

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

URN: 105087

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Shrewsbury

07–08 July 2025

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

2

Catholic life and mission (p.3)

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission

2

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

2

Collective worship (p.7)

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

2

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

Compliance statement

- Ten percent of teaching time is dedicated to religious education. The school is implementing *The Vine and Branches* in Years 1, 2, 3 and 4 to deliver the new *Religious Education Directory*. Early Years Foundation Stage and upper Key Stage 2 continue to use *The Way, the Truth, and the Life*.
- The school fulfils its statutory duty to teach relationships, sex and health education and uses the *Life to the Full Plus* scheme. Personal, social, health and economic education is delivered through a Catholic lens.
- The school has responded fully to the areas for improvement from the previous inspection and is developing these to meet the demands of the new *Religious Education Directory* and *Prayer and Liturgy Directory*.

What the school does well

- Pastoral care ensures pupils' spiritual, emotional, and physical development is nurtured so that pupils develop a sense of worth and respect for themselves and others.
- The welcome and inclusivity of all pupils and their families in Holy Cross means pupils are happy learners.
- The pupils' engagement and behaviour in religious education lessons ensures that they make good progress.
- With support from the parish priest the Holy Cross community celebrates a variety of feasts and special occasions during year.
- During a time of transition, the leadership and vision of the acting headteacher, with support from the senior leaders, is enabling the school to develop without disruption to pupils or families.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop monitoring and self-evaluation procedures for Catholic life and mission, religious education and prayer and liturgy that are fully analysed, measure the impact of actions and identify the next steps to improve.
- Develop further the links with other local Catholic schools to ensure that moderation and assessment is in line with outstanding schools in the diocese for religious education and prayer and liturgy.
- Develop a policy for staff that clearly identifies how pupils' skills of planning and leading prayer are developed progressively when implementing the new *Prayer and Liturgy Directory*.

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

2

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

2

2

Pupils at Holy Cross are proud of their school and they know their mission statement is 'Loving and learning together in faith'. They can articulate clearly that they feel special because they 'learn a lot about God' and 'we have class worship'. Pupils also describe how 'we are all unique in our own way' and 'God is in my heart'. They understand that it is important to look after others, and they do this by fundraising for a variety of charities, such as a Lenten walk for Cafod, selling poppies for the Royal British Legion and baking cakes for Mary's Meals. They also support local charities. However, pupils do not readily make links between the principles of Catholic social teaching and the fundraising activities they undertake. Pupils have opportunities to gain experience about how they can look after the environment, for example Mini Vinnies make posters about turning off lights and not wasting water. A group of pupils with their dads, are making wooden bird boxes for the outdoor space that is being developed together with the family support officer. The school rules of 'Be Safe. Be Happy. Be Respectful', underpinned by the mission statement, ensure behaviour is good and pupils show respect to each other and to adults. The school cleaners value the help from pupils to keep their classrooms tidy.

Staff are committed to supporting activities which reflect the life and mission of the school. This is evident through the many activities provided for the pupils and their families. For example, the free breakfast club is open to all pupils; they give practical help with school uniforms; they provide opportunities in the nurture hub; the family liaison officer provides effective support to families and pupils. Visits are planned that enrich pupils' experiences such as retreat days and in this jubilee year a trip to Rome is organised for any Year 6 pupils wishing to go. Staff work hard to help all pupils and families feel included. Responses to parental questionnaires and comments from families arriving at school indicate that this effort is appreciated. The parish

priest is a regular visitor to school and pupils enjoy participating in Mass. The pastoral care for pupils and families is outstanding and the family support officer, together with staff, ensures all pupils learn in a safe and nurturing environment. Parents know they can approach any member of staff in confidence for advice. However, the school community does not reflect regularly on the mission of the school, although staff do understand the importance of 'Living and learning together in faith'.

Despite there being recent changes in the senior leadership team and governing board it is evident that school life has continued without disruption to pupils or families. This is because of the governors' and senior leaders' determination to continue to put the pupils and their families at the forefront of their resourcing and planning. They are all proud of their pupils and acknowledge the trust that their families put in them. Families are engaging more with school and pupil numbers have significantly increased in recent years. Governors ensure the budget supports the most vulnerable by prioritising adult support when needed, funding a full-time family liaison officer, as well as carefully targeting support for those in greatest need through pupil premium funding. Attendance at diocesan training is increasing ensuring that leaders are accessing support for new initiatives and diocesan policies. Governors participate in the evaluation of the Catholic life and mission of the school, but this is not yet embedded, and pupil voice is not always followed up by action.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

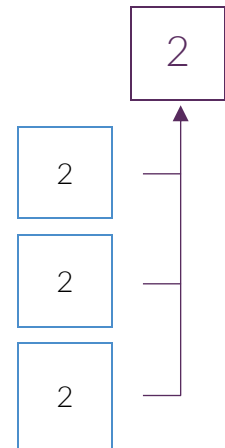
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education



Pupils are developing their knowledge in religious education lessons and make progress from their starting points. They make connections between what they learn in religious education and how they behave in everyday life. For example, the youngest pupils talk about saying ‘sorry if you hurt someone’ and older pupils explain following Jesus’ path ‘isn’t hard when God is by your side’. Pupils can speak about what they have learned, but they do not always confidently express their views, and they sometimes struggle to remember what they have learned. This is evident in lessons and in some pupil discussions. However, there are examples of pupils asking questions, which indicates they are curious and eager to learn. Pupils collaborate with partners and then produce independent responses to tasks. These tasks are teacher led so there is limited opportunity for creativity or independence. Pupils are engaged in lessons, and behaviour is good because the individual needs of pupils are well supported. Pupils enjoy their lessons but would like more variety of tasks. They know how to improve their work as teachers help them during lessons, and this contributes to the progress pupils make at Holy Cross.

