



ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

INSPECTION REPORT

HOLY CROSS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

ST. HELEN'S

Inspection Date	1 st May 2018
Inspectors	Mrs Julie Rourke Mrs Angela Williams
Unique Reference Number	104804
Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Acts 2005 and 2011	

Type of School	Catholic Primary
Age range of pupils	3-11
Number on roll	180
Chair of Governors	Mrs T Butler
Headteacher	Mrs M Matthews
School address	Charles Street St Helens WA10 1LN
Telephone number	01744 678320
E-mail address	holycross@sthelens.org.uk
Date of last inspection	11 June 2013

Introduction

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Acts 2005 and 2011

The report of the inspection is produced for the Archbishop of Liverpool (Code of Canon Law 804 and 806) and for the governors of the school.

The inspectors are members of the Christian Education Department and their associates approved by the Archbishop of Liverpool for this purpose.

Information about this school

- Holy Cross school is a smaller than average sized Catholic Primary School situated in St. Helen's serving the parish of Holy Cross.
- There are 180 children on roll of whom 97 are baptised Catholic, 16 come from other Christian denominations and 16 from other faith or religious traditions. Fifty-one children have no religious affiliation.
- There are 9 teachers at the school, including the headteacher, of whom 6 are baptised Catholic. Eight teachers teach Religious Education and 7 have a suitable qualification in Religious Education.
- Since the last inspection a new Chair of Governors has been elected.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires Improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

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OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School is an outstanding school in providing Catholic Education.

CATHOLIC LIFE

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

- The extent to which the pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.
- Pupils at Holy Cross understand and know how to live out their mission, *'We care, we share, we value.'* The children have produced a photography display of their mission in action.
- Pupils show a respect for themselves and others as made in the image and likeness of God. The behaviour of pupils is exemplary, they are polite and well-mannered. In proportion to their years, they show an ability to listen, to give thanks, to forgive and be forgiven. They are also quick to congratulate and celebrate each other's achievements.
- Children are praised regularly through a variety of awards such as, lunch with the Headteacher, class rewards and a *'Helping Hands Trophy.'* They are consistently congratulated on values that they have shown.
- Pupils participate in opportunities provided by the school, such as a variety of after school clubs, attendance at the local Holocaust Memorial Day service and a visit from CAFOD to help children understand the plight of the refugees.
- Pupils enthusiastically embrace the demands that membership of a Catholic school, serving the community, entails. They accept their responsibilities and as a result, they become for example; reading buddies, prefects, school council members or head girl and head boy.
- Pupils enjoy promoting the Catholic Life and mission of the school in a variety of community events. The school choir has performed at a memorial event and the head boy and girl have worked with a local councillor for pupil well-being.
- They continually raise funds for a variety of causes. The schools' house teams; Faith, Hope, Charity and Peace, are linked to a variety of charities. These include Nugent, CAFOD, Willowbrook Hospice and Mission Together. Foodbank and MacMillan Cancer Care. Pupils are alert to the needs of others and seek justice for all within and beyond the school community.
- Pupils enthusiastically embrace a holistic approach to education, understand what it means to have a vocation and recognise the importance of using their gifts in the service of others. Children actively seek ways to ensure they fundraise for national charities but also know the needs of their own community.
- Pupils value and respect the Catholic tradition of the school and its links with the parish community. They are involved with the planning for May processions, class masses, Advent and Lenten services.
- Pupils respond well to the many opportunities the school provides for their personal support and development. School staff are trained in Rainbows counselling, which is having a huge impact for the children who need this support. Mindset Theory promotes weekly discussions of perseverance and resilience. There are parish contributions at Christmas for those families in need of support. The school is due to receive a bronze award from St. Helen's Young Carers.
- Pupils, appropriate to their age and capability are developing in their understanding of loving relationships and sexual development within the context of a Christian understanding. This is through the successful implementation of the Archdiocesan advised programme, *Journey in Love.*

