

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 is a smaller than average sized Catholic Primary School situated in St. Helens serving the parish of the same name.
- There are 176 children on roll of whom 127 are baptised Catholic, 18 come from other Christian denominations, and 4 from other faith or religious traditions. A further 27 have no religious affiliation.
- There are 10 teachers working in the school 9 of whom teach Religious Education. Six teachers have a suitable qualification in Religious Education. Six teachers are Catholic.
- The headteacher was in post at the last inspection. However, since September a new subject coordinator has led and managed Religious Education. There is a separate coordinator for Collective Worship. There has also been a considerable change in staff and governors.

Key for inspection grades

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

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Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school.

Overall effectiveness:

Holy Cross is an outstanding school in providing Catholic Education.

Inspection Judgements

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 know and understand the school's Mission Statement and understand the part they play within it. The motto 'We care, we share, we value' enables them to apply its philosophy to all areas of their school life. They are regularly involved in its evaluation.
- Pupils have an enormous sense of belonging to the school community and value and respect others. In turn they know they are respected and valued because of the developments that have taken place to make their school experience the best it can be.
- Pupils are encouraged to take on roles of responsibility in the school and wider community e.g. by becoming buddies, members of class and school councils, a head boy and girl have also been appointed.
- Pupils are actively involved in developing the Catholic character of the school e.g. leading and planning worship and assemblies, also house teams 'Faith, Hope, Charity and Peace' are linked to international, national and local charities.
- Pupils benefit from participation in reflection activities e.g. the Maundy Thursday Reconciliation, and 'Mary's Way of the Cross' reflections led by pupils. They also benefit from visits to places such as the Catholic Cathedral for the Advent service.
- Pupils have a good sense of right and wrong and apply this in their personal relationships. They take an increasing responsibility for themselves and their actions. This was evident on the day of inspection as children were able to give first hand examples during the 'Reconciliation' theme topics.
- Education for pastoral care and personal relationships has fostered positive attitudes in pupils.
- They praise and acknowledge the contribution of others. They show a readiness to embrace and celebrate their lived experiences. Weekly awards are presented to acknowledge this e.g. the 'Helping Hands' trophy.
- Pupils embrace opportunities to meet their potential in all aspects of school life. They are keen to offer suggestions! Visits to 'Kingswood' and London have been most successful and school is looking to venture further afield.
- Pupils are involved in service to the local faith and religious communities e.g. through Mission Together work, the immediate neighbourhood served by the school e.g. Willowbrook Hospice and the wider community, the work undertaken on behalf of CAFOD. They show respect and understanding of other faiths and religions and are most enthusiastic in their learning about other Religious traditions.

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

- Pupils' achievements and enjoyment in Religious Education is outstanding.
- Their attainment in Religious Education is good.

- They make outstanding progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities.
- On entry to school many children have an extremely limited knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith.
- There is no difference in performance between pupils of different gender.
- Outcomes for pupils with additional or special needs are outstanding. This is due to the attention given to the work they are given by teachers and the excellent support provided by teaching assistants. The Learning Mentor has a pivotal role in removing barriers to learning.
- Analysis of assessments has begun and provides evidence of pupils generally attaining appropriate level for their age and stage of development in each key stage. By the end of key Stage 2 a number of pupils exceed this.
- Pupils are becoming increasingly more religiously literate. Their knowledge, understanding and skills are developing appropriate to their age or capacity.
- They are developing the skills that enable them to reflect spiritually, think ethically and theologically and are becoming more aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. Work undertaken on the current Reconciliation topics provided clear evidence of this.
- Pupils' engagement in and enjoyment of their learning is generally outstanding as shown by their interest, enthusiasm and exceptionally good behaviour. They have fun in their lessons and many show a real excitement when working.
- Pupils are encouraged to work independently and collaboratively and do so with increasing confidence.
- Pupils are anxious to learn and improve their knowledge, understanding and skills as they become independent learners.

How well pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship

- Pupils' response to and participation in Collective Worship is outstanding.
- They show interest, respond well and actively participate in Collective Worship.
- They act with reverence and are keen to participate in a variety of gatherings
- Pupils' knowledge of prayer and liturgy is increasing.
- They become familiar with a variety of prayer styles. They appreciate and are open to the Word of God in the scriptures.
- They sing joyfully, reflect in silence beautifully and join in community prayers appropriately and with confidence.
- They are becoming increasingly more confident preparing and leading worship. Each class has been provided with cards from which the children can select ideas for the various parts of worship. The provision of a termly topic overview and different approaches to the topics will support this. Resources are becoming more available to develop this further from their earliest years. Children are invited to respond to the acts of worship and keep a log of comments made. This is good.