Teachers have engaged positively with initiatives in religious education this year. They attend relevant diocesan courses to increase their confidence and subject knowledge when teaching *The Vine and the Branches* scheme. They are committed to providing lessons that ensure pupils make good progress in religious education and they value the support of the subject leader who guides them if they need more information. They demonstrate an understanding of the importance of religious education and convey this to pupils by ensuring work is well presented and completed. Teachers use a range of questions, but do not always expand on pupils’ responses to correct misconceptions or deepen understanding. The new feedback sheets are supporting planning, but the detail is not sufficiently focused on clarifying previous learning or identifying next steps. Teachers provide some opportunities for pupils to explore concepts in

more depth, however staff discussion and responses to questionnaires indicate there is little time in lessons for individuals to reflect on their own personal response to what they have learned.

Leaders ensure teachers have the skills to teach *The Vine and the Branches* scheme as directed by the diocese. Class teachers' attendance at diocesan courses is prioritised so that they now have a solid foundation on which to develop the curriculum and meet the demands of the new *Religious Education Directory*. The subject leader together with the other senior leaders is implementing a range of teaching and assessment strategies across all core subjects, which include ways to recap previous learning. There is evidence that these strategies are helping pupils to build on prior learning and, when used effectively, ensure progress and attainment continues to be good in religious education. The leadership team conduct self-evaluation activities each half term. These activities include lesson observations, the views of pupils, and book-looks. However, the analysis is not sufficiently focused to identify how to further improve teaching and learning in individual classes. The recently appointed governors are also involved in evaluating religious education, but this is not yet fully embedded. Governors and leaders now need to review the religious education policy to clearly identify the expectations for teaching and learning in Holy Cross. During a time of change in the leadership of the school all senior leaders and governors have worked successfully to ensure pupils continue to make progress and enjoy their religious education lessons.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

3

2

Pupils are respectful and respond well to the weekly opportunities for prayer in class and with the whole school. They enjoy participating in a variety of prayer and liturgy during the year. Pupils are invited to attend the regular Mass opportunities offered by the parish priest during Lent and Advent. Because of these planned times of worship pupils know they can pray in a variety of ways during the liturgical year. Pupils in older year groups undertake ministries at Mass such as reading scripture, writing and reading bidding prayers. Pupils enjoy these ministries and embrace the opportunities offered to them. In Year 5 and Year 6 pupils choose the scripture readings and use planning sheets to prepare for their class prayer. Most classes rely on one resource, which does limit creativity in some year groups. Pupils can talk about how prayer helps them in everyday life and one pupil expresses this as prayer 'feeding our hearts (which) helps our faith to grow'. The class prayer books are well presented, and they are an effective way of recording pupils' own prayers. However, opportunities for pupils to develop creative and spontaneous ways of praying is limited.

Teachers ensure there is a daily pattern of prayer with times for prayer and liturgy clearly identified on the timetable. Pupils and staff come together to celebrate significant feasts during the year when there are opportunities for pupils and staff to engage in the Catholic traditions of prayer. These include Advent trails, Stations of the Cross, and, to celebrate the jubilee year, special prayer stations. Pupils confidently talk about times they pray. Prayer bags are taken home during Advent by pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Appropriate scripture is chosen to help pupils understand the Church's liturgical year. Each week the whole school gathers for prayer, which is led by the acting headteacher. Individual classes participate in celebrations of the word using the Gospel of the week or the resource identified by the subject leader. This helps to build staff confidence when leading prayer in class. Teachers now need to

build on this confidence and extend the variety of ways in which they pray with pupils. Teachers in upper Key Stage 2 also provide opportunities for pupils to plan and lead prayer. There is a calm and reflective atmosphere in class for prayer and children in all year groups understand that this time is different from the rest of their curriculum time. Staff provide opportunities for families to pray with their children as they are invited to class assemblies and Masses.

The leadership team prioritise building staff confidence so that pupils continue to experience times of quiet prayer and reflection. The parish priest offers much appreciated support, and Mass is celebrated regularly during the year. Holy Cross joins with other Catholic schools in Merseyside, for example taking part in an Advent service at the Metropolitan Cathedral. This enables pupils to experience the awe and wonder of a large community praying together. Leaders ensure that prayer and liturgy is highlighted on the weekly timetable and resources are being built up so that that class prayer tables reflect different times of the liturgical year. Self-evaluation is carried out, however this is not embedded or effectively analysed. There is a prayer and liturgy policy, but it has limited impact on helping pupils to develop a variety of ways of praying, of planning, or on participating in prayer and liturgy. This policy needs to be reviewed to include guidance for staff about the progression of these skills and knowledge of formal prayers expected at Holy Cross.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Holy Cross Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	105087
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3443368
Full postal address of the school	Holy Cross Catholic Primary School, Gautby Road, Bidston, Birkenhead, CH41 7DU
School phone number	01516528454
Acting Headteacher	Paula Bras
Chair of governors	Madeleine Haines
School Website	www.holycross.wirral.sch.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	10/01/2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Susan Lyonette
Louise Conlon

Lead
Team

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement