

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Stonesby Avenue, Leicester, Leicestershire LE2 6TY

Inspection dates

2–3 May 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Although leaders' actions are improving teaching and learning, teaching is not yet consistently good enough to ensure that all pupils make strong progress.
- There are inconsistencies in how well groups of pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, achieve.
- There is some variation in how well teachers pitch work to pupils' abilities and challenge the most able pupils.
- Pupils in Year 1 do not reach the expected standards in phonics.
- The new approaches to the teaching of reading are not yet leading to the systematic development of pupils' comprehension skills.
- In mathematics, the tasks that teachers set do not regularly enable pupils to deepen their understanding and demonstrate their reasoning.
- Subject leaders are not fully informed of pupils' progress and standards in their subjects.
- While much is being done by leaders to improve attendance, it remains below average.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher works determinedly to improve the school. She, together with senior leaders and governors, set clear priorities.
- Teaching is improving strongly because leaders ensure that staff receive good support to improve their work.
- Pupils' behaviour and personal development are good. Pupils say that they feel safe in school.
- Children in early years get off to a good start because of good teaching.
- The curriculum is enhanced well by trips and visitors, which pupils enjoy. It promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have strengthened links with parents and carers. There are varied ways for parents to be involved in their child's learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and accelerate pupils' progress in order to raise standards by ensuring that teachers consistently:
 - match work well to the range of ability in the class
 - have high expectations of the most able pupils
 - teach phonics effectively
 - adopt the school's approach to the teaching of reading and routinely develop pupils' understanding
 - enable lower-attaining pupils to build well upon what they already know in mathematics
 - encourage pupils of all abilities to demonstrate their mathematical reasoning.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - increasing pupils' overall attendance so that it is in line with that seen nationally
 - ensuring that subject leaders have a clear understanding of pupils' progress and standards.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- New leaders and governors have wasted no time in addressing the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. They have an action plan of main priorities and regularly measure their progress towards achieving them.
- Senior leaders' main priority is the improvement of teaching and pupils' achievement. They support the development of teachers' skills and frequently evaluate how well pupils are doing. They unite staff in understanding the school's aims. As a result, all work towards a common goal and teaching is improving strongly.
- The headteacher promotes a welcoming school environment where links with parents are strong. She makes good use of staff expertise and has re-organised classes to benefit pupils. She uses external advice well, including that provided by the local authority, to improve facilities and to develop teaching and learning.
- Since her appointment, the headteacher has introduced a new behaviour policy which is managed well by staff and understood by pupils. Leaders ensure that pupils receive the support they need to help them to behave well. As a result, pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning have improved since the previous inspection and are now good.
- New approaches to the teaching of reading, writing, mathematics and phonics are having a positive impact on pupils' progress. Leaders are developing greater consistency in the teaching of these subjects through the sharing of good practice and training for staff.
- Subject leaders know about the quality of teaching in their subjects and identify what needs to improve. They share good practice and give guidance to staff. Their roles are developing well, although they are not yet fully involved in analysing the progress pupils make in their subjects.
- Much is being done to improve pupils' attendance and punctuality. The number of pupils who stay away from school persistently is reducing due to the school's work with families. However, leaders recognise that improving attendance remains a main priority as, overall, it is below average.
- Leaders use additional funding they receive for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities to provide adult help and relevant resources. There are examples of some of these pupils making very good progress, although it varies from class to class.
- The pupil premium funding is used to improve the academic and personal achievement of eligible pupils. Spending on extra resources is speeding up pupils' progress in reading. However, not all disadvantaged pupils yet make the accelerated progress needed to reach the standards expected for their age.
- The curriculum is interesting. It widens pupils' experiences and promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils have time to reflect upon their learning. They acquire social and cultural understanding by learning about cultures, eras and places that are different from their own.
- Learning in lessons and during assemblies helps pupils to understand important British values, such as democracy and respect for others. Consequently, pupils are suitably

prepared for life in modern Britain.

Governance of the school

- Governance has improved since the previous inspection. Governors now work more effectively with school leaders to determine the strategic direction of the school.
- Governors have re-organised their committees and have a clear focus on improvement. They know how school leaders check on pupils' progress and how teachers are helped to improve. Governors analyse information about the progress of specific groups of pupils.
- Governors ask relevant questions to hold school leaders to account, including how the school's work is strengthening links with parents and improving pupils' attendance.
- Governors check areas of the curriculum and meet school leaders regularly. They gather the views of parents and pupils and check whether spending, for example to improve the teaching of reading, is effective.
- The governing body now ensures regular review of the impact of pupil premium spending on pupils' achievement. This better informs the governing body of the progress of disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have established new and effective ways to record any concerns they have over pupils' welfare. They ensure that staff are well informed and receive regular training to keep pupils safe.
- The vetting of adults who work with pupils is thorough and systems are well maintained. Governors check that the school's processes are fit for purpose and they review policies systematically.
- Leaders make sure that staff know how to report any child protection issues. Leaders have good relationships with parents and families and provide extra support for those who need it. Leaders readily seek advice and show perseverance in working with external agencies to reach the best outcomes for pupils.
- Learning in lessons and assemblies provides pupils with guidance on how to stay safe. Leaders make good use of outside visitors, such as the local police service and the NSPCC, to strengthen pupils' understanding of possible risks and safety issues, including those presented by extremism.
- The school's records show that bullying incidents are rare. Any occurrence of unacceptable behaviour or minor disputes between pupils, including any incidents of bullying, are recorded and followed up. There is regular anti-bullying and e-safety learning, including guidance for parents.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Although teaching is improving strongly, it is not yet leading to pupils' consistently strong progress.
- In some cases, work in writing and mathematics is not well enough matched to pupils' abilities. For some pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, the work is too hard; for some it is too easy. This slows pupils' learning and reduces the amount of progress they make.
- Sometimes, tasks in mathematics are not suitably pitched for pupils to master concepts securely and to consolidate their skills. There is variation in how well teachers expect pupils of all abilities to demonstrate their reasoning. The most able pupils sometimes work through activities they can easily do before they move on to more challenging work.
- There are inconsistencies in how well staff teach phonics. However, after some time of fluctuating standards in Year 1, the teaching of phonics is improving because teaching is becoming more consistent.
- The teaching of reading is improving well. Although there is still some variation between classes and groups of pupils, extra support is speeding up pupils' progress. There is an increased whole-school focus on developing pupils' comprehension skills and helping the most able pupils to reach their full potential.
- Pupils make the best progress when teaching is well matched to their ability. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 6 gathered information from a text. Lower-attaining pupils received extra adult help to explore their ideas. The most able pupils were challenged well to use evidence from their reading to answer questions. They expressed their ideas confidently and showed good understanding.
- Staff have positive relationships with pupils and manage behaviour well. They expect pupils to contribute. Teachers question pupils and build upon pupils' answers to extend learning. They provide useful written and verbal feedback to help pupils to understand how well they are doing and how to improve.
- Teachers motivate learning in varied ways and link subjects together well to make learning interesting. They make sure that pupils write for a range of purposes. They adopt new approaches introduced by leaders to stimulate writing and develop pupils' vocabulary in order to improve pupils' achievement in the subject.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. From the time they start school in early years, pupils develop well socially and play their part in the school community.
- Those whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable receive good support in their emotional and personal development. This builds pupils' confidence and enables them to become successful learners.
- Frequent physical education (PE) and games sessions keep pupils active and help them to see the importance of regular exercise. Leaders' effective use of the primary PE and

sport funding increases the number of otherwise reluctant pupils who engage in physical activity.

- Pupils say that they feel safe. They know about the different forms of bullying, including that presented by technology and social media. Pupils say that they use their 'think books' to write down any worries they may have, and they are confident that staff will help them to deal with any issues.
- Pupils say that they get on well together and newcomers feel welcomed. They understand the values of respect and tolerance and say that it is important 'to treat others as we like to be treated.' They know about democracy and fairness.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils know the school rules and sanctions because they are well promoted by staff. Pupils are keen to receive recognition for good behaviour and effort.
- Pupils are attentive in lessons. They listen to their teachers and contribute their ideas willingly. Pupils behave well with a range of adults, including when attending the breakfast and morning clubs. They engage readily in various playtime activities.
- Pupils are tolerant of those who find it difficult to behave well. Leaders and staff provide behaviour plans and suitable support for those pupils who need extra help in conforming with the school's expectations.
- Pupils spoken with during the inspection say that they enjoy school. They like the trips to outside locations and visitors who enhance their learning. Most are keen to attend. The school's work with families helps them to see the importance of good attendance for their children's achievement.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress as they move through the school is not rapid enough to ensure that they reach the standards expected for their age by the end of key stage 2.
- There is some variation in the progress made by different groups of pupils. In some instances, the achievement of boys and girls varies. Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds do not consistently make the accelerated progress needed to catch up with their peers and other pupils nationally.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make variable rates of progress. They make the best progress when extra adult support and resources are well matched to their capabilities.
- The standards pupils reach in phonics during Year 1 are below those expected. Leaders are helping teachers to build more strongly upon children's learning in early years. Consequently, phonics standards are on an upward trend.
- For the most able pupils, there is some variation in how well tasks build upon what they already know and can do. However, these pupils are now achieving better than previously because teachers are paying more attention to matching work well to their abilities.

- Leaders are improving the quality of teaching and the curriculum to help to reduce differences in performance. Although not yet consistent, there are signs that boys are making improved gains in reading and writing. They are inspired by the books available to read and the interesting subjects to write about.
- In mathematics, where girls previously did not achieve so highly, leaders are building girls' confidence in tackling their work. This is improving girls' progress in mathematics.
- Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are now making better progress than previously. Leaders' use of the pupil premium funding is leading to greater academic gains for these pupils, particularly in reading.
- Pupils currently in Year 6 are making stronger progress and are more suitably prepared for their learning in secondary school than previous Year 6 pupils. They are reaching higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

Early years provision

Good

- Early years provision is good because consistently good teaching ensures children's good progress in the Nursery and the Reception classes.
- Good leadership supports staff well. Leaders have improved resources and the learning environment. They ensure that information gathered about children's abilities and progress is accurate.
- Leaders frequently check on the progress that children make. They use any additional funding effectively to reduce differences in performance between groups of children. Leaders and staff establish good relationships with parents and pre-school settings.
- Staff provide practical tasks which interest children and develop their understanding. For example, during the inspection, children tried out various items to discover which float. Staff keep evidence of children's good progress across the areas of learning in well-maintained 'learning journeys'.
- Behaviour is good. Children know their teachers expect them to behave well and safely. Children choose activities for themselves and learn to take turns. They respond well to their teachers' praise and encouragement.
- Children come to school with starting points that are well below those typically expected for their age. Although they do not reach the expected levels by the end of early years, they achieve well in early reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- This, together with good gains in social development and communication skills, mean that they are ready for their learning in Year 1. Leaders are improving the transition to Year 1 to ensure that children's basic skills are built upon strongly.

School details

Unique reference number	120225
Local authority	Leicester
Inspection number	10047991

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	241
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr. David Rocks OP
Headteacher	Gail Neill
Telephone number	0116 283 3135
Website	www.holycross.leicester.sch.uk
Email address	office@holycross.leicester.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–20 May 2016

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are from White backgrounds.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average.
- The early years provision comprises a Nursery class, which children attend in the morning, and a Reception class, which children attend full time.
- The school offers a breakfast club and a morning club, which the governing body manages.
- In 2017, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced significant staff and

leadership changes, including in governance. The headteacher took up post as the substantive headteacher in February 2017.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in 13 lessons, six of which were seen jointly with senior leaders. In all, 12 members of staff were observed teaching.
- The inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work across the school. They spoke with pupils about their work during lessons and met with groups of pupils. They listened to pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 read.
- The inspectors held meetings with governors, school leaders and staff. An inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- There were too few responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, for inspectors to analyse. However, inspectors took account of written comments from parents and looked at a survey for parents carried out by the school. Inspectors also spoke with parents during the inspection.
- The inspectors scrutinised the school's systems and documentation relating to safeguarding. They reviewed information about pupils' attainment and progress, and about their attendance. The inspectors evaluated the school's improvement plan and evidence of its checks on the quality of teaching.

Inspection team

Viv McTiffen, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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