

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120214
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	358720
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Keith Sadler

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	183
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Ball
Headteacher	Geraldine Willders
Date of previous school inspection	9 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 16 lessons led by eight different teachers. The inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, and groups of pupils. The school's work and a wide range of documentation were reviewed. This included the school's analysis of pupils' progress, teachers' lesson plans, the school improvement plan, leaders' monitoring records and pupils' work. Questionnaires from staff and from 126 parents and carers were analysed and their responses taken into account.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The strength of pupils' progress in mathematics and whether Year 6 pupils are on track to meet their targets.
- The quality of the curriculum for information and communication technology (ICT).
- How well teachers ensure that work is matched to pupils' abilities.
- The key strengths of the school's provision for the pupils' care, guidance and support.

Information about the school

Holy Cross is an average sized village primary school that is substantially oversubscribed. It shares a site with Holy Cross church and most pupils live within the parish though a small minority come from nearby Catholic parishes. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The number of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is about half the national average.

There is a pre-school on the site that is not managed by the governing body and is subject to a separate inspection. The school provides a breakfast club. This provision is managed by the governing body and is included in this inspection. The school has gained the Artsmark Silver award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Holy Cross is a good school. Pupils, staff and governors are proud of their school and the education that it offers. It provides a harmonious learning community in which pupils' self-esteem and respect for others are successfully nurtured. The outstanding care, guidance and support, when linked to the strong Catholic mission statement, provide a secure foundation for the school's work. In consequence, pupils' behaviour is outstanding and they are helped to feel exceptionally safe in school. Pupils' attitudes are positive and they enjoy school and learning. By the time that they leave, pupils develop into thoughtful and socially mature pupils who are prepared well for the next stage in their education. Pupils' good personal skills have a positive influence on their learning. Parents and carers are supportive of the school with most saying that their children enjoy school and that they are happy with their children's experience at the school. Their views are summarised by the parent who wrote, 'The school is a happy and great place for learning. The ethos is one of inclusion and nurture. We couldn't ask for a better school.'

The quality of teaching is good, and this has a positive effect on the pupils' achievement. Pupils benefit from lessons where they enjoy using their own ideas and working together in pairs and small groups. Pupils are invariably helped to understand lesson objectives and so they are clear about what they need to do to succeed. However, there are some inconsistencies in teaching and, on occasion, a few pupils' learning needs are not fully met, teachers' introductions are too long and this slows the pace of learning. This means that occasionally, a few pupils are not challenged totally effectively in lessons. Over the last three years attainment by Year 6 has been average. Progress and learning are particularly strong in English. This is due to the good focus that has been placed on strengthening provision for reading and writing. This, in turn, leads to standards that were exceptionally high in 2010. However, in the past, attainment in mathematics has lagged behind that of English. This has been tackled well and current Year 6 pupils are on course to make good progress in mathematics. However, pupils' skills in applying and using their mathematical knowledge in practical situations remain behind their well developed calculation skills.

The headteacher has successfully ensured that all staff play an important role in the school's good quality and accurate self-evaluation procedures. This leads to an effective school improvement plan which provides a good tool for future development. Improvements in the checking of provision and monitoring pupils' progress reflects the school leaders' success in embedding ambition and driving improvement. Almost all the members of the governing body have been appointed since the previous inspection. They are committed to improvement and support the school satisfactorily. However, governors recognise that they are over-reliant on the headteacher for information. Whilst there are good plans in place to strengthen their monitoring and evaluation role, at present they are not in a good position to challenge the school to improve further. Improvements in the

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school's provision and the maintenance of the pupils' good quality personal development, underpinned by improved effectiveness since the previous inspection, demonstrate a good capacity for sustained improvement in the future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Lift the quality of teaching and progress in learning from good to outstanding by:
 - ensuring that work is consistently matched to pupils' learning needs
 - removing inconsistencies in the quality of teaching by making sure that that all lessons are conducted at a brisk pace
 - improve pupils' skills in applying and using their mathematics knowledge in practical applications.
- Strengthen the role of the governing body in the checking of provision and pupils' progress and attainment.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

