

St Cross Catholic Primary School

Upper Marsh Lane, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire EN11 8BN

Inspection dates

5–6 June 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Effective leadership by the headteacher has ensured that the school has improved since the last inspection. She is well supported by the two assistant headteachers.
- Governance is a strength of the school and the governing body is well led. Governors provide good support and challenge to leaders because they have an accurate strategic overview of the school's strengths and areas for development.
- A strong safeguarding culture exists in the school. Leaders and governors have ensured that there are effective systems in place to safeguard pupils.
- Teaching at the school is good because teachers have high expectations, plan interesting lessons and use questioning effectively to deepen pupils' learning.
- Pupils feel safe at school and have adults that they feel able to talk to if something is worrying them.
- Parents and carers praised the school for promoting pupils' social and emotional development.
- Behaviour is good because pupils show consideration and courtesy for each other, as well as staff. They behave well in lessons and during less-structured times of the day, such as playtime. Parents and staff overwhelmingly agree that pupils' behaviour is good.
- Outcomes in 2018 improved. Pupils' attainment and progress in Year 6 for reading, writing and mathematics were all in line with the national average or better.
- Early years teaching is good because the curriculum is motivating for the children and is appropriately balanced. Children in early years cooperate with each other and with adults, showing respect and kindness at all times.
- Progress in reading at the end of key stage 2 improved in 2018 because of better teaching. It will take time for improvements in the quality of education to fill gaps in knowledge for the most able readers so that they make better progress by the end of Year 6.
- The school is successfully working on improving challenge for the most able pupils. Occasionally, some children can become disengaged in class because the tasks that they are asked to complete are not well matched to their abilities.
- The attendance of a small number of pupils who are disadvantaged or with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is lower than the national average.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that challenge in lessons is always well matched to the pupils' needs
 - continuing to develop the provision for the most able readers so that they make better progress by the end of Year 6.
- Improve attendance by communicating clearly to all pupils and parents the link between attendance and achievement in school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has been successful in improving the quality of education and addressing the school's weaknesses effectively since the last inspection. She is ably assisted by her two assistant headteachers and, together, they have an accurate and thorough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- The school is a happy place for staff to come to work and for pupils to learn. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the leadership of the school and proud to work there. Almost all the parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, said that their children are taught well and make good progress at the school. One parent spoke for many in saying: 'This school is an absolute dream. Both my children wake up every day wanting to learn in this happy, fun environment.'
- The quality of teaching is now monitored closely by leaders at the school and they rigorously track pupils' outcomes. During the inspection, leaders' and inspectors' views about the teaching that was jointly observed were in agreement.
- Subject leaders have clear roles and understand their areas well. They have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Subject leaders conscientiously fulfil their roles and ensure that their actions have a clear impact on pupils' learning, such as through the development of child-led investigations in science.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Observations in lessons, work in books and displays around the school show the breadth of pupils' learning. This ranges from learning music notation in Year 1 to analysing Jim Crow and segregation in Year 5. The curriculum also helps to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills effectively within different subjects. This includes using bar charts to record data in science experiments and using reading skills to make inferences from historical sources about the feelings of people during the First World War.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school and pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Leaders provide a wide range of opportunities in and out of the classroom for pupils to develop their understanding of the world around them. This includes both worldwide and local issues, ranging from global warming to support for a local food bank. Doing the right thing is a fundamental value of the school that is lived out by staff and pupils on a daily basis.
- Performance management is effective, well structured and closely linked to the school's improvement priorities. Actions provide clear steps about who by, when and how an objective is to be achieved. As a consequence, staff are held clearly to account for pupils' learning.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively and there is careful monitoring of the impact of the spending. The pupil premium leader knows each individual child and they ensure that these pupils receive timely support. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- The school makes effective use of the additional funding for physical education and sport. This is used to provide a range of activities and there is a high take-up of the clubs offered. A dedicated sports coach provides specialist teaching, allowing teachers

to benefit from this expertise.

- Funding for pupils with SEND is used effectively. This area is well led by an experienced special educational needs coordinator who has established clear and comprehensive systems to meet these pupils' additional needs. Consequently, this has a positive impact on the progress made by pupils. Parents of children with SEND praised the school for the support it gives them. One parent of a child with SEND, speaking for many, said:

'The teachers, teaching assistants and all the staff have been very supportive since my child started school and they have made significant progress from their starting point academically, socially and emotionally.'

- Pupils' overall progress in reading at the end of key stage 2 improved in 2018 because of improvements in the quality of education at the school. However, it will take time to fill gaps in knowledge for most-able readers and ensure that they make good progress by the end of Year 6.

