



# Holy Cross Catholic Primary Academy

URN: 136967

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Brentwood

14–15 February 2024

## 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

1

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

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

Fully

2

## What the school does well

- The school mission statement is well known and lived out by the whole community
- Pupils have many opportunities to put their knowledge and understanding of Catholic social teaching to practical use
- The school gives all pupils the opportunity to contribute to the Common Good.
- The school promotes a strong prayer life which is embraced by all
- There is a strong emphasis on inclusion in all aspects of school life; no one is left out

## What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that all lessons are planned with high expectations for all pupils, especially those capable of achieving greater depth
- To continue to develop the outside areas as a resource for prayer and reflection

## 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

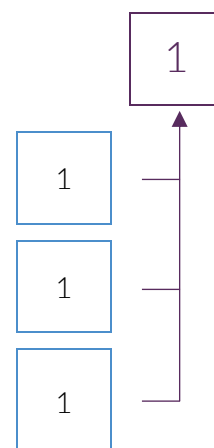
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### 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



The school teaches a “golden thread” of Gospel values through its acts of worship and class lessons alongside a recently added “silver thread” which explores Catholic social teaching. Pupils of all ages can talk about these with confidence and say how they are living them out in their lives. They take on the opportunity to develop these teachings through the many groups such as Minne-Vinnies, Laudato Si’ eco-group, Cafod Club and gardening club which all aim to make their local environment and the world beyond a better place in which to live. They are clear about why they are called to carry out this work. The pupils feel happy and secure in school, and this is reflected in their behaviour towards each other, in lessons and during times of prayer. They are supported by nurturing staff. The chaplaincy team is made up of pupils from Year 1 upwards and all of them can explain the role they play in helping to set the tone for the Catholic life of the school and are very proud of it.

The school mission is prominent around the school and visible in each classroom. It is known by the community, and it is regarded as a badge of pride to be seen to be living it out. Staff are excellent role models for pupils in this and pastoral care is of a very high standard. One parent commented, “My children's spiritual and moral development is at the heart of everything they do at Holy Cross,” and another, “The children are like a family, all responsible for the happiness and wellbeing of each other”. The importance of the mission statement, the Gospel values and Catholic social teaching are shown in the high-quality displays drawing attention to them around the school, alongside details about the work done by the various pupil groups. Outdoor spaces are used well to provide places of prayer and reflection, and the allotments, kept up by the gardening club, remind the children that they are stewards of creation. There is no mistaking that this is a Catholic school from the moment you enter it. A member of staff commented, “I

have been blown away by ... the incredible, good-natured children who have been educated and nurtured with Gospel values, Catholic ethos and spiritual prayer." Provision for relationships, sex and health education meets the statutory requirements.

Leaders and governors, including the parish priest and the parish deacon, work closely together to promote the Catholic life of the school. They ensure that, in the words of another parent, "Children and faith are at the centre of the school." Governors are frequent and welcome visitors to the school. The school and parish work together seamlessly to ensure that they are seen to be extensions of the same provision to learn about the teachings of the church. Parents are highly supportive of the school, with a large number completing the online survey. Many expressed their gratitude for the work done by the school to support and nurture their children and they enjoy participating in school worship and the at-home opportunities, such as the travelling class prayer bag, which deepen their understanding of what the school is teaching. Leaders at all levels model the behaviours, moral values and understanding of Catholic teaching which makes the Catholic life of this school so strong. A member of staff commented, "Everything we do is embedded in our Catholic values."

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

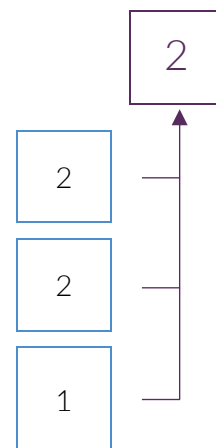
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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 enjoy their religious education lessons and participate well in them. Planning from the school scheme of work is supplemented by teaching on the Gospel values and Catholic social teaching and this helps pupils to think ethically about what they are learning and begin to apply it to their lives. Progress in religious education is recorded by topic across the year and data over the last two years shows that achievement is improving. The support provided for pupils with special education needs/disabilities means that they are able to access learning in religious education well. Pupils capable of higher attainment are sometimes held back by tasks which are not designed to help them fully explore their learning or engage in discussion about their thinking. Marking and feedback helps the pupils understand what they have achieved. In order to help pupils make connections between the learning in different topics, it should be more explicit about the skills they have acquired and how these can help them to improve. Presentation in the books of all pupils from the youngest to the oldest is of a high standard, showing the importance given to the subject.

