

# Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Queens Drive, Swindon, Wiltshire SN3 1AR

## Inspection dates

9–10 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Governors have not held leaders to account with sufficient rigour. They have relied too heavily on information from senior leaders.
- The roles and responsibilities of senior and middle leaders are not clear enough. Consequently, teachers are not held to account with sufficient rigour.
- The school has not successfully tackled all of the areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection.
- Leaders' plans for school improvement lack clarity and precision. Consequently, it is difficult for leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of their actions accurately.
- Pupils do not consistently make good progress because work provided is not based closely enough on assessment and lacks challenge.
- The teaching of mathematics does not provide sufficient challenge or opportunities for pupils to deepen their mathematical understanding.
- Outcomes require improvement because pupils do not develop secure knowledge, understanding and skills from their different starting points.
- Inconsistencies exist in the quality of teaching of science, history and geography. Consequently, pupils' progress is too variable in these subjects.
- Leaders do not focus sufficiently on the different groups of pupils when checking the impact of the quality of teaching and learning. Consequently, the progress for different groups of pupils is too variable.
- Leaders' actions to improve attendance have not had a strong enough impact. Too many pupils are absent too often.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has instilled a strong sense of moral responsibility. This permeates through this happy and welcoming school. Pupils' conduct is good.
- Pupils' progress accelerates in Year 6 because teachers' subject knowledge is strong.
- Leadership of the early years is effective. As a result, children get off to a good start in Reception.
- Leaders' effective use of the sports funding ensures that pupils achieve well in sport.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - leaders' plans for improvements include measurable actions that increase the urgency with which they tackle pupils' progress
  - all leaders are clear about their roles and responsibilities and are held to account for the impact of that role in driving school improvement
  - leaders hold teachers to account through checking and focusing on pupils' progress and outcomes from their starting points
  - the governing body strengthens the rigour of its challenge to check the impact of leaders' actions on raising pupils' outcomes.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers:
  - use information about what pupils know, can do and understand to be sure that pupils, including the most able pupils, receive the challenge and support they need to make consistently good progress
  - provide high-quality opportunities to deepen pupils' mathematical understanding and reasoning
  - make sure that pupils develop deep knowledge and understanding of what they are learning in science, geography and history.
- Improve the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils by leaders working effectively to improve pupils' attendance.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- The school has gone through significant changes in the last three years. School leaders have worked hard to mitigate the adverse effects of this. However, the changes have negatively affected outcomes across the school and across subjects.
- Leaders have not secured consistently good outcomes for current pupils. The quality of teaching is too variable.
- Leaders are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses but specific actions often lack the urgency and precision needed to bring about rapid change. This slows down the impact of initiatives and makes it difficult for governors to assess the impact of actions taken. Leaders have not been successful in ensuring that the most able pupils are making sufficient progress, an area for improvement in the previous inspection.
- Roles and responsibilities of leaders across the school are unclear. Growth in pupil numbers, the change from junior to primary school and changes in staffing have destabilised the school's journey of improvement. Lines of accountability are blurred and the quality of teaching is too variable. This has resulted in pupils in Year 5, for example, making slower progress than those in Year 6.
- The actions leaders have taken have not ensured that the attendance of pupils is good. Too many pupils are absent too frequently. As a result, pupils miss lessons and do not catch up quickly enough.
- Senior leaders recognise that middle leadership needs to be developed. They are making effective use of expertise within the samuel partnership group's middle leadership training programme to tackle this. This is a recently formed group of Catholic primary schools, who provide mutual support and challenge. Consequently, middle leaders have a clearer command of their responsibilities. However, some middle leaders do not identify where improvement is needed precisely enough. Their initiatives to bring about improvement vary considerably in quality and impact.
- Leaders' checks, while mostly accurate, do not focus rigorously enough on how well teaching brings about strong progress for different groups. Their checks are too infrequent and do not lead to a strong understanding of the progress of the various pupil groups. Too little emphasis is placed on progress compared to the focus on attainment. As a result, teachers are not sufficiently challenged, nor are their expectations high enough.
- Leaders have tackled some of the weaker aspects of teaching by providing effective training opportunities. Consequently, staff skills have developed. For example, staff training has been effective in raising standards in phonics.
- The curriculum provides a broad coverage of subjects. However, in some subjects such as history, geography and science, there is little opportunity for pupils to gain a deep understanding.
- The headteacher has developed a strong team spirit in the school. Staff morale is high. Staff are proud to work in the school. They greatly appreciate the training opportunities they receive. This positive atmosphere adds to the welcoming feel in the school that

parents very much appreciate.

