

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

URN: 104804

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Liverpool

26–27 February 2025

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

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

1

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

2

Compliance statement

- The school is fully compliant in relation to the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the Archbishop of Liverpool.
- The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection.

What the school does well

- The headteacher is an inspiring model of vocational Catholic leadership. Her example inspires the senior leadership and staff in the development of the Catholic life and mission of the school.
- Pupils behaviour is outstanding, both in lessons and around the school. They demonstrate kindness and respect to others in a school where everyone is welcomed and valued.
- Holy Cross embraces Catholic social teaching through active participation in contributing to living out the mission of this school and its community.
- All staff are committed to providing the highest level of pastoral care to pupils and their families within their community.
- The distinctive and cherished environment embodies the Catholicity of the school and values the human dignity of each member of the community.

What the school needs to improve

- To make use of moderation practices within the local cluster group, to further develop assessment procedures within Religious Education to secure better outcomes for Pupils.
- Extend the quality and presentation found in pupils religious education workbooks matches the high standards of floor books.
- Provide pupils with a wider range of opportunities to participate in the delivery of prayer and liturgy.

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

Provision

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

Leadership

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



Catholic social teaching is at the heart of Holy Cross. The school community works proactively in finding ways of responding to needs locally, nationally and globally. Pupils embrace Catholic social teaching through their active participation in contributing to living out the mission of the school. Pupils can clearly express an understanding that they are valued and cared for. They can also articulate a clear understanding and commitment to following the teachings and examples of Jesus. Pupils recognise the gospel message as their motivation to living their faith through action. Mini Vinnies take a leading role in finding ways to engage in charitable works, both locally and globally. Younger pupils look forward to taking part in the fund-raising activities. Pupils can explain confidently how they live out the school mission statement, 'We Care, We Share, We Value.' Pupils' behaviour is outstanding, both in lessons and around the school. They demonstrate kindness and respect to others in a school where everyone is welcomed and valued, including visitors. Pupils' manners are exemplary. They follow the positive lead given by staff in how they greet one another from first thing in the morning and throughout the day.

Throughout Holy Cross, there is a tangible expression of living out the mission statement. Staff work tirelessly in ensuring that every child and family is valued. There is a culture of welcome at this school, with Christ at the heart of every decision and action. The dedicated pastoral leader provides able guidance that ensures all staff are deeply committed in their delivery of the highest level of supportive care to pupils and their families. Staff are exemplary role models for all pupils. Through their relationships with each other and the love and care they show for pupils, bearing continuous witness to the school's Catholic life and mission. Staff go the extra mile to understand the needs of all pupils and families, both inside and outside of the classroom, and strive to meet these. Throughout the school environment there is an effective witness to the school's Catholic

identity, mission and charism. There is a mutual dynamic between the parish priest and the school. This is exemplified by how leaders and the parish priest are looking for even more ways to connect the school with the parish. The provision for relationship, sex and health education meets archdiocesan requirements and has successfully moved on from the previous inspection target.

The headteacher through her own example is an inspiring model of vocational Catholic leadership. Consequently, leaders and governors radiate the school's mission and are passionate about ensuring that the wellbeing of pupils and their families, is always at the centre of their supportive actions. Parents are overwhelmingly positive and appreciative of all that is offered by the school especially the rate of invitations received to participate in its events. School is skilful at finding ways to increase parental engagement, striving to always overcome barriers. Leaders and governors are pioneering witnesses to the Gospel and application of Catholic social teaching. The value of the human dignity of all members of the school community is paramount. Decisions are made with compassion and concern for others. Wellbeing is of the highest importance and staff report that Holy Cross is like an extended family, where a strong, supportive network is readily available. There is a small, active group of governors who are fully involved in the life of the school and ensure a very supportive role. The next step will be for governors to become more familiar with how the school evaluates itself and offer challenge when needed. New staff feel fully supported in their teaching and pastoral roles and actively participate in the Catholic life and mission of the school.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

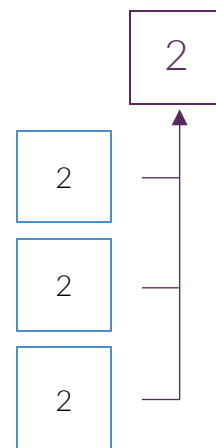
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 secure knowledge, understanding and skills that are a faithful expression of the Religious Education Directory. Classroom observations evidenced that pupils are religiously literate and can articulate their knowledge and understanding. Pupils can make links to prior learning and use appropriate subject-specific vocabulary to make connections between topics. Pupils can speak with confidence about what they have learned in Religious Education. From an early age, pupils show notable independence in their learning. They love the challenge of learning and are enthusiastic to share their ideas. Class floor books demonstrate work of a high quality and showcase creativity. These strengths should now be applied to individual religious education books. Most pupils can explain the marking policy and know how they can improve their work. However, the use of moderation practices, within the local cluster group, would further develop assessment procedures within religious education and lead to better outcomes for pupils. After scripture is read from the source, the Golden Box is used effectively to help pupils to retell the stories and provides a creative approach to learning. Pupils clearly demonstrated that they are learning more and remembering more through their ability to articulate the links they could see between pieces of scripture. In several classes there was a tangible sense of excitement when the items were revealed from the box, promoting strong engagement from the pupils.

