



Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

URN: 146296

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Brentwood

04–05 June 2026

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

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

Compliance statement

- The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' conference.
- The school is fully compliant with the additional requirements of the diocesan Bishop.
- All areas for improvement outlined in the previous inspection have been addressed in full.

What the school does well

- The school is deeply inclusive, embracing every child as a unique individual created in the image of God, ensuring that all pupils are valued, supported and enabled to flourish within a caring and nurturing community.
- Engagement with families is strong, and parents have a great appreciation of the way Holy Cross fosters faith within its thriving community; they know that their children are cared for.
- All members of the school community actively live out the mission statement, with staff acting as excellent role models in promoting the Catholic life and mission of the school.
- Pupils demonstrate strong religious education knowledge and engage deeply with their learning.
- Pupils engage thoughtfully with and are active participants in the wide variety of opportunities for prayer and liturgy across the school.

What the school needs to improve

- To provide more opportunities for pupils to take on meaningful leadership roles, enabling them to initiate, shape and evaluate activities that promote the school's mission and wider service to others.
- Teachers should ensure that learning activities provide an appropriate level of challenge for all pupils and that feedback is more targeted and purposeful, enabling pupils to deepen their understanding and make stronger progress in their learning.
- To strengthen staff expertise in supporting high-quality, pupil-led prayer and liturgy through targeted training, coaching and the sharing of best practice.

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

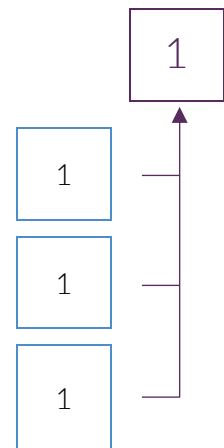
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



Pupils wholeheartedly embody the school's mission statement, knowing it by heart and weaving it into the fabric of their daily lives. As one pupil beautifully articulated, "It is like building a bridge together — helping people cross together with God." Faith here is both active and deeply personal; pupils confidently recognise themselves as children of God and take immense pride in their relationship with Him. Feeling safe, happy, and profoundly valued, they eagerly step into the opportunities provided to them. They take their responsibilities seriously, particularly within high-profile leadership roles like the Faith Council and the Catholic Social Teaching Team. To deepen this impact, the next step is for pupils to transition from active participants into true mission leaders, designing their own evaluation tools to help drive school improvement. Pupils speak passionately about the tangible difference they make to local, national, and global communities, demonstrating a well-developed theological understanding of their duty to help others. Their charitable outreach is exemplary, spanning from local initiatives such as the Thurrock foodbank and Little Havens Children's Hospice to global fundraising for Cafod. Catholic Social Teaching is not just taught; it is embedded across the school and wider community. Pupils truly understand the reasoning behind these core principles, as captured by a pupil who noted, 'It helps us to be one step behind Jesus.'

The school's mission statement serves as a constant reminder to all staff that they are Christian role models, embracing a lived sense of community while offering and celebrating a remarkable culture of inclusivity. Staff contribute enthusiastically to the school's vision and collaborate seamlessly, ensuring every pupil is treated with dignity and educated as a whole person destined for a unique vocation. Relationships across the school are excellent, sustaining a nurturing climate where all are cherished. Partnerships with parents are exceptionally strong, characterised by proactive engagement strategies. Parents champion this collaborative approach, describing the school as 'a community that builds lasting friendships, where staff are always prepared to go the extra mile.' Pastoral care is a standout strength; families have absolute

confidence that staff are always available to listen and support. This enriching, sacred environment is visually evident in dedicated prayer spaces, the school chapel, and reflective displays. The mission statement and school values board in the hall clearly announce its witness to the character of the school. Furthermore, the relationships, sex, and health education curriculum is robust, meticulously planned in line with statutory and diocesan guidelines, and fully faithful to the teachings of the Church.