- Leadership of special educational needs is strong. Additional funding is used effectively. The special educational needs leader provides effective support and guidance to staff. Consequently, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points.
- The pupil premium report on the school's website was out of date at the start of the inspection. The most recent pupil premium report reflects leaders' improved focus on the few pupils who are eligible for this additional funding. Funding is deployed effectively for individuals. However, there is little evidence to suggest that governors are closely monitoring the impact of expenditure for this group as a whole.
- Leaders make effective use of the primary sports funding to improve teachers' coaching skills and to promote participation in sport. More pupils in key stage 2 now take part in sporting activities and there are more opportunities to play in sporting events. The girls' football team have been particularly successful. They have been in the Swindon league cup finals in six out of the seven years that they have taken part. Leaders recognise that more needs to be done to engage younger pupils in clubs and sporting activities.
- Leadership across key stage 1 is having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes. This new team are driving improvement effectively. Previously slow progress is improving and outcomes are becoming closer to the national averages. However, there is more work to be done.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Leaders draw on the wide cultural diversity in the school to establish an inclusive and nurturing ethos. In particular, the school's personal, social, health and citizenship education supports pupils' good understanding of care, respect, diversity and democracy. Consequently, pupils are well prepared to become responsible citizens in modern Britain.
- With the exception of safeguarding, the school does not engage with external school improvement support beyond the samuel partnership group. It is too soon to see the impact of this group's work on outcomes for pupils.
- The breakfast clubs on each site provide a calm and relaxed start to the day and a healthy meal that meets nutritional standards.

## **Governance of the school**

- The governing body has gone through a challenging period managing budget cuts and redundancies. This, together with managing the transition from junior to primary school and the change in managing two sites, has taken the focus away from pupils' progress. However, governors have been proactive in carrying out an audit of their current skills and are seeking to strengthen the governing body membership.
- Governors are too accepting of the information they receive. They receive copious amounts of information around pupils' attainment. However, the information presented has insufficient focus on pupils' progress. Governors have not probed deeply enough into areas of weak progress.
- Where governors do offer challenge, they do not follow this up with sufficient rigour.

As a result, leaders have not been held to account for pupils' progress. For example, issues relating to the provision for the most able pupils, an area for improvement in the previous inspection, remain unresolved.

- Governors have identified ways to increase the impact of their work. For example, they have identified that the school improvement plan is not precise enough. However, they have not yet implemented the proposed changes.
- Governors are committed and are conscientious in maintaining their links with classes. They make regular visits and speak knowledgeably about general attainment in classes. They are less clear about progress, particularly for various groups of learners. Middle leaders are beginning to present information in governor meetings and this is giving governors a broader understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The importance of reporting concerns is embedded in the school culture. Staff know the pupils and their families well. Pupils and their parents find staff approachable and are confident that if they have worries or concerns, staff will listen.
- All staff are clear about their responsibilities to keep pupils safe. The headteacher ensures that staff undertake the relevant training needed to alert them to signs of harm and risks. Most staff are trained in first aid and risk assessments are thorough.
- The school has effective systems in place to check if pupils are safe when they are absent from school. Leaders work closely with families and other external agencies where they have concerns.
- Some administrative aspects of record-keeping require improvement. The headteacher is aware of these and has begun to put plans in place to remedy the shortcomings.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment are too variable across year groups and between different subjects. Teaching does not routinely deepen and extend pupils' learning. Consequently, they do not achieve as well as they can. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils. However, in the Reception Year and Year 6, work is well matched in mathematics and writing and, as a result, pupils make stronger progress in these areas.
- Teachers routinely use the school's approach to assessment to identify what is to be learned in lessons. However, this is not always sufficiently sharp and focused, or varied enough, to promote effective learning. In addition, teachers are overly cautious with their assessments, particularly of the most able pupils. This can limit the progress that the most able pupils make.
- The teaching of writing, although improving, is still too variable across the school and is weakest in Year 5. Writing is not well developed throughout the curriculum. For example, some pupils' writing is underdeveloped in subjects such as science, history and geography. In contrast, workbooks in religious education are consistently of a high

quality across the year groups.

