

Holy Cross RC School

Basuto Road, London, SW6 4BL

Inspection dates 24–25 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Checks by leaders and governors on the quality of teaching and learning have not ensured that there is enough good or better teaching to enable pupils to make good progress, especially in Years 3 and 4.
- Some teachers do not set work that is at the right level or sufficiently demanding.
- Pupils do not always have enough time to get on with their own work because some teachers talk for too long in lessons.
- In some lessons the attitudes and behaviour of a few pupils can hinder their own learning and that of others.
- The curriculum does not encourage all pupils to have a love for learning.
- Senior and middle leaders do not have sufficient impact on securing a good rate of school improvement.
- The pace at which pupils with milder special educational needs (those supported through school action) become independent learners is not fast enough.

The school has the following strengths

- The inspirational leadership of the headteacher and the work resulting from the school improvement project have halted the dip in achievement and accelerated improvement throughout the school.
- The governing body has held the school to account and had a major impact in bringing about key improvements in challenging circumstances.
- Staff and senior leaders share the headteacher's vision for rapid improvement and are now working hard to achieve their goals.
- Attendance is high.
- Pupils feel safe and secure. They respect each other, know right from wrong and are polite and well mannered.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, 24 lessons or part-lessons were observed.
- Six joint observations of teaching and learning were conducted with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, members of the governing body, the local authority, staff and groups of pupils.
- The inspectors listened to pupils read.
- The inspectors spoke to six parents and took account of one letter and 32 responses to the online Parent View survey.
- The inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised pupils' work books and looked at school policies, including those relating to safeguarding and equality, minutes of meetings of the governing body and planning documents.
- The inspectors took account of the 16 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Barbara Atcheson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Peter Thrussell

Additional Inspector

Victoria Turner

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Holy Cross RC School is a larger-than-average-sized primary school.
- One third of all pupils come from a White British background, one third are from other White backgrounds and the remaining third are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for extra funding provided for looked after children, pupils eligible for free school meals (the pupil premium) is above the national average.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported through school action and those who are supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are below average.
- The school met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in 2013.
- The school runs a breakfast and after-school club for its pupils.
- There have been two headteachers in the last two years. The current headteacher took up post in September 2012 and is also the headteacher of another primary school, Holy Cross works in partnership with this and other schools.
- In 2009, in partnership with the French government, the school set up a bi-lingual provision on another site. Twenty eight of the 56 children admitted each year are English and the other 28 are admitted through a French independent school.
- During the inspection the school was undergoing major building work.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, particularly in Years 3 and 4, by making sure that all teachers:
 - use checks on learning to accurately identify pupils' starting points and track their progress
 - set work for pupils that is at the right level so neither too hard nor too easy, but leads to rapid progress for all groups of pupils, including pupils in the bi-lingual provision, pupils receiving pupil premium funding, those learning English as an additional language and the more and less able
 - do not talk for too long in lessons so as to give pupils more opportunities to work by themselves
 - keep a close watch on the learning and progress of all groups of pupils throughout a lesson and make regular checks on their learning
 - ensure pupils understand comments in the marking of their work and check improvements.
- Improve the attitudes and behaviour of some pupils by ensuring that the behaviour management policy and procedures relating to it are consistently applied.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - developing leadership at all levels to increase the part that senior and middle leaders play in improving the school's performance
 - planning individual action plans for each teacher to increase the proportion of good teaching
 - developing a curriculum which enthuses pupils and gives them a love of learning and curiosity about the world
 - keeping a close check on the progress of pupils, including those with special educational needs and others with particular needs, to ensure that they make good progress and quickly become independent learners.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because too few pupils make fast enough progress throughout their time at school.
- Pupils' standards at the end of Year 2 and 6 have been significantly above average since 2010. However, during a turbulent period in leadership in 2012, standards at the end of Year 6 dipped to the national average.
- The immediate implementation of a wealth of well-targeted extra support in 2013, together with good and outstanding teaching in Years 5 and 6, quickly closed any gaps in learning and ensured that all groups of pupils in these year groups made outstanding progress to reach standards that are once again significantly above the expected level. More able pupils also made outstanding progress to reach standards that were significantly above those expected.
- Good teaching at the end of each key stage ensures that progress is more rapid in these classes. However, in other classes, progress for all groups, including the more able, is much slower, particularly in Years 3 and 4.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes benefit from well-planned activities and make good progress. The school takes great care to ensure that the children in the bi-lingual provision have equal opportunities and achieve as well as the children in the main school.
- The school places the promotion of equality of opportunity at the heart of all its work. There is no discrimination. A major improvement is that all teachers are now held to account for pupils' achievement and pupils' progress is checked at regular meetings. If any pupil is seen to underperform, extra help is quickly arranged.
- The identification of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is becoming more accurate and an appropriate range of extra support ensures that most of these pupils make the same rate of progress as their peers. However, a close enough check is not kept on the progress of pupils who are supported through school action and their progress in becoming more independent learners is often slow.
- Pupils learning English as an additional language get an appropriate level of support and often make the same progress as others. However, key words are not always explained and this can slow their progress. Pupils from minority ethnic groups make similar progress to their classmates.
- Checks on pupils' progress show that, in some classes, pupils who benefit from the pupil premium funding have made slower progress than their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly in Years 3 and 4. However, by the end of Year 6 where the quality of teaching and extra support is good, these pupils are one term behind their classmates in reading and writing but make similar progress in mathematics.
- Good working relationships ensure a close watch is kept on the achievement of pupils in the bi-lingual provision. Here there are also some classes where pupils make rapid progress, but there are also some classes where progress is much slower and so achievement overall requires improvement.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it does not always promote good achievement.
- Pupils' learning is limited when pupils have to sit and listen to the teacher for too long as it then shortens the time they have to work by themselves and so become effective independent learners. Although pupils often appear to behave well when listening, their attention wanders.
- Pupils' progress slows when teachers become so engrossed in the work that they are doing with a particular group that they fail to keep a check on other groups and then pupils either struggle because they do not understand something or finish their work quickly because it was too easy.