During inspection the staff and pupil relationships demonstrated mutual respect. A safe learning environment was evident in that pupils and staff were very relaxed and therefore enabled to share their ideas with confidence. Most teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and pupils' methods of learning. Religious education is valued by all members of staff at Holy Cross, and this is effectively communicated to pupils. Lessons are carefully planned to ensure the needs of all pupils are met, particularly the adaptations made within lessons for those with special

educational needs and/or disabilities. Skilful questions are used effectively to adapt explanations, which are improving the learning opportunities for all pupils. Teachers give good explanations of key vocabulary which enables pupils to gain a full understanding of its meaning. Misconceptions that arise within lessons, are addressed so that pupils have a clear understanding about how to progress. Teachers celebrate pupil achievement, which in turn motivates pupils. The corridors and classrooms are filled with inspiring displays recognising how much the school values the pupils' contributions. Live marking is used to provide immediate feedback and enable pupils to make further progress. The effective deployment of teaching assistants is a strength within each class, supporting all pupils to achieve their full potential. All additional adults work hard to ensure that all pupils access their learning and achieve.

The progressive rollout of the new Religious Education Directory is successful and in line with archdiocesan recommendations. Religious education is valued as a core subject and has parity with other core subjects in terms of resourcing, timetabling and expectations. Leaders ensure that teaching staff have professional development opportunities, particularly in relation to the new Directory. The recently appointed religious education subject leader has a clear vision for teaching and learning and an increasing level of expertise in securing this vision. Together with the headteacher, she is committed to achieving the best outcomes in religious education. The school strives to enhance the curriculum with a range of enrichment activities that captivate pupils' interests and leads them to put their faith into action. The pupils benefit from a range of visitors including Cafod and can talk about how these influence their ideas. Self-assessment is guided by monitoring and evaluation. This would benefit from continued professional development for governors, to enable them to ask and answer searching questions.

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

2

2

Pupils respond well to prayer and liturgy provided by the school. They fully embrace the opportunity to reflect in silence. Pupils sing joyfully and often use sign language to make their times of prayer inclusive. Pupils understand and articulate different parts of the liturgical year. When invited pupils undertake ministerial roles in prayer and liturgy with reverence and respect, evidenced particularly by some of the youngest pupils carrying the cross and the Bible. Pupils reflect on their times of prayer and can fully explain how the themes from prayer and the scriptures are used to inspire their actions locally and globally. Prayer and liturgy is central to the life of Holy Cross. It is evident that gathering to pray is routine and that the daily pattern of prayer is embedded in every year group. During prayer and worship pupils were always reverent and responded well to periods for personal reflection.

Holy Cross offers pupils and adults a range of ways to pray within the Catholic tradition. Each classroom has an age-appropriate prayer book and prayer station. Pupils make good use of the prayer spaces and can explain why they use them: "We can go to the Prayer Spaces when we feel sad, when we are not feeling calm, when we are distressed, when we are angry, when we feel we need to pray. We ask the grown-ups if we can go there." Older pupils have written thoughtful prayers to mark the Year of Jubilee on the theme of unity. Careful consideration is given to the choice of scripture and is adapted for age and stage appropriateness, ensuring clear progression. This was evidenced in the weekly scripture chosen for the 'Virtue to live by' focus for prayer throughout the week. Early career teachers benefit from the opportunities to experience good practice by taking part in prayer and liturgy modelled by the senior leadership team. They receive support in planning and resourcing worship. Music is used appropriately to enhance the prayer experience. The imaginative and creative use of every prayer space is commendable. Attention and thought are given to maintaining these cherished spaces. The

commitment of parishioners maintains a well-established link with the school, which will be further strengthened by the connected vision of the school and the parish priest.

The existing policy for prayer and liturgy provides a firm basis for its ongoing development. Leaders understand the different levels and skills of participation to be further enhanced by inviting pupils to undertake ministerial roles within prayer and liturgy. Leaders and governors have planned the school calendar to celebrate key times in the liturgical year. Holy days of obligation are marked by well-planned whole school liturgies to which parents are also invited. Parents comment that they enjoy being invited to join the school for Mass and 'Learn and share' times, one saying that she enjoyed writing a prayer with her son. The school attends the celebration of Holy Mass, both in the school building and within church. The parish priest has plans for this to become more frequent in the future. Leaders have attended the launch of the Prayer and Liturgy Directory and have shared the outcomes with staff through twilights and staff meetings. Early career teachers have found this to be effective and supportive professional development. Priority is given to resourcing prayer and liturgy, thereby demonstrating its high importance to the school. Prayer and liturgy is reviewed as part of the school's self-evaluation and identified areas to improve are acted upon.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Holy Cross Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	104804
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3423404
Full postal address of the school	Holy Cross Catholic Primary School, Charles Street, St Helens, WA10 1LN
School phone number	01744 678319
Headteacher	Carol Gillespie
Chair of governors	Yvonne Allen
School Website	www.holycrossprimarysthelens.co.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	1 st May 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Deborah Albon
Anne Marie Webb

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