



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the
Archbishop of Southwark and Inspection of
Denominational Education under Section 48
of the Education Act 2005

URN 100739

**Holy Cross Catholic Primary School
Culverley Road
Catford
SE6 2LD**

Inspection date: 15th November 2016

Chair of Governors: Mr Paul Monaghan
Headteacher: Miss Mary Collins
Inspectors: Mr Stephen Beck
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EDUCATION COMMISSION

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DENOMINATIONAL EDUCATION AND COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Introduction

Description of the school

Holy Cross Catholic School is voluntary aided. It is situated in the Lewisham Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is maintained by Lewisham Local Authority. The principal parish which the school serves is Holy Cross, Catford. Small percentages of pupils come from the neighbouring parishes of, St Augustine's, Beckenham Hill, St Joseph's, Deptford, St Saviour's, Lewisham, Our Lady of Lourdes's, Lee, Our Lady and St Philip Neri, Sydenham. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 94.4%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10% in all Key Stages.

The school takes pupils from 3 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 250. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is broadly average. The proportion of pupils eligible for Free School Meals is below average. Around 16.4% of the pupils receive extra support in class with 16.8% of pupils being in receipt of Pupil Premium. The school has a diverse population. 86% of the pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest group being those of African origin. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is an Additional Language is above average at 58%

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school in providing Catholic Education

GRADE
1

Holy Cross is a warm, welcoming school from the point of first contact. It was graded as an outstanding school with a distinctive Catholic ethos at its last Section 48 inspection. It is to the credit of the senior leadership and Governors that it has not rested on its laurels and has built successfully on its numerous strengths. Holy Cross remains an outstanding school with 'challenge' as its byword. Its mission statement '*May God's love shine in our lives as we care and share and learn together,*' is a lived reality and pupils are developing an authentic knowledge and love of Jesus Christ as it is lived out in the daily life of the school. The school is outward looking and is in no way complacent. The collegiate approach to leadership reflects the confidence the leadership team have in each other and an ability to utilise individual strengths to the maximum. There is a clear understanding at Holy Cross that it is the shared responsibility of the parents, parish and school to pass on the Catholic faith to the pupils and this responsibility is taken very seriously. With this in mind the school deems it paramount to teach well-planned, challenging and enjoyable lessons in which pupils see their Christian faith as something exciting and relevant to them in their everyday lives.

Holy Cross school is at the heart of the local community and is outstanding in providing Catholic education. There is a genuine commitment to the provision of quality Catholic education which is very visible in the everyday life of the school.

Quality leadership is at the heart of maintaining and developing the outstanding ethos. This in turn has created outstanding relationships which are manifest in common values such as respect, empathy, understanding and forgiveness. High quality self-evaluation provides significant evidence that priorities for the continued development of Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school are explicitly addressed.

There are very strong links between the school and the parish community. Together they work closely to ensure that there is a seamless partnership and common understanding of worship and liturgy.

Daily prayer, for adults and pupils, nurtures this community, where both behaviours and attitudes are outstanding. Pupils feel safe and secure, this has built their confidence and given them a sense of purpose. Pastoral care is a real strength and is given the highest of priorities. The school has demonstrated, a significant concern for those in need. Parents are very proud of the school and confirm their children love attending every day. During a meeting, parents said they felt valued and listened to. They can approach the school if there are any difficulties. The ethos of the school is perhaps best summed up in its own words, "*Our children are the greatest resource of our school and the best ambassadors we could have.*"

The school operates on a restricted site but maximises space very effectively. The school environment is well looked after providing a lovely working environment for pupils and staff that is respected by all. Displays around the school and in classrooms are of a high standard recognising the value placed on Religious Education as a core subject.

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

The school's capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding. Morale is very high and all staff work in partnership for the best interests of the pupils. Consequently, standards are very high. The leadership team remain committed to high expectations and aspire to securing continuing improvement. The Governing Body is very effective in holding leadership to account.

Governors, Headteacher and staff should:

- In line with the school's development plan review the school policy for Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) in consultation with staff, governors and parents with a view to securing a whole school cross curricular policy with reference to Diocesan guidance and the Diocesan policy 'Education in Human Love'.
- Continue to demonstrate their common fundamental commitment to Catholic Education in its widest, all embracing sense, whilst continuing to aim for the highest academic standards for all pupils.
- Continue with their policy of being an outward looking school, so they can contribute to and benefit from, working in partnership with different groups and agencies in wider society.