The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education

- The quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education is good.
- Some teaching and learning is outstanding. The excellent practice identified through the monitoring process should be shared to ensure greater consistency across the school and raise standards further.
- Teaching is consistently effective in ensuring that pupils are interested and engaged and make outstanding progress by the end of Key Stage 2.

- Teachers display good subject knowledge and deploy a range of teaching styles to motivate and inspire pupils. Some teachers would benefit from Archdiocesan training for *Come and See*. This would improve their confidence.
- Teaching encourages pupils' enjoyment of and enthusiasm of Religious Education because of the tasks they provide and the manner in which they deliver lessons.
- Teachers take into account pupils' prior learning and ensure differentiated tasks when planning so that the work consolidates, builds and extends their knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to work independently and collaboratively. Good use is made of time and resources including other adults and Information and Communication Technology to maximise learning. The parish priest is very willing to support the curriculum when needed.
- Using the 'driver words' during plenary sessions to draw together pupils learning, challenge their thinking and move them on and will support assessment further.
- Pupils are informed of their progress and how to improve through marking. They are given opportunities to discuss their work and how to improve. Effort and achievement are celebrated.
- The assessment of pupils work in Religious Education is good.
- The school has good and developing assessment strategies which provide accurate and detailed information on the achievement of all the pupils. These need to be firmly embedded. Moderation of work has been undertaken with a small cluster of schools to ensure accuracy and consistency. This has been one of the major developments since the last inspection. Tracking has been introduced and will be shared with governors and others to celebrate achievement and support further challenge.
- Teachers are able to identify how well pupils are achieving and tackle underachievement.
- Teachers enable pupils to evaluate their own work. It would be good to do this during plenary sessions to get a broad overview of who has met the learning objectives through a simple 'thumbs up/thumbs down', or 'traffic lights' routine.

The extent to which the Religious Education Curriculum promotes pupils' learning

- The extent to which the Religious Education Curriculum promotes pupils' learning is good.
- The curriculum is good and in some classes outstanding in meeting pupils' needs. This innovation and creativity in delivery should be shared to ensure greater consistency.
- The school using the *Come and See* programme recommended by the Archdiocese meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory for Religious Education. Appropriate levels of the programme are being followed in different classes. This ensures complete Religious Education entitlement for each child and meets National and Archdiocesan requirements.
- Of the total curriculum time 10% is allocated to Religious Education. This fulfils the requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales.
- Planning ensures full coverage of the Religious Education programme. Imaginative and well planned strategies are deployed to enrich pupils' learning.
- The school implements new curriculum developments as appropriate and has fully embraced the new *Come and See* programme.
- Enrichment activities such as use of film, power-point etc have a positive impact on the curriculum.

- The Religious Education curriculum provides outstanding opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral development and vocation. This was very evident on the day of inspection when the children were exploring different aspects of Reconciliation.
- The curriculum is customised to meet the needs of groups and individuals.
- Children have explored the beliefs and values of other faiths and religions. This helps to promote tolerance and respect for those who think differently. The school plans to invite speakers from other religious traditions to support this work. Visits to places of worship for other religions would also enhance work in this area.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.

- The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is good. It reflects the Catholic character of the school and takes into account the variety of faith backgrounds among the pupils.
- Collective Worship has a high profile and is central to the life of the school.
- Collective Worship plays a key part in meeting the spiritual needs of the pupils. Opportunities are provided to enable full, active and conscious participation of the whole school community.
- Children are enabled to pray formally and informally using a variety of prayer methods and styles.
- The school has provided opportunities for staff to develop the skills in planning, leading and evaluating Collective Worship.
- The teachers provide the necessary resources and opportunities to help children to develop the skills necessary to plan, lead and participate in Collective Worship and to evaluate it effectively. These are developing. This will enable children from their earliest years to grow in confidence to plan and lead worship themselves.
- Opportunities are provided for parents, carers the local and wider faith communities to participate in a variety of celebrations of the *Come and See* programme and the Church's liturgical year. The parish priest who is also the governor for Religious Education attends worship and assemblies regularly. This is very much appreciated by staff and children.

How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.