Governance of the school

- Governors have the relevant range of expertise required to allow them to provide the school with support and challenge in equal measure. Training ensures that governors keep up to date with new initiatives. They are well led by a knowledgeable and experienced chair of governors.
- Governors recognise that, at the last inspection, they were overly generous in their evaluation of the school's effectiveness and they have worked hard to address this issue. While they are now provided with detailed information by the headteacher, governors robustly hold the leadership of the school to account by not relying solely on this evidence to shape their understanding of the school. Instead, governors compare the information provided by the school with external reports from the local authority and regular visits to the school during the working day. This allows them to come to a balanced and impartial view of the school's performance. The governing body, therefore, has an accurate understanding of the strengths of the school and the areas for further improvement.
- Governors' overview of safeguarding is strong and they have a clear understanding of procedures. They ensure the effectiveness of safeguarding in school through regular meetings between the designated lead and the link governor. There are also regular reports from the headteacher and from the local authority to the governing body that enable governors to have a clear overview of safeguarding. Governors check that safeguarding procedures meet statutory guidelines and also that there is a culture of safeguarding deeply embedded in the daily routines of the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- A strong safeguarding culture exists within the school. Processes for the recruitment of staff are compliant with guidance and all necessary checks are undertaken when recruiting new staff. Information is recorded appropriately on the school's single central

record, which meets all statutory requirements.

- Staff receive regular training to refresh their understanding of all government safeguarding guidance. This includes the 'Prevent' duty, which identifies the support available to pupils who are vulnerable to extremism or radicalisation.
- As the overall designated safeguarding lead, the headteacher has ensured that there are suitable and robust systems in place to safeguard pupils. The electronic recording system where staff log all concerns is clear and enables leaders to quickly follow up these concerns. Records are detailed and accurate. There is clear evidence of the school engaging with external agencies and working in the best interest of the pupils to keep them safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching at the school is good and based on respectful relationships that promote pupils' positive attitudes to learning. The vast majority of parents agree that teaching is good and that their children make good progress in the school.
- Teachers have high expectations and plan interesting, sequenced activities across the curriculum. For example, a science lesson seen during the inspection was part of a sequence of work on rocks and fossils. This structured planning allowed pupils to recall lots of information from previous lessons about rocks and fossils to help them consider the difference between a petrologist and a geologist. Staff build reflection time into lessons and this allows pupils the opportunity to review their learning.
- Reading and writing are taught well across the school, including the teaching of phonics. Pupils make good use of their phonological knowledge to read new words in early years and Year 1. In key stage 2, pupils were observed keenly discussing the range of language that they would use in their character description based on a painting by Henry Rousseau.
- Throughout the school, teachers use questioning effectively to challenge thinking and deepen learning. For example, in a Year 3 guided reading session, the whole class discussed whether one character in the shared text might be perceived as a bully. The pupils were all keen to take part and explore what they had inferred from the text because of the teacher's skilled use of questioning. Accompanied by well-judged humour, the teacher's questioning contrasted opposing views among the pupils and deepened the whole class's understanding of the author's choice of language in the text.
- Teaching assistants have a clear understanding of pupils' learning needs and so support them skilfully in lessons.
- The school is successfully working on improving challenge for the most able pupils. Occasionally, this can lead to tasks not being well matched to the needs of all pupils because they are too challenging and, as a consequence, some pupils can become disengaged.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Parents praised the school's focus on social and emotional development. This ranged from the peace garden and its worry box for pupils to share concerns to support for charities such as the Catholic Agency For Overseas Development.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe online and they have an age-appropriate understanding of the potential dangers. All pupils who responded to the pupil questionnaire agreed that they feel safe at school and that there is an adult in school that they feel able to talk to if something is worrying them.
- Pupils told inspectors that they had experienced bullying rarely, if ever, and that they have complete confidence that staff will resolve any difficulties. Parents who responded to Parent View said that incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. Many parents commented on the strength of the support for pupils in the school. For example, one parent said, 'All the staff really care for the pupils.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school is an orderly environment. Pupils take pride in their work and there is a very high standard of presentation in pupils' books. Pupils told inspectors that behaviour is good in lessons and, as a consequence, 'We can learn.'
- Pupils play together in the playground well. They show consideration and courtesy to each other. They are able to regulate their behaviour when playing games and are very clear about the rules on what they can, and cannot, do outside. Consequently, playtimes are a pleasant experience.
- Pupils behave well in lessons. In almost all classes seen by inspectors, pupils were very respectful to the teachers, as well as their peers. For example, in a Year 4 class, pupils listened carefully to each other during a class debate. They shared, in an orderly and respectful fashion, their different views of a character based on what they had inferred from their class text. In rare instances where behaviour is poor, it is because work set for the pupils is too challenging. This causes pupils to lose focus and become distracted.
- The school has taken effective action to improve attendance after a dip last year. The overall attendance rate for pupils has risen since September 2018 and is now in line with the national figures. Equally, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school has decreased and is now below the national average. Staff follow up quickly when pupils are absent.
- The attendance of some groups of pupils, such as those who are disadvantaged or pupils with SEND, is lower than the national average. Leaders work closely with this small number of families to improve pupils' attendance.
- The overwhelming majority of parents and staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaires agree that the behaviour of pupils is good.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Outcomes have improved because of leaders' and governors' successful actions to improve the quality of education at the school. In 2018, pupils' attainment and progress in Year 6 for reading, writing and mathematics were at least in line with the national averages. This is an improvement since the last inspection, where progress in reading was below the national average. Work in pupils' books and the school's current assessment information show that standards are continuing to improve throughout the school.
- Approaches to teaching the most able pupils have changed at the school as this is a group that has, historically, not made enough progress. Changes include improvements in guided reading and the introduction of pre-teaching checks for the most able pupils in mathematics to ensure that teachers understand their starting points. Staff have received training on how to improve writing for the most able pupils. Consequently, this group of pupils is making better progress across almost all year groups.
- In 2018, standards at the end of key stage 1 were in line with national averages for reading, writing and mathematics. Outcomes in science were above the national average and work in pupils' books shows the high standards that pupils achieve in this subject.
- As a result of effective teaching, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was above the national average in 2018.
- Pupils achieve well in the early years setting and the proportion securing a good level of development exceeded the national average in 2018. This setting prepares children well for the next stage of their education.
- Most of the small number of pupils who are disadvantaged or pupils with SEND make good progress from their various starting points. This is because they are benefiting from improvements in the quality of teaching. Pupils who are disadvantaged or with SEND are well known to the leaders and they receive effective support.

Early years provision

Good

- The quality of education in the early years is good.
- Leaders have a clear and accurate view of the early years. They have created a child-centred setting that encourages children to be curious and to take an active interest in their learning. As a consequence, children's behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils are kept safe in the Reception class because all welfare requirements are met.
- The early years classroom is bright and well resourced. There is a good range of equipment, both inside and outside, that supports children's independent learning.
- The quality of teaching is good and children enjoy coming to school. The curriculum is motivating for the children. It is appropriately balanced to cover all the areas of the early years foundation stage framework, with activities carefully selected to capture

children's interest. For example, during the inspection, inspectors saw children choosing and enjoying a beanbag throwing activity that extended their mathematics, writing and science skills.

- The behaviour of the children is exemplary. They cooperate with each other and with adults, showing respect and kindness at all times.
- Learning in the Reception class is well planned so that it effectively supports children with SEND. As a consequence, they make rapid progress from their starting points, particularly in their writing.
- Children leave the early years well prepared for Year 1. Phonics has a clear structure and is effectively taught. As a consequence, the pupils remain totally engaged throughout their phonics sessions. Phonics sessions are also used to successfully reinforce writing skills, such as appropriate pen grip, the formation of letters and the reinforcement of punctuation.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed and effectively support all pupils with their learning and development.

School details

Unique reference number	117483
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10088658

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cate Campany
Headteacher	Kathryn Hall
Telephone number	01992 467 309
Website	www.stcross.herts.sch.uk
Email address	head@stcross.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 January 2017

Information about this school

- St Cross is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- This is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided school. The most recent Section 48 inspection of the religious aspects of the school was conducted in April 2018.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited every class across the school at least once, except for Year 6, who were on a residential trip for the entirety of the inspection. Inspectors observed teaching and learning, talked to pupils and assessed the quality of their work. The headteacher and assistant headteachers accompanied the inspectors on some classroom visits.
- The inspectors looked at documentation, including the school's analysis of its strengths and weaknesses, information on pupils' attainment and progress, records of behaviour and safety, minutes of governing body meetings and safeguarding documentation.
- Inspectors examined examples of pupils' written work across a range of subjects and year groups in lessons. The inspectors also separately scrutinised a range of pupils' work, including English, mathematics, topic books and science books.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, staff, pupils, governors and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors held discussions with pupils, listened to pupils read and observed pupils' behaviour at playtime.
- Inspectors spoke with parents at the start of the school day and considered 95 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also took account of the 24 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 41 responses to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

James Adkins, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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