- Teaching in mathematics does not challenge pupils well enough. For example, Year 5 higher-ability pupils are often given the same work as those who find mathematics hard. Consequently, the most able do not make rapid progress or have the opportunity to work at greater depth. Work in books shows that pupils spend too long on exercises where they have already mastered the skill. There are too few opportunities for pupils with differing starting points to develop their practical problem solving. Consequently, pupils' progress in mathematics slows at times.
- Teachers establish good relationships with pupils and manage them well. Teaching assistants support pupils well and draw on a range of strategies to involve individual pupils.
- Leaders identified that the teaching of phonics was a weakness. They put training in place and it is now a strength. Teachers engender a love for reading. Effective support is provided for those pupils who have difficulty with reading. As a result, these pupils learn effective strategies to overcome their difficulties to make good progress. Similarly, the most able readers achieve good rates of progress.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are polite and respectful to one another, staff and visitors. They say that everyone should be treated equally, no matter what their beliefs or sexual orientation because 'a person's happiness is what matters most'.
- Pupils develop self-confidence because they are valued and well cared for. They are happy to share their opinions and talk about their learning. Through assemblies and lessons, pupils develop strong moral values and concern for others.
- Teachers are caring and are vigilant in passing on concerns to senior leaders where they notice changes in pupils' physical or emotional well-being.
- Pupils are clear about what is expected of them; they know the school's core values well. They thrive on the responsibilities they are given. For example, the Year 6 school chaplaincy team lead collective worship and raise funds for charity.
- Pupils say staff look after them well. They are clear that unkindness, bullying or name-calling will not be tolerated and that staff deal with this promptly. The school's behaviour logs reflect this. The majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, said that the school deals effectively with bullying.
- Many pupils show a commitment to following a healthy lifestyle, with a high proportion participating in clubs that help them to keep active and fit.
- Pupils feel very safe in school and show responsible attitudes to caring for themselves and for each other. Teachers help them to gain the confidence and self-belief to be strong willed. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online.
- Pupils are proud of their school. Most take great pride in their work. There are many

examples of well-presented work, particularly in religious education and English books. However, when teachers' expectations are not high enough, presentation slips, particularly in science.

- The school makes adequate provision for pupils who join the school from a different country. Consequently, these pupils settle quickly and feel happy in school.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' attendance is below the national average and shows little sign of improvement. Leaders recognise that poor attendance is affecting pupils' outcomes and have put strategies in place. However, as yet, these have had little impact. Too many pupils are absent from school on a regular basis.
- Pupils are categorical that behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Inspection evidence confirms that pupils conduct themselves well around the school and at play and lunchtimes. They line up in an orderly manner at the end of break and lunchtimes and make their way quickly back to class, settling down to work and following staff instructions.
- Pupils' attitudes towards their learning are good when they are appropriately challenged by the work set.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Published outcomes for key stage 2 reflect weak progress over the last few years in writing. Work in books demonstrates that pupils' writing is stronger this year. However, pupils have few opportunities to develop their skills in writing when studying other subjects, such as science and geography.
- Historically, boys' writing has lagged behind the girls'. There are encouraging signs that boys' writing is improving.
- The number of Year 1 pupils who met the expected standard in phonics was lower than the national average in 2016. Current outcomes, although still below the national average, show that the school's work to improve the teaching of phonics has made a discernible difference. Pupils are making good and sometimes rapid progress in acquiring phonic knowledge.
- Historically, outcomes in mathematics have been good. In 2016, published outcomes at the end of Year 6 show that a greater proportion of pupils than the national average achieved the expected standard in mathematics. This represented good progress from pupils' different starting points. However, work in current books suggests that although there is accelerated progress in Year 6, pupils' progress in other year groups is not as strong.
- An analysis of work in science shows that pupils' progress across different year groups is too variable. Pupils, including the most able, have too few opportunities to deepen their scientific knowledge. However, Year 6 pupils' science books show that they make good progress. Pupils deepen their scientific subject knowledge and apply their



mathematical and writing skills effectively in their explanations in these classes.

- This will be the first year that the school has Year 2 outcomes to report on. Current outcomes in Year 2 reflect particularly good progress in reading and writing for those pupils who did not meet the expected standard in phonics in 2016. Similarly, in Year 1, low- and middle-ability pupils are making good progress.
- Outcomes at the end of Reception have been below the national average over the last two years. Current outcomes show some improvement. However, leaders are too cautious in their assessments of those children who are exceeding the early learning goals. Consequently, pupils' progress across Year 1 looks misleadingly strong.
- Pupils read widely and regularly, including for homework. They speak enthusiastically about favourite authors and books. The most able readers have well-honed comprehension skills which support their deepening understanding of strategies to engage the reader in their writing.
- Few pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Overall, they make good progress from their starting points because leaders identify their needs clearly and teaching assistants have been trained well to provide good support.
- There are too few disadvantaged pupils to make reliable national comparisons. However, work in individual pupils' books shows that pupils who are not already working in line with others nationally are making accelerated progress to catch up.