On entry to Year 1, pupils' skills and abilities in reading and writing skills are below expectations. Pupils achieve well in all year groups, and their enjoyment of learning is clear in all classes. They are eager to be involved and they particularly enjoy working together in the many opportunities for collaboration that teachers provide. This enhances their speaking and listening and social skills. Pupils show good levels of independence and self-organisation. This was evident in an outstanding Year 6 literacy lesson when the learning challenge was to identify the recurring themes of the work of the author Michael Morpurgo. Pupils thoroughly enjoyed working together to develop a 'mind map' from the summaries provided of his novels. Others used laptop computers well to find his website and these pupils contributed well to the group's findings. Pupils are highly supportive of each other and show pride in completing the tasks and getting them right. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress as well as their classmates because provision for them is well-founded and they receive good support from learning support staff.

Although attainment over the past three years is average overall, it is on an upward trend with standards in English moving from above average to exceptionally high and for mathematics to slightly above average levels. Pupils' use of investigative skills in mathematics is not fully established. Pupils achieve well in ICT. Although their skills were weak at the time of the previous inspection, these have been strengthened because both resources and also teachers' planning to make use of ICT in many subjects, has significantly increased opportunity.

Pupils say that they enjoy school and respect and responsibility to each other is at the heart of the school's values. This leads to the pupils' outstanding behaviour and also the support that they show for each other. For example, even though the playground space is currently very limited due to building works, pupils play well and thoughtfully and older pupils delight in looking after younger ones. This included a number of older pupils playing games or reading to younger pupils. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are happy, confident and willing take on responsibility including acting as monitors or being members of the influential school council. They have a good

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understanding of the need to conduct a healthy lifestyle. All these qualities contribute to the harmonious school community.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Consistently good, and occasionally outstanding teaching, is at the core of the pupils improved progress and achievement. Teachers plan lessons well and they generally provide interesting and motivating activities. New arrangements for the teaching of letters and sounds in the lower part of the school are well founded and are paying dividends in strengthening progress in this area. Teachers are skilled at making learning meaningful by linking activities across subjects. For example, in a good quality Year 4 lesson, the teacher cleverly linked the literacy target of retrieving information from a newspaper article to the current history topic relating to the Tudors. He supplied a newspaper 'The Tudor Times', and pupils enjoyed extracting information that would support their own journalistic writing. Occasionally, teaching does not extend pupils' learning fully and time is not used well.

Curricular provision has been strengthened since the previous inspection. It is constructed well to provide a good balance between basic skills in literacy and numeracy and the development of pupils' performance and creative skills in subjects such as drama, music and art. The headteacher's musical talents have enriched learning and have also led to national recognition when school drummers performed in a concert hall in London.

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Provision in the arts is recognised through the school gaining the Artsmark award. Pupils' experiences are further enriched by the numerous trips and extra curricular activities and by a well-planned programme for personal, social and health education.

Outstanding attention is given to all aspects of care, guidance and support. Adults place the pupils' well-being at the centre of their work and they do all that they can to make the school a happy and safe place to learn. The breakfast club, which is of excellent quality, provides an outstanding start to the day and provides a further opportunity for older and younger pupils to enjoy learning and playing together.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership and management of the headteacher are highly effective. Together with senior leaders, she has been successful in embedding ambition and driving improvement. Staff morale is high and the whole staff team have developed a common approach to helping pupils thrive socially and to make good progress in learning. Revised systems to track pupils' progress are used well to spot any pupils in danger of slipping behind and also to hold teachers to account for their pupils' progress. There is a clear path for improvement based on accurate and thorough self-evaluation and by embedding initiatives. These are making a positive difference to pupils' achievements. In this way, the school promotes equality for all pupils well, and no discrimination on any grounds is tolerated.

The school is a cohesive community and there is a positive and inclusive atmosphere in which pupils' differences are celebrated and the variety of cultures in the world are studied and respected. There are close links with Holy Cross church. Pupils worked with the local community when developing their school travel plan and campaigned with a local councillor to promote the need for a crossing in the village. Older pupils enjoy the many opportunities to visit a mosque, synagogue and Hindu temple and this broadens their perspective. Links are in the process of being established with a school in Namibia and also Ghana though the school recognises that there is more to be done in this area.