Teaching in religious education shows a good awareness of the needs of the individual pupils and is adapted very well for those with special education needs/disabilities where scaffolded resources and adult support means that all pupils are included in the full lesson. All staff are well prepared to deliver the lessons and show confidence in what they are teaching. Teachers use questioning to check the understanding of pupils, especially at the start of a lesson. They do not consistently use this to extend the learning of the more able pupils who may have already demonstrated good understanding. Feedback and marking are detailed across all year groups, and pupils say that they are confident that they know how well they have achieved; they are less clear about how what they have learned will help them progress in their future work. Religious education lessons show a great variety; pupils are invited to use drama and IT, and to respond

to art and music. They greatly enjoyed seeing video of their parish priest as they learned about different parts of the Mass. There is time for quiet reflection during lessons and links are made to Gospel values and Catholic social teaching.

Leaders and governors have worked hard to ensure that religious education is taught well across the school. It is well resourced with many Bibles and books of religious stories available at age-appropriate levels. It is given prominence across all other subjects. There has been an emphasis given to the quality of professional development provided for staff in order to equip them to deliver high quality religious education. Several members of staff are currently being supported through the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies to increase their subject knowledge. The school scheme of work has been supplemented with work on Gospel values and Catholic social teaching, which provides greater breadth to what the pupils are learning. Monitoring and evaluation is used to analyse standards and progress in religious education and capacity to make this even more effective has been made possible by the appointment of a new deputy head teacher after a period without one. Governors play an important part in monitoring standards; two governors are teachers of religious education at the local Catholic secondary school and they offer subject-specific support where necessary. All leaders are focused on making the teaching of religious education an area of strength for the school.

## 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

1

#### Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

1

#### Leadership

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

1

1



The school provides opportunities for all pupils to plan and take part in collective worship. Led by examples given to them by the chaplaincy team, pupils are able to lead their own classes in prayer confidently and reverently. As they progress through the school, they are increasingly able to evaluate the quality of the worship they lead. Pupils of all ages are able to use the traditional language and forms of prayer, whilst making it unique to their situation. Children in reception not only used the outdoor church set up for them to role-play the Sacrament of Baptism, but also spontaneously knelt down and prayed in the class prayer area. One group offered prayers for a sick class member during their class collective worship and an older pupil was confident enough to finish a meeting with the inspectors with an extemporised prayer. Throughout prayer sessions, whether they are pauses for reflection during a lesson, part of a class liturgy or a whole school event in the Church, pupils display excellent behaviour, respect for each other and lovely singing. All pupils participate fully in the prayer life of the school, even those who are not from Catholic families.

Prayer is a natural part of the lives of the pupils at the school. One parent commented that their child, "...will often find time for prayer and reflection at home which is something that she hasn't done in the past." There is a good mix of traditional Catholic prayers and liturgies and opportunities for pupils to experience these at their own level. A parent sums up the joined-up work of the school and parish when they say, "my child has learnt to pray every day and is very interested in doing his sacraments in church." The school is very fortunate to have a parish priest who is a regular visitor to the school and is able to support the pupils in their school prayers and more formally in the church. Great care has been taken to make sure that pupils are surrounded by prompts; the Gospel values and Catholic social teaching are displayed prominently around

the school and are matched with suitable quotations from scripture. The school is looking to develop links with other deanery schools to share their excellent practice in this area.

School leaders and governors place great importance on the prayer and liturgy experience of the pupils in the school and make sure that they monitor and evaluate it regularly. They ensure that all staff have access to training to help them lead their pupils in prayer with authority. There is a good system in place to support new staff and non-Catholic staff by “buddying” them with a more experienced member of staff who will help them. Use is made of the diocesan resources to provide this training, alongside the training which the school leaders are able to provide themselves. It is clear from the artefacts and displays around the school, as well as the outside areas provided for prayer and reflection, that the provision for prayer and liturgy is of the utmost importance to school leaders. Parents appreciate being able to join their children at assemblies and Mass in the church, which they say has also improved their own prayer practice. One sums up by saying, “The links between the parish and the school community are strong. We enjoy taking part in the children’s collective worship and assemblies. Holy Cross is a family where staff, pupils and families have a special bond.”

## Information about the school

Full name of school	Holy Cross Catholic Primary Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	136967
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8815278
Full postal address of the school	Holy Cross Catholic Primary School, Tracyses Road, Southern Way, Harlow, CM18 6JJ
School phone number	01279424452
Headteacher	Alison Kerrell
Chair of Trustees	Anthony Rowley
School Website	<a href="http://www.holycross-pri.essex.sch.uk/">www.holycross-pri.essex.sch.uk/</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Holy Cross Catholic Primary Academy
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-Selective
Age-range of pupils	5-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	4 <sup>th</sup> July 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

## The inspection team

Catherine McMahon  
Christine Curtis

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