### Early years provision

**Good**

- The Reception class has only been in place for two years. The number of pupils reaching a good level of development has been below the national average for both years. However, this represents good progress from children's starting points. Catch-up is particularly strong in writing and in personal, social and emotional development (PSED).
- The Reception leader has provided clear, determined and focused leadership to develop the provision and improve teaching. Consequently, this year, more children are on track to achieve the goals for the early years than in the previous two years. However, despite their experience, teachers lack confidence in identifying those children who are achieving beyond the early learning goals.
- Teachers' effective use of initial assessment and transition information from the many feeder pre-schools supports children in settling quickly into school. Home visits and 'stay and play' sessions also ensure that children and parents feel comfortable in the school. Consequently, children make good progress, often from very low starting points, particularly in PSED.
- Parents appreciate the way that the school involves them in their children's learning. Leaders are creative in providing many opportunities to engage families. Parents have attended phonics workshops and worked alongside their children in class.
- Adults interact effectively with the children and have high expectations of behaviour. Consequently, children are happy and safe. They cooperate well and learn from each other.



- Teachers plan high-quality experiences for the children. As a result, the children are curious and make strong links in their learning. For example, children displayed awe and wonder when looking at the class tadpoles. When one child incorrectly explained how a tadpole changes into a frog, another helped them to understand by pointing at the pictures of the life cycle of a frog and described the sequence.
- Teachers ensure that there are plentiful writing opportunities for children when they are choosing activities. Consequently, children are able to practise the skills and words they have learned with the teacher. This is leading to good outcomes in writing for many. For example, inspectors observed children in imaginative play in the 'builders' yard' recording customers' telephone orders and writing lists.
- There are too few disadvantaged children, or those who have special educational needs, to reliably compare with national figures. However, teachers' plans show clear consideration of the differing needs of children. Teachers have a strong understanding of individual children's skills, knowledge and understanding. This is reflected in the learning journey records. These clearly capture children's development across all areas of learning.
- Safeguarding in the early years is effective. The learning environment is safe and inviting. Adults meticulously record nappy changes and any accidents or small injuries that occur. Staff and volunteers are alert to changes in children's demeanour and know how to recognise the signs of abuse.

## School details

Unique reference number	136981
Local authority	Swindon
Inspection number	10033090

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	286
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Hryb
Headteacher	Tony McAteer
Telephone number	01793 527679
Website	<a href="http://www.holycross.swindon.sch.uk">http://www.holycross.swindon.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:head@holycross.swindon.sch.uk">head@holycross.swindon.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	June 2014

## Information about this school

- The school meets the government's floor standards.
- Holy Cross Catholic Primary School is an average-sized primary school. It changed status from a junior school to a primary school in 2014 and is situated on a split site. Years 5 and 6 currently share a site with Holy Rood Primary School. The early years and key stage 1 are on the Holy Cross Primary School site. There are currently no Years 3 or 4 pupils in the school.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of specified information on its website about the curriculum, pupil premium funding and sport funding.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school has fewer pupils eligible for free school meals than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds in the school is much larger

than the national average.

- A much larger proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language compared to the national average.
- The school has fewer pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities than the national average.
- The school provides a breakfast club and an after-school club on both school sites. The Year 5 and 6 pupils attend clubs jointly run by Holy Rood and Holy Cross primary schools.

## Information about this inspection

- Meetings were held with senior leaders, including the headteacher and deputy head, as well as subject leaders for mathematics and writing. Other meetings were held with the special educational needs coordinator, representatives of the school’s local governing body and the local authority safeguarding trainer.
- The lead inspector also held telephone conversations with a representative from the Clifton Catholic Diocese, a local authority officer and the chair of the governing body.
- The inspectors scrutinised a number of documents including governors’ minutes, school assessment information, the school’s self-evaluation, the school development plan, staff training and performance management records as well as evidence relating to safer recruitment and child protection.
- Inspectors conducted visits to classes across the school as well as a learning walk to review other subjects taught across the curriculum.
- The inspectors undertook an extensive scrutiny of pupils’ books alongside middle and senior leaders to evaluate the quality of work and to check the accuracy of assessment information held by the school in writing and mathematics. Inspectors also scrutinised pupils’ science and topic books.
- The inspectors spoke to children through various activities during the inspection. In addition, inspectors met separately with groups of key stage 1 and 2 pupils.
- Inspectors also heard pupils read from Years 1, 2, 5 and 6.
- Inspectors observed pupils’ behaviour at playtime and lunch, and their general conduct across the school day.
- The 50 responses to Parent View were taken into account. The inspectors also considered comments provided in other ways, such as when meeting with parents, and from free-text comments on Parent View.
- Twelve responses to the staff survey were considered.

## Inspection team

Tracy Hannon, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Mark Lees	Ofsted Inspector
Debbie Marklove	Ofsted Inspector

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