Even though the governing body is not yet in a position to provide effective challenge for the school to improve. This means that they do not have a thorough understanding of pupils' attainment in all year groups. Governors are deeply committed to supporting the school and ensuring that statutory regulations are met. Keeping children safe has a very high priority and the governing body ensures that safeguarding procedures and staff vetting arrangements are of good quality.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

There has been a marked improvement in provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Close liaison with the pre-school that shares the school's site ensures that children are helped to settle quickly and well when they start school. The excellent arrangements to support the children's welfare mirror the strengths in the rest of the school. This ensures that the children make rapid progress in their personal, social and emotional skills. Even so, because children enter the school with skills and abilities lower than those expected, only a minority attain the expected goals. In the past, progress in reading and writing has been particularly slow, but the arrangements for teaching sounds and letters are having a positive benefit on the children's achievements.

Both the indoor and outdoor space is very well organised to enable children to make good gains in their learning across all the required areas. Although the outdoor space is limited, it is organised exceptionally well and the rich range of resources enable children to make choices for themselves and they thoroughly enjoy the many good learning and play opportunities provided. Assessments are accurate and thorough though the 'learning journey' documents could be enhanced by children and parents making more contributions. In addition, although observations of children's learning and play are thorough and comprehensive, more extended observations would enable staff to pinpoint future learning needs even more accurately. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed well even though the leader is new to the age group. The staff work closely as a team to the benefit of the children.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A particularly high proportion of parents and carers responded to the opportunity to complete the questionnaire. Parents and carers were unanimous in saying that the school keeps their children safe and helps them to have a healthy lifestyle. Overall, the very large majority said that they were happy with their children's experience at the school and most said that their children enjoy school. A few parents and carers expressed concern about the effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school. This was investigated as part of the inspection and leadership and management were found to be good and that of the headteacher particularly effective. A few comments were made about the headteacher leaving the school after three years in post. These parents and carers, recognising the headteacher's talents, were concerned about the effect that this may have on the continuity of the school's provision. Some parents and carers were concerned about the way in which the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. This too was investigated and the school's systems were found to be outstanding and led to the excellence of the pupils' behaviour. Finally, concern was also raised by a few about the school taking account of suggestions and concerns. The school's systems for managing these processes are in line with those found in most schools.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Holy Cross Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 126 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 183 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	81	64	38	30	7	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	84	67	42	33	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	55	44	61	48	8	6	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	52	41	62	49	12	10	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	60	48	60	48	5	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	58	46	53	42	13	10	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	56	44	69	55	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	50	40	66	52	3	2	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	61	48	58	46	5	4	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	47	37	62	49	12	10	3	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	39	31	68	54	14	11	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	55	44	48	38	16	13	4	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	71	56	50	40	5	4	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



16 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holy Cross Catholic Primary School, Coalville, LE67 5AT

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to inspect your school. This letter is to tell you what we found. Yours is a good school. Your teachers work hard to make lessons interesting and they plan lots of exciting activities for you to do. This helps you to make good progress in your learning. The youngest children settle very quickly in 4+ and they also do well. We can understand why these children are excited about moving into their new classroom along with Year 1 because they look really good! It will help the rest of you too, when the fences are taken down and you can have all your playground back!

You told us that your school is a very happy place and that the adults look after you really well. We agree with you and so do your parents and carers. We were very impressed about how well you get on together. Your behaviour is outstanding, you have a good understanding about being healthy and also you feel very safe in school. We think that your headteacher does an excellent job and she is greatly helped by all the staff. They are always checking on how well you are doing because they want you always to do as well as you can.

Even in a good school like yours there are things to improve. We have asked your headteacher and governors to make sure that all your lessons are as good as the best. To do this, we have asked that teachers make sure that they give you work that challenges all of you whether you find learning easy or hard, that they don't talk for too long in lesson introductions and also they provide you with even more chances to practise your good calculation skills by doing more practical mathematics. We have also asked that your governors find out more about how well you are doing by visiting your school instead of relying on your headteacher and teachers for information.

We really enjoyed our time in your school. Thank you for taking time to talk to us and watch your lessons. We hope that you continue to find your time in school enjoyable.

Yours sincerely

Keith Sadler

Lead inspector

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