- Most teachers use the new marking policy which encourages pupils to respond to their teacher's comments and to make the improvements required. However, pupils do not always understand what the teacher has written, and teachers do not always check improvements have been carried out.
- Where teaching is good the work is at right level of challenge for all groups and pupils enjoy making rapid progress. However, this is not always the case. Where teachers do not have an accurate view of the levels of pupils' learning, the work planned does not always meet their needs and ensure rapid progress.
- Good partnerships with parents in the Nursery and Reception classes ensure that important information is passed on to the school and this helps teachers to plan for children's learning. For example, a child on their second day in Nursery settled quickly to work because the teacher knew that they had a consuming interest in dinosaurs and had planned an interesting activity around this.
- Pupils make the best progress where teachers have high expectations, and the pace of learning is quick. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson on fractions, the teacher was not content with pupils supplying the answer, he pressed them to explain their working, asking searching questions which helped the pupils to think for themselves and rise to the challenge.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Behaviour in some lessons is not good enough. Although pupils usually have positive attitudes to their learning, when teaching is not demanding some pupils lose concentration and become restless, and at times this goes unchecked as the school's behaviour policy and procedures are not consistently applied.
- Each class has a different set of rules. Pupils say they like the use of a behaviour chart as they can see the improvement in behaviour.
- Pupils say lessons are boring when they are too easy and that when other pupils talk they lose concentration. They say that misbehaviour wastes time.
- Pupils do not always get enough opportunities to work independently and use their initiative because teachers often talk for too long and then pupils lose their concentration. However, where lessons are interesting and the pace of learning quick, behaviour is good.
- Playtime is harmonious and pupils say they feel safe in school. Attendance is high and pupils are polite, well mannered and respect adults and each other. A good example of this was seen in a lesson where although a pupil gave the wrong answer they were able to laugh at their error without feeling foolish.
- Pupils say that bullying does not exist. They know about the different sorts of bullying and are clear that adults would help them if they were worried.
- A large majority of those parents who responded to Parent View said that they would recommend the school to another parent. A very large majority said that the school dealt effectively with bullying, and that their children were happy and felt safe.
- Parents appreciate the benefits of the school's breakfast and after-school clubs and pupils enjoy the companionship and games.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because senior leaders and middle managers are only just beginning to undertake a more prominent role in school improvement. They now have a very clear idea of what is expected of them but have not yet had the time to translate that expectation into action.
- The management of teachers' performance has only just been brought in the last year. It is managed effectively. Reviews of performance tackle weaknesses and recognise and reward improvements in teaching.

- The curriculum does not encourage pupils to make links between subjects. There are some good opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, but the curriculum does not always excite or encourage a love of learning.
- Highly effective leadership by the headteacher in challenging circumstances has turned the school around. It has halted the dip in achievement, created stability and significantly improved the quality of education on offer.
- The headteacher's high expectations have increased the proportion of good teaching and ensured that all teachers are accountable for their pupils' progress. Staff recognise the amount of hard work that has been put in to make such a 'massive change for the better'. They say that her inspirational leadership has permeated the school. They recognise that there are still areas to develop, but they also recognise and appreciate the 'very real feeling of moving on'.
- A large majority of parents who responded to Parent View said that the school was well led and managed.
- The positive partnership with the headteacher's other school, together with well-targeted work carried out under the school improvement project, has ensured that teachers and leaders talk to each other. This has brought staff together, ensured a shared vision and a common approach which, in turn, has accelerated and secured a rapid rate of improvement.
- The school has planned carefully and spent the new primary sport funding wisely. It has ensured that every class, including those in the bi-lingual provision, has appropriate games and gymnastics provision each week and has secured sports pitches to play those games. Swimming lessons have ensured that most pupils leaving Year 4 are confident swimmers. Sports clubs are now more affordable and this has seen a 20% rise in the take up of these clubs.
- Teaching and learning are improving as a result of effective checks and a comprehensive programme of modelling, coaching and good-quality professional development. Visits to other schools provide valuable models of excellence. As a result, there is a growing proportion of good teaching within the school.
- The school has benefited from appropriate support from the local authority, particularly in relation to the development of newly qualified teachers.
- Safeguarding is at the heart of all that the school does. As building is taking place on the site, rigorous risk assessments have been carried out by specialists before pupils were allowed into the school and fire drills are carried out so that everyone is clear about procedures.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The members of the governing body have played a highly significant role in the strategic direction of the school. They quickly identified what needed to be done to secure improvement and against challenging circumstances, ensured that steps were taken to secure stability for the school. They have an accurate view of the school's performance, including the quality of teaching and how pupils' test results compare to those of other similar schools. They not only benefit from good-quality local authority training but have undertaken to see how other governing bodies operate in order to improve their skills. They realise that more work has to be done to increase the proportion of good and better teaching. They understand about the management of teachers' performance and how it must be used to improve the quality of teaching if pay rises are to be awarded. Governors are fully involved with setting targets for the school and have demonstrated that they hold it rigorously to account. They ensure that statutory duties such as safeguarding are met and that financial resources are managed well. They know that pupils known to be eligible for extra funding are beginning to close any gaps they may have in attainment because money allocated for this purpose is used appropriately.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	100345
Local authority	Hammersmith and Fulham
Inspection number	425598

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	411
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Seana Bengtsson
Headteacher	Kathleen Williams
Date of previous school inspection	8 October 2008
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