- Leaders, governors and managers are outstanding in promoting monitoring and evaluating the provision for the Catholic life of the school and in the way they plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils. This is reflected in the school's own Mission Statement.
- Reviews of the Mission Statement have taken place. As the school has recently had a large turnover of staff and governors the headteacher has recognised that this would be a good time for all who form part of the school community including parents, clergy, governors and children to be involved in a major review of the Mission Statement. Its motto 'We care, we share, we value' directs and guide every aspect of school life and is a useful tool by which the school evaluates its effectiveness. A board showing mission in action is proof that the school lives out this motto. Further evidence is available on most displays and walls throughout the school.
- Leaders, governors and managers are becoming more proficient in the way they use monitoring data to evaluate the schools performance, celebrate, and plan future improvements.

- Outstanding opportunities are provided for the staff and pupils to play an active part in Catholic life and Mission of the school e.g. the whole school topic undertaken on 'Our Church, Our Faith'. They know, own and live out their Mission.
- The Self Evaluation Document provides evidence of the schools monitoring, searching analysis and self challenge.
- Their analysis provides a basis to celebrate the school's strengths and outlining areas for development. Constructive criticism is welcomed and acted on swiftly.
- The school provides good induction and in-service training to enable staff to further understand the Church's Mission in Education and play their unique part in it e.g. Newly qualified teachers attend Archdiocesan training days and other members of staff are keen to undertake the *Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies*. The quality of Collective Worship is a priority for the school. It is effectively monitored and evaluated by leaders, governors and managers and pupils. An up to date policy is in place.
- A range of opportunities for spiritual and moral developments are provided for staff and pupils such as senior leaders attending Archdiocesan Spirituality conferences to nurture their own spirituality and be enabled to pass this on to other staff and children.
- Leadership at all levels respects difference, values diversity and ensures equal opportunities for all.
- Prayer, worship and the liturgical life of the school reflects and respects the religious diversity within the school.
- There are positive relationships at every level within the school.
- Parents are consulted regularly through meetings and newsletters and involved in a variety of ways in the life of the school.
- There has been a significant change in governors. They are very willing to embrace their responsibilities. They have begun to effectively shape the direction of the school and are thoroughly committed to this.

How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Religious Education of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.

- Leaders, governors and managers are good in promoting monitoring and evaluating the provision for the Religious Education of the school and in the way they plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.
- Monitoring data is to be used effectively to evaluate the schools performance and plan for future improvements.
- Monitoring and evaluation is undertaken by the leadership team and subject leader.
- Teaching and learning is monitored regularly and appropriate feedback and support given as necessary. Good practice is shared and celebrated. This needs to be further developed to ensure all practices are embedded and outstanding practice is shared to ensure greater consistency throughout the school.
- Continuing professional development opportunities are provided for all.
- Assessment information has begun to be collated and tracked by the subject leader and shared with the leadership team. Governors are to be provided with this information before the end of term.
- Formal assessment tasks are undertaken in line with Archdiocesan guidance.
- The subject leader has been in post since September. She is outstanding in guiding Religious Education. She shows true commitment and has introduced new initiatives appropriately. Excellent documentation guides and directs all staff in the delivery of the subject. This will be updated as necessary.

- The Self Evaluation Document is rigorous in identifying targets, timescales and lines of accountability. A tremendous amount has been achieved in the short time since the last inspection and is testimony to the commitment of the leadership.
- Curriculum outlines are provided for parents who are consulted on different issues depending on the topic being covered.
- Achievement and effort are celebrated in a wide variety of ways and are a key part of the school's philosophy.

What the school needs to do to improve further?

Embed and consolidate the outstanding practices implemented since the last inspection throughout the school to ensure greater consistency by:

- sharing the elements of outstanding teaching and learning observed through monitoring with all staff;
- using the 'driver words' during plenary sessions to draw together pupil's learning, challenge their thinking and move them on;
- using the tracking information gleaned through the assessment process to report to governors in order to celebrate success and enable further challenge;
- providing a theme planner for Collective Worship;
- developing further the resources provided for all children from their earliest years in order that they grow in confidence when planning and leading Collective Worship.

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education	1
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OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils	
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	1
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	1
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	1

PROVISION

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education	
The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education	2
The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning	2
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	2

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How effective leaders, governors and managers are in developing the Catholic Life of the School	
How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
How well leaders, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	2

Key to judgements: Grade 1 is outstanding, Grade 2 good, Grade 3 requires improvement and Grade 4 inadequate