

Inspection of a good school: Holy Cross Church of England Primary School

Belmont Road, Uckfield, East Sussex TN22 1BP

Inspection dates:

16 June 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils describe their school as a loving, inclusive and welcoming place. They say that there is some bullying, but staff deal with any incidents quickly. One pupil shared, 'All grown-ups really care that we are happy and safe. They welcome us with a friendly smile every morning.'

Leaders and staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. There is a peaceful and pleasant atmosphere around school. Playtimes are sociable and harmonious occasions. As well as playing with their friends, pupils take time to relax in the 'weather hut'. They are proud that they are involved in choosing the games and equipment available on the playground.

Pupils look forward to the after-school clubs. These include gardening, bushcraft, dancing and multi sports. Pupils take delight in looking after their school through roles such as classroom monitors, playtime buddies and members of the school council. They routinely raise funds for local charities and enjoy participating in community events such as the town fair.

Leaders and governors are ambitious for all staff and pupils. However, the curriculum is not well planned in all subjects. Leaders know that they need to tackle this swiftly for all year groups, including early years, and have begun to make the necessary changes.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Since his appointment, the interim headteacher is making commendable improvements to many aspects of the quality of education. He has brought much needed rigour and is prioritising the areas that need to improve urgently. However, there is still more work to

do. The interim headteacher has developed a strong sense of teamwork and collaboration. Staff morale is high at Holy Cross.

Leaders and staff are determined for all pupils, including those with special educational and/or disabilities (SEND), to learn a well-crafted and coherent curriculum. However, they know that they still have a way to go before they fully realise this vision. The curriculum in some subjects, such as mathematics and history, is well sequenced. Leaders have thought very carefully about what pupils should learn and when. They have identified the order in which pupils will learn the essential knowledge from early years to Year 6. However, the content and sequence of the curriculum in most of the other subjects is not organised as clearly and precisely. Consequently, pupils are not well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils, including children in the early years, love listening to the stories that their teachers read to them. Older pupils enjoy choosing books from the well-stocked library. This helps them to develop their love of reading. Leaders have recently introduced a new phonics programme which is well sequenced. However, some staff do not deliver phonics effectively. Books are not always matched to the sounds pupils learn in lessons. This slows some pupils' ability to read with increased fluency and confidence. Leaders are in the process of addressing these issues.

Overall, pupils look forward to lessons. They describe their lessons as fun and exciting. Leaders ensure that teachers identify the needs of pupils with SEND and provide them with support and resources to meet their individual pastoral and emotional needs. However, leaders have not made sure that teachers are well trained to confidently deliver the curriculum for all pupils. Most teachers do not check carefully enough that pupils, including those with SEND, have understood important ideas and make links with what they know already. Consequently, pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Pupils behave well. The school's Christian values of compassion, courage, hope, thankfulness, love and service underpin all aspects of everyday life. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and respectful.

Personal development is a strength of the school. Pupils also regularly work with a range of professionals and experts to learn about the careers open to them. Pupils use their democratic voice to influence change in the local community. For example, they organise campaigns to encourage recycling and reduce plastic waste in the area. Pupils discuss topical issues confidently and maturely, such as individual liberty, immigration and mutual respect. Pupils learn about different cultures and communities. They understand well the differences and similarities between religious festivals and rituals. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Governors know what the school does well and where improvements need to be made. However, they recognise that they need to focus their monitoring of the curriculum more sharply. They have identified that, in the past, they have not challenged leaders well enough about the quality of education. Leaders and staff are making positive use of the resources and expertise provided by the local authority.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have developed a strong culture of safeguarding. All staff are well trained and vigilant to potential risks. Leaders make sure staff receive regular update training. All staff know how to report concerns. Leaders work closely with external agencies to ensure that vulnerable families are well supported.

Pupils learn about positive relationships, online safety and how to keep safe in the wider community.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not made sure that the curriculum in all subjects is well sequenced and coherent. Consequently, pupils are not well prepared for the next stage of their education. Leaders need to continue to develop the curriculum so that it clearly sets out the order in which all pupils, including children in the early years, should learn the essential knowledge across all subjects.
- Across the foundation curriculum, staff have variable pedagogical knowledge. In too many subjects, teachers move learning on before carefully checking that pupils, including those with SEND, have understood the important ideas. This means that pupils do not learn as well as they should. Leaders should provide training to develop teachers' expertise to deliver the curriculum effectively for all pupils.
- Some staff do not teach the school's phonics programme effectively. They do not always check that all pupils learn the right sounds and blends. The books that pupils read do not always help them to read fluently and with increased confidence. Leaders need to make sure that all staff are trained to deliver phonics effectively and that the books pupils read match the sounds they learn in lessons.
- Governors do not challenge leaders well enough to check for the impact of strategic actions to improve the quality of education, which includes the achievement of pupils with SEND. Governors need to hold leaders to account more effectively.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 2017.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	114562
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10227867
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	77
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jan Meyer
Headteacher	Paul Prest (interim)
Website	www.holycross.e-sussex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 and 20 April 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The interim headteacher took up his post in January 2022.
- A new chair of governors has been elected to the governing body since the last inspection.
- The school is a voluntary-aided Church of England school. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in June 2016.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the interim headteacher, school leaders, staff and pupils.
- The lead inspector met with seven governors, including the chair of the governing body. She also met with a senior officer from East Sussex local authority. The lead

inspector also had a telephone discussion with a representative from the Diocese of Chichester.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked samples of pupils' work.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record of recruitment checks and talked to leaders responsible for safeguarding. Inspectors also talked to a range of staff and pupils informally.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the confidential staff survey and spoke to a range of staff about their views of the school.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire. The lead inspector talked with some parents at the start of the inspection.
- Inspectors considered responses to the pupil survey. They met with a range of pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to pupils informally during social times and in lessons.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school development plan.

Inspection team

Shazia Akram, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Stephen Jackson

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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