- Pupils value and respect the Catholic tradition of the school and its links with the parish community and the Archdiocese. As a result, they respect and are involved with parish and diocesan celebrations and activities, irrespective of their own faith commitments. Pupils have attended celebrations at Christ the King Cathedral in Liverpool.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school

- The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.
- The schools' Mission Statement is a clear and inspiring expression of the educational mission of the Church. The whole school community fully embraces the clear aims and objectives of the mission.
- The school environment reflects its mission and identity through concrete and effective signs of the Catholic character of the school. There are a variety of vibrant displays as well as sacred areas for reflection. A *'golden table'* takes pride of place in the school hall at lunchtimes for pupils, rewarded for their behaviour. On the day of inspection, the children were excited and keen to earn a place at the table!
- Clear policies and structures are in place, which provide the highest levels of pastoral care to pupils, and there is a commitment to the most vulnerable and needy in both policy and practice.
- The school employs a Pastoral Manager, who provides support and care to pupils and their families. A variety of services are accessed to address children's needs, such as, Barnardo's, and Behaviour Improvement Team. The school has access to the Philippi Trust, a Christian counselling group. They also use the local Pupil Referral Unit, for specialised support with a view to re-integrating the pupils back into school.
- All staff promote high standards of behaviour and are exemplary role models of mutual respect and forgiveness for pupils. They provide outstanding opportunities for the spiritual and moral development of all pupils, particularly through the use of cross-curricular, Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development.
- The curriculum reflects a commitment to Catholic Social Teaching, to care for our common home and to the dignity of every human person. As well as continual support through the teachings of CAFOD, the school is an inclusive community. They have welcomed and supported refugee families, ensure access for those families of whom English is an additional language and have been awarded a *Meet Your Muslim Neighbour* award.
- There is a strong sense of community at all levels, evident in the high quality of relationships and the centrality of prayer. The school is a supportive and joyful community.
- The Parish Priest is new, and both the school and the parish are keen to form close relationships. This will ensure that school and parish are supporting families in the school community and promoting the Catholic Life of the school.
- Staff are offered opportunities for prayer through class worship and liturgical celebrations. One staff member commented, *'Both staff and children enjoy time to reflect and think about their relationship with God.'* The school is keen to develop further staff reflection, contemplation and spirituality throughout the school year.
- The Relationships and Sex Education programme, *Journey in Love*, has begun to be taught across the school. The school now needs to embed their recording in each year and identify how they are mapping it across the school.

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

- Leaders and governors are good with many outstanding features in promoting, monitoring and evaluating the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.
- Leaders and governors demonstrate a public commitment to the mission of the Church. They are well regarded as models of Catholic leadership by both staff and pupils.
- As leaders, the governing body is ambitious for the Catholic Life of the school and leads by example in the way it emphasises Catholic Life as a school improvement priority. This leads to planned improvements to further enhance the Catholic Life of the school.
- The school's mission statement is an excellent reflection of their daily practices. The school is keen to renew their mission with the whole school community. This will ensure that the aims and objectives are celebrated, revisited, keep the mission alive to be lived by all.
- The provision for the Catholic Life of the school is given priority by leaders. The schools' Self Evaluation Document contains good evidence throughout and has planned improvements to further enhance the Catholic Life of the school. The document is populated with 'real' events that reflect how they are achieving and is evaluated well.
- The school has strategies for engaging with parents/carers to the benefit of pupils, including those who might traditionally find working with the school difficult. As well as the wealth of pastoral support, the school's website has a wealth of information and newsletters reflect a variety of events.
- Parent questionnaires received show that the majority of parents are in full agreement of the Catholic values and welcome they receive at school.
- Continuous Professional Development focusing on the Catholic Life of the school occurs and is effective. Staff are involved in shaping and supporting it.
- The school responds well to Archdiocesan policies and initiatives and actively promotes them throughout the school, including, Archdiocesan subject leader Religious Education training, headteacher spirituality retreats and newly qualified teacher training and reflection.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

