

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Basuto Road, Parsons Green, London, SW6 4BL

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 15 September 2021



Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education is outstanding

- The content of classroom RE, mapped expertly to meet the requirements the Religious Education Curriculum Directory, is ambitious and rigorous.
- Strong, cohesive leadership ensures high academic standards in religious education across all key stages. The leader of religious education is highly knowledgeable and has worked relentlessly during the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure religious education remains at the heart of the curriculum.
- The school demonstrates an outstanding commitment to staff professional development and this results in teaching that is thoroughly planned and expertly delivered. Monitoring and moderation informs planning and staff are strongly supported to further their knowledge and expertise in religious education.
- Pupils are exceptionally religiously literate and are well versed in religious language consistently throughout all key stages. They speak with confidence and conviction; this is a real strength of the school.
- Pupils in Nursery and Reception receive an outstanding start to religious education and school life in general.
- There are increasing opportunities provided to engage pupils more creatively in religious education. This includes areas such as art, design technology and computing. Examples of this were evident during periods of lockdown and remote learning.
- Governors provide consistent support to the school and contribute very effectively to the school's vision for religious education. They challenge leaders to ensure the highest expectations.

B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- 10% of curriculum time is given to religious education, as required by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.
- The Catholic life of the school is exceptional. Relationships between the staff and pupils and between pupils is strongly based on mutual respect and consideration for one another. Pupils are courteous and clearly very proud of their school.
- The school embodies its vision of 'Growing hearts and minds, today, tomorrow and for life.' This is evident throughout every aspect of school life.
- The school's motto, '*Facta Non Verba*' – 'deeds not words,' is strongly encouraged and pupils are articulate in demonstrating why and how they can make a difference to society.
- The school's expression of its catholicity lies at the heart of this school. During the planning of the building extension, the leadership team involved the pupils and community expertly in ensuring every aspect of design was thoroughly considered to reflect the school's Catholic identity.
- Although challenging during the Covid-19 pandemic, the school has maintained worship and prayer as a central focus for the whole school community. This is experienced in a purposeful and meaningful way.
- The outstanding partnerships between parents, school and parish in promoting the Catholic life of the school expertly develops their experiences of being part of a universal Church.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

Since the last inspection, feedback to the pupils regarding their work has been improved through a more consistent approach. Pupils know how to respond to teacher feedback and what their next steps are from the assessment grids and success criteria systematically placed in books and via verbal feedback.

Professional development and training for staff is now an ongoing priority and this has resulted in teachers' increasing confidence in effective and accurate assessment, using the agreed levels of understanding.

Pupils talked about being challenged through 'big questions,' discussion and feedback from teachers.

The content of classroom religious education is outstanding

The content of the religious education curriculum at Holy Cross is ambitious and exceptionally well planned. It comprehensively meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory and this ensures pupils are highly articulate and literate in religious education. The progressive and cohesive curriculum builds pupils' knowledge year on year and they are able to recall prior learning, despite periods of remote learning during the Covid - 19 pandemic. During these periods of lockdown, teachers provided videos and some live lessons in religious education to ensure pupils' learning was not detrimentally affected.

The core RE curriculum is supplemented with the inclusion of feast days, information about saints and religious leaders as well as explicit messages taken from scripture in assemblies and collective worship. The school has plans to include further opportunities for more creative and engaging activities involving aspects of art, music, design technology and computing.

Pupil achievement in religious education is outstanding

Pupils at Holy Cross achieve exceptionally well in religious education. Their attainment is line with, and in many cases, better than in other core subjects. They are well versed in religious language and can articulate their knowledge and understanding confidently. This is a real strength of the school. In Year 6 lessons, pupils were engaged in a discussion about making links between scripture and the nature of God expressed in some Biblical metaphors. Pupils described God's strength and support as a 'backpack,' 'a helmet,' a 'sat nav,' and, topically, a 'vaccine.' In a Year 2 class, the pupil's responses to the question, 'How can we get to know God?' extracted thoughtful answers for example, 'God sent his only Son down to earth,' and 'the Bible is a source of how we know God.'

Clear learning objectives in pupil books support the pupil in their outstanding achievement. They take the opportunities given to work individually, collaboratively or with support. This ensures that learning is inclusive and teachers' expectations are high for all pupils.

Pupils are exposed to various genres in religious education and this raises attainment in across key stages. Pupils are eager to learn and participate actively in lessons.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

During the inspection, it was abundantly clear that teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils. Discussions with pupils and scrutiny of books from previous years indicate that this is a culture within the school. Teachers demonstrate witness to the faith and are confident in their knowledge of religious education. It was evident that teaching is consistent across all year groups and lessons observed were at least good and, in some cases, outstanding. Inspectors were particularly impressed that pupils from various year groups had been so inspired by the quality of teaching they had brought in work they had completed at home as a result of what they had been taught the previous day. In Year 2, a pupil had brought in an encyclopaedia to share a different source of

revelation with her teacher and in Year 5, a pupil had made a fact file on 'the exaltation of the holy cross' as a result of the school's feast day which was held the day before the inspection. On the same theme, another pupil had intricately drawn a piece of art inscribed with the words, 'The Joy of the Lord is my strength.'

Teachers ask higher order questions in the 'Big question' and in class discussion. One of the questions posed to the pupils, 'Can only good people be disciples?' was answered eloquently by a pupil with a link to scripture and the response, 'Jesus said, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick.'

In a Year 4 book, a teacher asked a pupil, 'How do you feel wearing the symbol of the Holy Cross?' The pupil's response was, 'It means that I am in touch with God and I have a connection.'

Teaching is becoming increasingly creative and the school has plans to develop this further. Evidence of art, music and ICT was seen across all year groups and pupils said they were looking forward to having more opportunities to demonstrate their understanding in these creative areas. The chaplain is a regular visitor to the school and supports pupils and staff in deepening their understanding of religious education. Pupils were eager to tell inspectors about Mass on the school's feast day where the chaplain had explained to them the liturgical tradition where the Holy Empress Helena, found the location of the True Cross by digging for it under a large growth of basil. Basil plants were reputed to have sprung up at the foot of the Cross where the Precious Blood of Christ fell, along with the tears of the Mother of God. As a result, pupils baked basil bread to remember this story. The school encourages homework tasks to complement work done in school and this encourages pupils and their families to share their knowledge and opinions.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education is outstanding

The leadership of religious education in this school is outstanding. As a result of the leadership team and RE lead's collaborative and ambitious approach for all staff and pupils, it is evident that religious education is central to the school's mission. Staff are supported exceptionally well through numerous opportunities for CPD and planning sessions with experienced members of staff to ensure sound subject knowledge. Leaders have a committed approach to working with the diocese and other schools in the deanery and planning and moderation for religious education is a priority. The RE lead encourages excellent practice and has an effective action plan which, along with the actions contained in the school's SEF, accurately identifies areas for further development. The governing body is actively engaged in supporting and monitoring all staff and this is evidence of their thorough commitment to sustaining and improving the quality of religious education offered to pupils.

What should the school do to develop further in classroom religious education?

- To ensure all pupils are given the opportunity to demonstrate increasing independence in their learning and take more responsibility for innovative outcomes in their work.
- To ensure a consistent range of creative opportunities, linked to other areas of the curriculum, is offered to all pupils in order to deepen their knowledge and understanding of religious education.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

Since the last inspection, the school has supported the pupils in actively engaging in numerous charitable initiatives linked to justice and peace issues. The school has a plan to develop this further as the school returns to a sense of normality following periods of lockdown through the Covid -19 pandemic.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

is outstanding

Religious Education receives the 10% curriculum as required by the Bishops' Conference. The school has developed a distinctive culture where religious education lies at the foundation of all it offers. A generous budget for RE has been instrumental in acquiring excellent resources which are used collectively throughout the school. Robust, well-planned professional development for staff in religious education ensures high quality teaching. Governors and the leadership team demonstrate an outstanding commitment to religious education which underpins the quality of Catholic education offered to pupils and the whole school community.

The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community

is outstanding

The school excels at providing worship and prayer in a creative and meaningful way. Clearly, during the periods of national lockdown and Covid restrictions, opportunities for whole school worship were somewhat diminished, however, the school was able to encourage forms of collective worship remotely. During this period, pupils were encouraged to share thoughts and prayers with one pupil writing, 'During Covid I cannot hug my friend, but I can smile.'

Now that restrictions are easing, the school are making every effort to reintroduce the pupils to their local parish for celebrations of the Eucharist, and other sacramental celebrations will be offered at key times in the liturgical year. The pupils are very proud of the new prayer room and look forward to praying and reflecting together. Weekly Gospel assemblies combine the Catholic tradition of prayer and worship with engaging ideas to encourage the pupils to put their faith into action. In the assembly observed during the inspection, it was clear that strong, trusting relationships are encouraged between staff and pupils who are offered opportunities for reflection, sharing and discussion. Pupils spoke of trying to live out the Gospel message from assemblies and acts of worship. They also spoke about their role in planning and delivering child-led collective worship and how this helps them to develop a close relationship with God and each other.

In the Reception class, teachers have created 'God's listening tree' in the outdoor area to become familiar with the pupils' understanding of religion. Pupil responses to the listening tree included, 'We can talk to God and make him happy,' and 'God follows you around, God follows you all around.'

There is a Prayer focus area in each classroom and in various places around the school. These are carefully planned to link with the liturgical year as well as to support the pupils' learning. The school's mission of 'Growing hearts and minds is further developed by the opportunities the school provides the pupils in prayer and worship.

The contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice –

is outstanding

Throughout months of uncertainty and challenge during the Covid pandemic, Holy Cross has never wavered in its commitment to the Common Good. Raising awareness of the most vulnerable, especially in the vicinity of the school, was evident in their support of the local Foodbank and the 'Winter Coat' drive. During their annual 'Refugee week' pupils were encouraged to use their design technology skills to make replica homes of the most vulnerable to show solidarity and remember those less fortunate. The school is proud of its 'Holy Cross Helping Hands' theme and pupils could explain articulately their role in being Jesus' hands and feet on earth. Their references to various passages of Jesus' mission and teaching from scripture indicates that they clearly understand the theology underpinning their actions.

One pupil explained that we just needed to reflect on the sacrifice Jesus made for us in order to be of service to others. The school provides support for a variety of charities, including, MacMillan Cancer, NSPCC and Jeans for Genes. A number of pupils and staff have made contributions to individual and collective fundraising efforts. The school has plans to develop this further by embarking on a sustainable project for the school to support.

Finding God in human experience and the pupils' understanding of the call to human flourishing is found in daily experience for the pupils of Holy Cross because they live it through the school's encouragement of developing a close relationship with God. The staff and pupils appreciate that supporting and celebrating the talents and accomplishments of one another is part of their mission. They highlight human flourishing moments in the 'Beyond School: Human Flourishing' section of the newsletter. They have also initiated a 'broad and deep learning programme' which targets a group of pupils who benefit from challenge and the exploration of ways to deepen their knowledge about a range of issues. They debate key issues within the world, and have recently focused on refugees and their responsibilities as global citizens.

The partnership with parents, school and parish, and collaboration as an integral part of the diocese through its relationship with the diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf

is outstanding

The partnership with parents, school and parish is outstanding. Their collective vision to promote the Catholic life of the school is equally shared by the whole school community. There was an overwhelming response to the inspection parent questionnaire with the overriding theme of the school being a 'happy, welcoming place.' Feedback from parents included comments such as, 'Great school and teachers, they have the balance just right' and 'Holy Cross is a wonderful school both with a strong and demanding academic curriculum and distinct opportunities for spiritual growth.' The 'Friends of Holy Cross' parent and teacher association provides an excellent support to the school and are engaged in a variety of ways. The governing body are very much committed and involved in promoting the Catholic life of the school. The school's chaplain is highly supportive of the school community and spoke highly of the engagement of the pupils when in the parish and when he makes regular visits to the school. Alongside the leadership team, he is also instrumental in supporting staff new to the school.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school

is outstanding

The leadership of the executive headteacher, head of school and their leadership team in promoting the school's commitment to its mission of 'growing hearts and minds' is outstanding. Their vision to promote the Catholic life of the school is shared wholeheartedly by the school community to ensure a rich Catholic experience for all their pupils. The governing body makes an enormously valuable contribution to the work and Catholic life of the school. Their regular visits support and challenge the school in equal measure. The school's self-evaluation is detailed, informative and accurate. One of the strongest features of the school is the pupils' ability to articulate their sound knowledge of

religious education and how they live out what it means to be a pupil in a Catholic school. They are rightly very proud of being pupils at Holy Cross. This is testament to the leadership and management team who have created a vibrant community which drives the mission of the school to develop the pupils in its care.

What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?

- To extend the 'broad and deep learning programme' across the curriculum for all pupils to develop their knowledge about social justice issues as a response to Catholic Social Teaching themes.
- To develop a sustainable project in partnership with a local, national or global community to further enhance the pupils' involvement in the Common Good.

Information about this school

- The school is a 2 form entry Catholic Primary School with a one form nursery in the locality of Parsons Green in the borough of Hammersmith and Fulham.
- There is a separate one form bilingual stream (see separate document)
- The school serves the parishes of Holy Cross in Parsons Green and Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Sands End.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 71%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 20% and from other faiths is 4%. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 69.2%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 4.
- 13% of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 18 have Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average.
- There is a below average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 76 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (19%).

Department for Education Number	205/3354
Unique Reference Number	1003451
Local Authority	Hammersmith and Fulham

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	401
The appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Seana Bengtsson
Headteacher	Mrs Kathleen Williams
Telephone number	02077361447
Website	www.holycrossfulham.lbhf.co.uk
Email address	admin@holycrossrc.lbhf.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	2 nd June 2015
Grades from previous inspection:	
Classroom religious education	Good
The Catholic life of the school	Outstanding

Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out (i) under the requirements of the Canon 806 and (ii) in accordance with the Framework for Diocesan Inspections 2015 approved by the Archbishop of Westminster and (iii) under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

- The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection.
- During the inspection 15 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended an assembly and an act of worship.
- Meetings were held with school staff, pupils, chaplain and governors.
- Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

Inspection Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

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