Leaders and governors successfully articulate a vision that ensures Christ remains firmly at the heart of the school so that all pupils are central to the work that the school does. The headteacher leads by example with a profound, widely recognised commitment to the community. The governing body is highly visible, actively participating in the school's Catholic life and maintaining a sharp, accurate understanding of its strengths through regular visits. Every policy, procedure, and curricular choice explicitly prioritises the school's distinct Catholic identity, charism and mission. Supported by strong diocesan links, leaders prioritise ongoing professional development and collaborate closely with other schools in the Christus Catholic Trust to benchmark and elevate provision. This is mirrored by a flourishing parish partnership, with the parish priest providing regular spiritual guidance for both staff and pupils. Notably, staff feel exceptionally well supported and cared for, both personally and professionally, by leaders. As the school's evaluative processes are becoming increasingly rigorous and self-challenging, leaders now need to be well positioned to weave pupil voice systematically into future school improvement plans.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

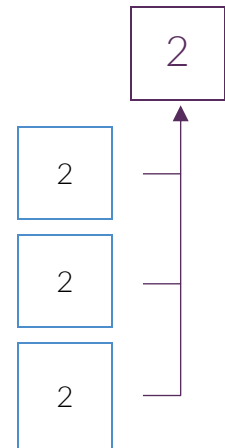
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 at Holy Cross Catholic Primary School thoroughly enjoy religious education, viewing it as a distinct and special subject. Consequently, pupil knowledge is strong, closely aligning with the requirements of the *Religious Education Directory*. Over time, pupils make secure progress, maintaining attainment levels that run parallel to other core subjects. Pupils are highly engaged and articulate; they eagerly answer questions and confidently suggest ideas. This was demonstrated when a pupil in Key Stage 1, exploring the significance of the cross, shared: ‘It meant that God loves us because Jesus died for us to save us from our sins.’ Similarly, during a debate on whether St Paul belonged in a ‘Hall of Fame’, a pupil from lower Key Stage 2 noted: ‘He could have decided to stay where he was, but chose to travel and tell people about Jesus.’ Pupils accurately employ age-appropriate religious vocabulary and take pride in their work, presenting both individual and communal floor books to a high standard. They transition smoothly between independent tasks and collaborative work, effectively supporting one another’s grasp of key concepts. To refine and further develop this practice, leaders should address variations in marking; currently, feedback does not consistently challenge pupils’ understanding, leaving some uncertain of their current progress or next steps.

Most teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge, and all have a deep commitment to teaching religious education, routinely planning together to share best practices. Lessons frequently open with prayer, giving pupils a purposeful moment to connect their faith to the upcoming lesson. Where teachers deliberately recap prior learning, pupils successfully build bridges to new concepts. High-quality and effective questioning, when modelled effectively — particularly the use of ‘I Wonder’ prompts — elicits thoughtful reflections and secures strong pupil engagement. In several year groups, this approach has empowered pupils to formulate their own analytical questions. Furthermore, tools such as mind-mapping allow pupils to actively evaluate their prior knowledge. Support staff provide invaluable, sensitive assistance, ensuring that pupils facing barriers to learning can fully access the curriculum. While verbal feedback is regularly delivered in the moment, it does not consistently clarify the exact expectations or

success criteria for the pupils. Reassuringly, strong teacher-pupil relationships foster a safe classroom environment where children feel safe sharing ideas. While knowledge organisers have been effectively adapted to outline the scope and purpose of each topic, the next step for staff is to implement consistent strategies that stretch and challenge pupils, deepening their conceptual understanding.

Leaders and governors ensure that Holy Cross fully meets the statutory requirements of the *Religious Education Directory*, and this has been implemented across the school. Governors are visible and active within the school community, utilising detailed reports from the headteacher and subject leader during meetings to inform the self-evaluation process. Through routine monitoring, evaluation, and curriculum reviews, leadership maintains an accurate grasp of teaching standards and secures high-quality provision across all cohorts. Furthermore, leaders ensure the curriculum is differentiated effectively, strategically deploying additional adult support to guarantee that children with additional needs thrive. This approach is a model of excellence, which is adopted by all. Religious education is given equal status to other core subjects regarding timetabling, professional development, and resourcing. The subject leader provides a clear, strategic vision. Supported closely by the headteacher, she drives school-wide improvement through targeted 'RE clinics', staff training, and rigorous monitoring schedules. Her impact extends beyond the school through valuable collaboration across the Christus Catholic Trust. Staff explicitly value her expertise and welcome her guidance. Staff are also in the process of moderating with colleagues across their trust; this will ensure that teacher assessments are accurate and consistent.

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 know and enjoy the prayer rituals of the school and respond positively and enthusiastically to the opportunities for prayer and worship offered. Pupils in the St Ursula's SEND provision show particular enthusiasm when engaging in prayer activities centred around music. During times of prayer, pupils demonstrate reverence and respect, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, while older pupils are able to reflect thoughtfully on scripture through *Lectio Divina*, recognising the importance and power of prayer in their daily lives. Pupils are familiar with traditional prayers of the Church and can confidently describe key seasons and celebrations within the liturgical year. They are active participants in a range of ministries and enjoy being selected to plan class celebrations of the word. With staff support, pupils are developing their ability to plan, lead and evaluate liturgies, and where practice is strongest, they do so independently, with the oldest pupils confidently introducing each part of worship, making meaningful links to everyday life. Pupils understand the significance of prayer, with one pupil stating, 'You grow closer to God; you follow him, believe in him and know that he is always with us.' They confidently formulate prayers of thanks; however, they would now benefit from further opportunities to learn about and create other types of prayers, including intercessory prayers.

The annual plan of provision identifies significant moments in the life of the school and the Church's calendar, ensuring that prayer and liturgy are central to school life. Prayer is embedded within the daily experience of the school, with scripture carefully chosen to complement religious education topics or reflect the liturgical season. Staff are developing confidence in supporting pupils with their celebration of the word; however, further professional development is needed to strengthen their expertise in enabling pupils to plan, lead and evaluate prayer and liturgy independently and effectively. Creativity plays an important role in enhancing prayer

experiences, with scriptural artwork, music and meditative practices such as Visio Divina. The school benefits from a strong and growing partnership with the parish priest, who provides valuable support for its spiritual life. Leaders thoughtfully plan opportunities for families to participate in the prayer life of the school, warmly welcoming them to liturgical celebrations and Masses. The school environment is thoughtfully designed to nurture the spiritual life of the community. A variety of welcoming and reflective spaces encourage contemplation, stillness and a deeper awareness of God's presence, with the chapel serving as a particularly valued focal point for prayer and worship.

The school's policy on prayer and liturgy is readily accessible to all staff. Leaders recognise the need to further develop the progressive strategy that has been introduced to enable pupils to take increasing ownership of prayer and liturgy as they move through the school. School leaders and governors ensure that opportunities to celebrate the Eucharist, Holy Days of Obligation, and other significant liturgical events are prioritised, resulting in a programme of worship that is appropriately matched to pupils' ages and experiences and encourages meaningful participation. Leaders regularly engage with diocesan professional development opportunities and have successfully introduced a four-part liturgy structure across the school. However, further targeted training is required to strengthen staff expertise and confidence in supporting high-quality, pupil-led prayer and liturgy. There is scope to build on the strong practice evident in some classes by creating further opportunities for coaching, collaboration and peer observation. Governors place a high priority on prayer and liturgy and ensure that appropriate resources are allocated to support this area. Through planned visits, observations and attendance at liturgical events, leaders and governors effectively monitor the quality of provision. To maximise their impact, monitoring activities should focus more sharply on securing greater consistency in practice and provision across all classes and phases.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Holy Cross Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	146296
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8833605
Full postal address of the school	Daiglen Drive, South Ockendon, Essex, RM15 5RP
School phone number	01708853000
Headteacher	Sandra Power
Chair of governors	Rachel Thomas
School Website	https://www.holycrossprimary.com
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Christus Catholic Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	20 March 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Isabel Quinn
Laura White

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