- The extent to which pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is good.
- Pupils, from their varied starting points, make good progress in each key stage.
- Pupils with special educational needs, are supported through careful planning for teaching assistants and support given to them in their work.
- Pupils, relative to their age and capacity, are religiously literate and engaged young people; they use their knowledge, understanding and skills, to reflect spiritually, and to think ethically and theologically.
- Pupils are actively engaged in lessons and are keen to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills, in order to further develop as competent learners.
- Pupils are interested and enthused in the variety of activities provided for them. Pupils respond well to opportunities which extend their learning.
- Pupils' attainment, as indicated by teacher assessment is good. Pupils achieve at least average attainment.
- The subject leader is keen to develop tracking of pupil progress and introduce Religious Education groups that will use data to inform planning.
- Formal assessments provide good evidence to the pupils' overall progress. They show good evidence needed for higher standards of attainment.

- The quality of pupils' current work, both in class and in written work, is good. Pupils workbooks celebrate their achievements. There is some evidence of developmental marking with the use of driver words. This good practice should be shared across the school to be consistent. This will enable pupils to benefit from challenges, know how well they are progressing and know how to keep improving.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education is good.
- Teachers plan good lessons, are confident in their subject expertise and have a good understanding of how pupils learn. As a consequence, pupils apply themselves well and make good progress in lessons and over time.
- Teachers are developing ways to include driver words to differentiate and challenge pupils. This will enable them to communicate high expectations for Religious Education.
- Teachers manage time well to secure good learning in lessons and across sequences of lessons.
- On the day of inspection, teachers planned a variety of creative activities to engage the pupils. Teachers employ a range of appropriate strategies, including individual and collaborative work.
- Teachers used excellent questioning during lessons to progress children's learning. Tasks and explanations were adapted to suit their learning needs. Driver words were used to show some differentiation and this practice now needs to be embedded and consistent across the school.
- The school would benefit from further Archdiocesan training to develop ways to further their use of the driver words that will support children's learning and progress.
- In one lesson observed, art work was used to depict Scripture. This captured the children's interest and the teacher skilfully led questioning and discussion, enabling pupils to not only further interpret Scripture, but link it to their own lives.
- Teaching assistants are carefully planned for to optimise learning for pupils. They show great understanding and consideration of the specific needs of pupils in their care.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education

- Leaders and governors are good in promoting, monitoring and evaluating the provision for Religious Education.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the Religious Education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference in every respect and in each key stage.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the required amount of curriculum time is given to Religious Education in each key stage. Leaders and governors would benefit from embedding the monitoring of Religious Education timetabling, reflecting quality teaching and learning time.
- Leaders and governors ensure that Religious Education is comparable to other core curriculum subjects, in terms of professional development, resourcing, staffing and accommodation.
- Any additional requirements and policies of the Archdiocese regarding the Religious Education curriculum are fully implemented.
- Leaders' and governors' self-evaluation of Religious Education is a good reflection of frequent assessment, tracking, monitoring, analysis and self-challenge which is informed by current best practice in Religious Education. This results in strategic action taken by the school which leads to at least good outcomes in Religious Education. Governors are fully aware of Religious Education standards.

- There is good evidence through monitoring that leaders and governors are ensuring that Religious Education is planned to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. Planning shows some differentiation using the driver words. This now needs to be consistent across all planning, teaching and learning to match the tracking of pupils' progress across the school.
- The curriculum leader for Religious Education has worked hard to ensure any new initiatives are in place and staff are supportive of those changes. She attends a local cluster group to share best practice. She understands her role and plans effectively. With continued support from leaders and governors, she is keen to seek the very best in all areas of Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship

- Pupils response to and participation in the school's Collective Worship is outstanding.
- Pupils act with reverence and are keen to participate in Collective Worship. They sing joyfully, reflect in silence and join in community prayer appropriately and with confidence.
- Pupils are involved in a variety of approaches to prayer which includes scripture, religious artefacts, liturgical music and other forms of prayer both traditional and contemporary. Pupils value and participate voluntarily in liturgy and prayer.
- Pupils regularly prepare and lead worship with confidence, enthusiasm and a degree of independence. They are thoughtful in their planning of liturgy. Other pupils are engaged by the worship opportunities planned by their peers.
- On the day of inspection, pupils gathered reverently to well-prepared, meaningful liturgies and in one worship observed, children led the liturgy with teacher support. The pupils were well prepared and confident in their approach to prayer. Both worships were creative and well resourced. There were appropriate moments for silent reflection.
- Older pupils gave heartfelt responses, writing down their thoughts. Younger pupils experienced awe and wonder through the focus and prayer environment created by the teacher. Go forth messages were clear and enabled the children to spread the message that they had heard.
- Pupils are keen to respond to Scripture and children are encouraged to participate in what they have heard. The heartfelt responses observed on the day of inspection gave children great opportunities to express themselves through worship without the need for teacher assessment. This outstanding practice allows all present in worship, to meet God where they are.
- There are a variety of opportunities throughout the school year for pupils to develop their understanding of the Church's liturgical year and its seasons and feasts.
- The experience of living and working in a faithful, praying community has a positive impact on the spiritual and moral development of the pupils, irrespective of ability or faith background.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

- The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is outstanding.
- Collective Worship is part of the life of the school and prayer is included in all school celebrations. Praying together is part of the daily experience for pupils and staff.
- Relevant staff understand the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts and ensure that pupils have a variety of experiences of the Church's liturgical life.

- Collective Worship has been given a high priority in terms of planning, evaluating and resourcing.
- Collective Worship has a purpose, message and direction. The themes chosen for worship reflect an outstanding understanding of the liturgical seasons and the Catholic character of the school.
- The headteacher has invited pupils to experience praying the Rosary. This had a great impact on the children. The children and the headteacher are keen to continue their understanding and wonder of the *Rosary* at various points in the year.
- The school is keen to model tolerance and respect for other faiths. They join with other faith and non-religious schools to celebrate Christmas. A lunch club is promoted through school, organised by the local Baptist church. The school also takes part in an annual Mother's Day card competition organised by a local group, '*Meet My Muslim Neighbour.*'
- Staff are skilled in helping pupils to plan and deliver quality worship when appropriate. On the day of inspection, there was an outstanding partnership shared between adults and children in leading worship. They have an outstanding understanding of the purpose of Collective Worship.

How well leaders, governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship

- Leaders and governors are outstanding in promoting, monitoring and evaluating the provision for Collective Worship.
- Leaders know how to provide clear policies and guidelines to plan and deliver quality Collective Worship. They lead Collective Worship within the school and are appropriate models of outstanding practice for staff and pupils. They promote pupils' planning and leading Collective Worship.
- They have an outstanding understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts and they are able to make these accessible to the pupils in a contemporary context.
- Leaders and governors are outstanding in promoting the provision for Collective Worship. They need now to ensure that monitoring and evaluating worship is embedded to support the outstanding practices across the school.
- Governors are informed of the Collective Worship policy guidelines. They are invited to and attend Collective Worship celebrations. Worship is central to the life of the school.
- Leaders offer regular professional development of staff, incorporating liturgical formation and the planning for Collective Worship along with many opportunities for staff prayer and worship.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- Continue to develop the Catholic Life of the school by:
 - Mapping and embedding the Relationships and Sex Education programme, *Journey in Love*.
- Continue to improve Religious Education standards by:
 - using tracking data to provide Religious Education groups to inform planning;
 - embedding the use of driver words to differentiate in planning, teaching and learning, and developmental marking.

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education	1
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CATHOLIC LIFE

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	1
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school	2

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education	2
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education	2

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	1
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship	1

Key to judgements: Grade 1 is Outstanding, Grade 2 Good, Grade 3 Requires Improvement and Grade 4 Inadequate