



# Holy Cross Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

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Better  
education  
and care

**Unique Reference Number** 114562  
**Local Authority** East Sussex  
**Inspection number** 289968  
**Inspection dates** 29–30 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Brenda Spencer

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Belmont Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Uckfield
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		TN22 1BP
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01825 762336
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	175	<b>Fax number</b>	01825 769423
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	G Simms
		<b>Headteacher</b>	A Raven
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 May 2001		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Holy Cross Church of England Primary is a small school with a shrinking roll because of a substantial reduction in numbers of children in the local area. The vast majority of pupils are of White British origin and a small proportion come from a range of eight other ethnic backgrounds. Sixteen pupils are at an early stage of learning English. Their home languages are predominantly Bengali and Hindi. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with statements of special educational needs, is much higher than the national average.

The school has the Basic Skills Award, Arts Mark Gold and a Business Enterprise Award. It has many partnerships with mutually supportive local businesses and local organisations and has been invited to be a pilot school for the Every Child Matters Quality Mark.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Holy Cross Church of England is an improving school, which provides a satisfactory standard of education. Since the last inspection the curriculum, provision for children in Reception, accommodation and resources, and the school's financial stability have been improved. The school is well positioned to make further gains.

Standards on entry to school are now below average but have been even lower in recent years, especially in communication skills. There are relatively few highly attaining children. Pupils make good progress in Reception because of the good provision and the way staff assess and build well on what children already know. The achievement and progress of current Years 2 and 6 are satisfactory. Pupils are on track to reach average standards but very few to reach the higher levels. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Behaviour is managed well, providing a good classroom atmosphere in which to work. The school provides a good curriculum that plans well for the needs of pupils at all stages of learning. However, the progress pupils make is uneven as lessons are not always well matched to pupils' understanding and teaching is sometimes not quick enough to adapt in lessons to pupils' responses. There are some good examples of marking which help pupils know how to improve their work but this is not the case in all classes and this negatively affects pupils' progress.

The school is highly prized by parents for the evident care it takes of the pupils and their families. This results in good personal development and well-being of pupils. A typical comment came from a parent who said of support for her son with special needs, 'his treatment from Holy Cross was first class and a complete success story'. The progress and achievement of vulnerable pupils and those for who English is not their first language is good because of the good provision for their emotional and academic needs.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The leadership of the headteacher is compassionate and ambitious for pupils' academic needs. He sets the tone of the school's work and enjoys the confidence of staff, parents and governors. Useful links forged with the church and local community benefit the pupils' personal development well. Pupils' academic progress is carefully tracked and the senior leadership team has a clear view of what is needed to bring about improvement. There is a comprehensive plan to improve the school, but it does not identify clearly enough how to measure the success of its outcomes in terms of pupils' standards and achievement. There is a good and wide-ranging programme for keeping the work of the school under review. Currently subject leaders' influence is too limited because they do not play a strong enough part in improving the quality of teaching.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure all lessons provide effectively for the range of pupils' capabilities.
- Accelerate the progress pupils make by giving them consistently good advice on how to improve their work.

- Identify how success can be measured to show more clearly that the school's plans for improving pupils' achievement are working.
- Extend the role of co-ordinators in improving the quality of teaching and learning in their specialist areas.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and is improving. Careful tracking of pupils' progress identifies where this is insufficient and support programmes are set up to address it. This enables vulnerable pupils and those with English as an additional language to make good progress. Presently energy is rightly focused on improving the progress of pupils of average ability, in mathematics and of pupils in Year 1. Recent reviews indicate that programmes to support mathematical learning are having success. On entry to school, pupils' communication skills have been particularly weak. The profile is improving but in recent years has been well below average, with very few highly attaining children. Despite making good progress because of the effective use of assessment, attainment at the end of Reception Year is below average. In 2006, standards were below average at the end of Years 2 and 6, reflecting low starting points for both groups of pupils. Results were, however, disappointing in mathematics for eleven-year-olds. The achievements of current Years 2 and 6 are satisfactory. They are on track to reach average standards at the end of the year but very few pupils are likely to reach the higher levels. The school is setting itself ambitious targets for pupils' achievement and is beginning to have some success.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' thorough enjoyment of school is reflected in their good attendance. Good attitudes and behaviour are the norm. Pupils say bullying is rare and that adults deal with inappropriate behaviour quickly and fairly. The strong emphasis given to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development successfully helps them develop a sensitive approach to everyday issues and to appreciate the achievement of others. Relationships are very good and pupils take advantage of staff's 'listening ear' when they have concerns.

Pupils enjoy taking responsibility and contribute well to the school and local communities. The school council makes a positive contribution to the day-to-day life of the school. Pupils raise money for charities and take part in business enterprise activities run in conjunction with local companies to develop skills in negotiating, decision making and marketing. However, preparation of pupils for their future world of work is only satisfactory because of the standards reached in English and mathematics by the time they leave the school. Work relating to the school's quest for 'Healthy Schools' status has given pupils a clear understanding of the need for regular exercise and healthy eating. They are also well aware of how to keep themselves

safe. The school is working to heighten pupils' awareness of and responsibility towards their environment through activities leading to the award of an 'Eco Green Flag'.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Lessons are planned well for the range of abilities and needs, but these intentions are not always successfully carried out. Sometimes teaching is not quick enough to react to the pupils' responses in lessons and to make necessary adjustments to the planned activities. As a result the pitch of lessons is not always sufficiently well matched to the range of pupils' understanding and this affects their progress. Most marking identifies clearly how pupils can improve their work but this is not the case in every class. Pupils behave and concentrate well because of the excellent role models and clear expectations of the adults around them. They are given lots of opportunities to work together which support their social development well. "It's part of becoming independent," said one child of the problems they are set. Teaching assistants are well briefed and make a good contribution to pupils' learning. This is particularly so for pupils in small groups with specific learning difficulties.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The enthusiasm with which pupils speak about subjects such as art and music reflects the school's success in gaining a national award for the creative elements of provision. Teachers successfully make meaningful links between subjects to enhance pupils' enjoyment and learning. For example, having studied the growth of traffic congestion in Uckfield from historical and geographical perspectives, older pupils wrote letters to the local council voicing concerns on the matter. Good support for pupils with learning difficulties and for those for whom English is an additional language results in them making good progress. The school is now developing its satisfactory provision for pupils identified as gifted and talented. Good enrichment is provided by a wide range of out-of-class activities. To further improve its already comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education, the school is now implementing a nationally agreed scheme to support and promote social and emotional aspects of pupils' learning.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 3**

The care, guidance and support of pupils are satisfactory. Many parents have the highest regard for the school's support of their children's and families' welfare. One wrote, "we have been impressed by the caring attitude of the staff – something which rubs off on the children". Extensive efforts are taken to ensure pupils settle into school

easily, and that they are safe and well cared for by suitable adults. The needs of vulnerable pupils are met particularly well. Consequently, pupils grow in confidence and into well-rounded human beings. The academic guidance pupils receive is satisfactory overall, resulting in pupils making satisfactory progress. It is strongest for English and mathematics and is developing in other subjects. Assessment in Reception is comprehensive and is used well to help children make good progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher provides effective leadership and has a clear vision for the school's development. With support from staff and governors he has established a caring environment that reflects fully the Christian ethos of the school. As such, learners progress well in their personal development and make satisfactory gains in their learning. Since the last inspection, improvements have been made to both curriculum and resources. Such developments, together with measures taken to improve progress across the school, have led to an overall rise in achievement by the end of Year 6.

The school has a clear understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. This is shown well in its self-evaluation and development plan. Whilst the latter reflects the views of all those associated with the school, and is a useful tool to move the school forward, greater rigour is needed for many of the criteria by which the success of targets are to be measured. Whilst the quality of teaching is checked regularly by the head and deputy headteacher, subject leaders have not yet been involved in this process, thus preventing them from playing a full part in managing and improving the provision in the subjects for which they are responsible.

With support from the local authority, governors have successfully redressed the large deficit budget present at the last inspection, and have given the school a stable financial footing. Governors play a full part in strategic planning and are purposeful in their role of 'critical friend'.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we came to inspect your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you. A particular thank you must go to those of you who gave up your time to talk to Mr Thelwell. You might like to know that he told me you were "delightful".

We think you are getting a satisfactory education in a school which is improving. The children in Reception class and those who find learning hard sometimes are doing well. You are very well cared for and we agree with you that there is always a "listening ear" for anyone with a problem. Your headteacher and staff think this is very important. You have a good knowledge of how to keep safe and lead healthy lives. You get on very well with each other, partly because the adults in school set such a good example. You enjoy school because your lessons are interesting. Sometimes your lessons are too difficult or too easy for some of you. You can help your teachers if you answer very thoughtfully at the end of lessons when you consider if you have learned what was intended. Teachers are going to make sure they always give good pointers to show you how you can improve your work. You need to follow this advice to try to reach higher standards.

The staff and governors have a special plan which shows what they are going to do to improve your school. They need to describe in the plan more clearly what difference it will make to your learning and development so they can see if they are successful. Some teachers have responsibility for raising standards in certain subjects. To help them know how to do this better they need to see how the teaching helps you learn. Do let them know what you think when they ask your opinion.

Please thank your parents for kindly sending in the questionnaires and letters. These helped us to understand how well the school is doing.