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

The mission statement is central to the life of the school and is understood and fully embraced by the majority of pupils in their daily school life. Opportunities to participate in the evaluation of the Catholic Life of the school are provided through the school council, during Religious Education lessons and by surveys. Pupils have a deep sense of belonging to their 'school family' and they strive to do their best to promote the strong ethos within their school family and in the wider community. They are well aware of the needs of others, both locally and globally, seeking to support others through awareness raising assemblies and fundraising activities. This has included, Jeans for Genes, Jump Rope for Heart, Macmillan Cancer Support and HCPT: The Pilgrimage Trust.

Pupils take full advantage of the opportunities provided by the school for their personal support and development. They are happy, confident and secure in their own stage of spiritual and emotional growth.

Pupils are very proud of their religious identity, deeply valuing the Catholic tradition of their school and its strong links to the parish community. They are regularly involved in school, parish and Diocesan celebrations, benefitting from staff involvement in these activities.

The school is rightly proud to be the first school in the Southwark Diocese to have a Mini Vinnies group. This childrens' version of The Saint Vincent de Paul Society is supported by an annual commissioning Mass to celebrate the achievements of pupils in learning the ways of St Vincent de Paul through helping others in the community, who are in need of both practical support and prayers

Work is already underway to review the school's programme for Education for Personal Relationships (EPR) including 'Relationships and Sex Education' (RSE) to secure an age-appropriate programme that supports pupils to develop and foster understanding appropriate to their age.

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

The quality of learning and progress in Religious Education is outstanding. Pupils have positive attitudes and work well in lessons. Behaviour for learning is outstanding. Pupils enjoy their learning, apply themselves diligently and constantly strive to extend and improve their learning in many different ways. Pupils enter the school with knowledge and skills that are typically expected for their age. They make good or better progress through Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, which continues throughout Key Stage 2.

Books are well marked reflecting a consistency of approach across the school, providing clear targets for next steps of progress to be made. The books are frequently marked with the pupils, especially in Key Stage 1. Pupils in Key Stage 2 read and respond to teachers'

suggestions when appropriate either verbally or through writing. This enables pupils to make excellent progress.

Pupils are religiously literate, articulate and reflective in their oral responses. Creative lessons, where pupils are challenged to think deeply and extend their knowledge and understanding, result in the vast majority of pupils achieving extremely well by the end of Key Stage 2.

Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are well supported and are achieving well. Inspection findings show no notable differences between groups of learners.

The parish priest is a frequent and supportive visitor to the school. His assistant is also very generous with his time, supporting the curriculum and Catholic Life of the school.

How well pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship

Collective Worship is central to the life of the school through regular staff prayer and daily acts of worship for pupils. Themes chosen for Collective Worship develop a deep understanding of the liturgical year, celebrate the 'The Way the Truth and the Life' topics and promote statements by which to live. Prayer opportunities are stimulating for pupils and parents enjoy being able to participate. Teachers are highly skilled at enabling pupils to lead Collective Worship. They have a thorough understanding of the forms prayer can take and are adept at sharing this with pupils. Teachers are effectively supported in their role by the priests of the parish. Everyone in this school community is passionate about ensuring pupils have high quality prayer experiences and this is supported through a broad range of opportunities for prayer, including each morning before school starts, when pupils gather in the school hall to say a decade of the Rosary. This is commendably led by the pupils and sees parents, staff and pupils come together to start the day in prayer. Prayers are also said within classrooms at the start of the day, before lunch and at the end of the day.

There is a strong broad and balanced programme of Collective Worship. This includes, classes from Year 1-6 leading the parish Mass on a weekly rota and children from Years 4-6 serving at daily Mass, also on a rota basis. They are trained for the role by the Headteacher and a governor. The school celebrates Mass with the parish for Feast Days and special occasions throughout the year including the start of each Academic Year. Each Key Stage 2 class celebrate Mass in their classroom once a year. Parents are invited and the Mass theme follows class Religious Education topics.

In a whole school assembly led by the Headteacher on the topic of the 'Journey of Life', pupils entered the hall and settled promptly. Year 6 pupils buddied Reception pupils effectively and sensitively in a supportive and caring manner that was a joy to witness. Pupils were attentive throughout, participating well through question responses and prayer. The assembly was greatly enhanced by beautiful singing, creating a real atmosphere of 'awe and wonder.'

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, which is lived out by all concerned and is regularly reviewed.

Excellent opportunities are provided for the staff and pupils to play an active part in the Catholic Life and Mission of the school. They live out the values of the Gospel in the everyday life of the school, especially in the way they treat each other. They make very good use of all aspects of 'The Way, The Truth and The Life' programme and incorporate learning in the context of day to day living.

The Self Evaluation Document provides evidence of the school's monitoring, self-challenge and development and demonstrates a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. It provides a basis to celebrate the school's strengths and move areas for development forward.

The school ensures that all staff receive a good range of induction and in-service training which enables them to further understand the Church's Mission in Education and play their unique part in it.

The quality of Collective Worship is a priority for the school. It is effectively monitored and evaluated by leaders, governors and managers. An up to date, comprehensive policy is in place. Leadership at all levels respects difference, values diversity and ensures equal opportunities for all through prayer, worship and the liturgical life of the school. There are very positive relationships at every level within the school. Parents are consulted regularly and involved in a variety of ways in the life of the school, especially by their attendance at assemblies and Masses.

The Headteacher has been in post for five years as well as being a long serving member of the teaching staff. She is an outstanding, motivational leader, who leads by example with verve and enthusiasm.

Governors are outstanding in fulfilling their responsibilities. They have effectively helped to shape the direction of the school drawing on their own strengths and areas of expertise.

The school's website is highly effective as a means of communication and reflects the school's strong Catholic identity.

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

Holy Cross has an active and effective governing body who work hard to ensure that the school has strong leadership, reflecting in its actions the values of Catholic education. Governors at Holy Cross are proactive in the monitoring of Religious Education in school. They share in the Catholic ethos of the school and regard the maintenance of this as being of the highest importance in promoting monitoring and evaluating the provision for Religious Education and in the way teachers plan and implement improvement to the outcomes for pupils. Data is used effectively to evaluate the school's performance and to celebrate and plan for future improvements through a robust cyclical programme for monitoring and evaluation. This includes programmed visits to the school.

Teaching and learning is monitored regularly with appropriate feedback. Support is given where needed, with good practice being identified, shared and celebrated. Assessment information is collated and tracked by the subject leader and shared with the leadership team, governors and parents. Formal assessment tasks are undertaken with achievement and effort being celebrated.

The experienced subject leader is a member of the school's leadership team and is outstanding in guiding Religious Education. She shows great enthusiasm and commitment and introduces new initiatives when appropriate. Outstanding and well-presented documentation, guides and directs all staff in the delivery of the subject and is regularly updated. The subject leader has been asked to work as a mentor to other Religious Education leaders new to the role across the Deanery, reflecting the high esteem in which she is held.

The Self Evaluation Document identifies targets, timescales and lines of accountability. and reflects governor involvement.

Over 50% of parental questionnaires were returned with virtually all being strongly positive about their childrens' education and supportive of the school. One parent commented, *"I agree with all of the above statements and feel strongly that parents and children are deeply involved religiously in school and church,"* with another writing, *"Holy Cross is a real community school that demonstrates strong Catholic values."*

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

Teaching at Holy Cross is marked by strong teacher subject knowledge and excellent, consistent classroom management. Teaching is effective in promoting purposeful learning, the engagement of the pupils, their enjoyment, and their outstanding results. Their excellent attitudes to learning have a strong impact on their progress and achievement. Learning assistants are involved in planning lessons with the teacher so that interventions have the maximum effect. Individuals learning needs are identified and tasks pitched to meet learning needs, ensuring pupils progress.

The quality of teachers' questioning is of a high order ensuring opportunities to stretch pupils even further, or to check that they really do understand before moving on. The assessment and marking policies are well embedded across the school and challenge pupils to raise the quality of their written work. Many Key Stage 2 pupils expressed their appreciation for the help given by teachers in their comments and marking. To encourage the understanding of Other Faiths, different classes have visited the local Synagogue and Sikh Temple. The pupils immensely enjoyed these experiences and have been commended for their respect and behaviour. This programme has been fully supported by parents who expressed the view that such visits not only enhance their childrens learning but appropriately reflect the need to understand other faiths in the society of today. This is further supported by visitors from different charities and associations visits to the school e.g. Catholic Truth Society, CAFOD, TenTen Theatre and a performer from Wintershall Plays.

Teaching is consistently good with significant amounts of outstanding practice. An example of outstanding teaching observed was in a lesson on the challenging concept of 'The Holy Trinity' with Key Stage 1 pupils. The teacher expertly linked this to the pupils' understanding of relationships, e.g. a mother also being a daughter and a sister. These young pupils rose to the challenge and demonstrated intellectual effort and understanding.

A Foundation Stage lesson reflected a consistent approach across the school to excellent classroom management, strong lesson pace, the clear setting of objectives, very good cross curricular links and high expectations to which pupils rise.

Nursery provision is outstanding. The teacher demonstrated expertise in the development of pupils' listening skills and building on previous learning. Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) were particularly well supported and integrated. Nursery staff created an affirming, inclusive environment in which pupils were fully engaged in a lesson that concluded with a lovely, age appropriate prayer.

A lower Key Stage 2 lesson used skilful questioning, that allowed time to respond, which elicited thoughtful responses and supported progress. The learning objective was clear and pupils understanding was supported by the teacher's clarity in setting tasks. Good use was made of paired working with strong vocabulary development.

An upper Key Stage 2 lesson on the topic of 'Justice' provided pupils with a broad range of learning experiences through the teacher's excellent, challenging rapport and provision of opportunities for thought provoking responses. Through the use of a film clip, excitement and enthusiasm was generated that the teacher channelled into learning. Her skilled open ended questioning and links to real life, including use of her own personal experiences, secured progress throughout the lesson and built very successfully on previous learning. The lesson was strengthened through the effective use of a range of cross curricular links.

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

The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning and meets their needs is outstanding. The curriculum is well presented not only through discreet teaching during lessons, but through shared prayers, Bible stories, discussions, assemblies led by teachers and the pupils themselves, music, plays and productions. The school uses 'The Way the Truth and The Life' programme which meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD). Great care is taken to ensure that all pupils have access to the curriculum and barriers to learning are removed as far as possible. Of total curriculum time, 10% is allocated to Religious Education. Imaginative and well planned strategies are deployed to enrich pupils' learning. The school implements new curriculum developments as appropriate and deploys modern resources effectively. Enrichment activities and programmes have a positive impact on the curriculum, as does the use of visits and visitors.

Achievement in Religious Education is of a very high standard and continues to rise through the school. In the Summer Term 2016 the school began to assess Religious Education on the ladders used for other subjects in line with the new assessment procedures introduced in 2015. These have been well planned and explained by the subject leader. Religious Education is assessed termly. This assessment is based on the Levels of Attainment as set out in the RECD. Pupils are continuously assessed through their work and contribution as well as through an end of term assessment task. Assessment demonstrates that standards pupils achieve in Religious Education are extremely high. They outperform in Religious Education compared to other core subjects, including pupils who have SEND. These assessments would be more secure with stronger evidence in written form.

The many extra-curricular activities provided by the school promote personal skills, Christian values, community cohesion and inter-school collaboration. The Religious Education curriculum provides outstanding opportunities for pupils' spiritual and moral development and vocation. Teachers enable pupils to reflect on their place in the world and to respect the uniqueness of each individual made in the image and likeness of God. They are taught to celebrate their own gifts and talents as well as those of others. Pupils have explored the beliefs and values of other faiths and religions including Judaism and Hinduism. Other religions are studied in rotation. Visitors of other faiths have shared their experiences and practices with pupils.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is outstanding. It reflects the Catholic character of the school, with prayer being at its heart. Collective Worship has a

high profile and is central to the life of the school, playing a key part in meeting the spiritual needs of the pupils. Opportunities are provided to enable the full, active and conscious participation of the whole school community. Pupils are confident to pray formally and informally using a variety of prayer methods and styles.

The school has provided opportunities for staff to develop their skills in planning, leading and evaluating collective worship. 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.

Over the last year the school has encouraged the pupils to take ownership of their learning by preparing and presenting the Thursday assemblies. These are always based on the 'Wednesday Word.' Key Stage 2 pupils enthusiastically take turns to lead these assemblies. The school could consider developing a retreat programme for pupils starting with Year 6.

Opportunities are provided for parents, carers and the local and wider faith communities to participate in a variety of celebrations of the Religious Education programme and the Church's liturgical year. The school takes the opportunity to celebrate important events in the Church's year and this adds to the quality of the experiences in which the pupils participate.

A parent commented, "Holy Cross is a wonderful school and learning environment with a very strong Catholic ethos. My child has been given a prayer book, regularly attends Mass with their class and is very able to talk about Jesus, God and other basic Catholic concepts. The school and parish are very close and form a wonderful community".