



## **DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD**

**Name of School: Holy Cross Catholic Primary Academy**

**Unique Reference Number: 115168**

**Inspection Date: 12 March 2012**

**Reporting Inspectors: Dr Michael Sutherland-Harper and  
Mr Derek Kelly**

**This Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.**

**Type of School: Academy  
School Category: Voluntary Aided  
Age range of pupils: 4 - 11  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 206  
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body  
Date of previous inspection: 27.2.2009**

**School Address:  
Traceys Road  
Harlow, Essex  
CM18 6JJ  
Tel. No. 01279 424452  
Fax No. 01279 424453  
Chair of Governors: Mr Nigel Long  
Headteacher: Miss Susan McGuigan**

## **Introduction:**

The Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education (Schools) Act 2005 by two inspectors appointed by the Diocesan Bishop at the request of the Governing Body of the School.

The Inspectors acknowledge and are appreciative of the full support, co-operation and courtesy they enjoyed from the Governors, Headteacher, Staff and Pupils of the School both before and during the Inspection. The Inspectors wish to express their gratitude to all concerned.

## **The focus of the Section 48 Inspection was:**

- Classroom Religious Education
- The Catholic nature of the School through;
  1. Worship
  2. Links with the Catholic and wider community
- Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development

## **The Section 48 Report**

**Holy Cross Catholic Primary Academy**  
**Traceys Road**  
**Harlow**  
**Essex**  
**CM18 6JJ**

**Head Teacher:**                      **Miss Susan McGuigan**

**Date of Inspection:**                **12 March 2012**

## **Description of the School:**

Holy Cross Catholic Primary Academy is a voluntary aided Catholic school situated in Harlow in the county of Essex and in the diocese of Brentwood. The school is a smaller than average sized primary school. The school serves the Catholic parishes of St Luke and Holy Cross and the Church of the Assumption, Mulberry Green.

### **Record of Evidence Base:**

Two Diocesan Inspectors were in the school for the equivalent of two inspection days.

The study of pre-inspection documentation including the Self-Evaluation Form/ Denominational Provision (SEF/DP).  
The observation of seven lessons.  
Participation in an assembly.  
Scrutiny of pupils' written work.  
Meetings with the Headteacher, who is also the Head of Religious Education (R.E.), the Parish Priest, the Chair of Governors and the School Council.  
Observations of R.E. displays in the classrooms and around the school.

### **What the School does well:**

Holy Cross Catholic Primary Academy is an outstanding Catholic school. Parents and carers, whom the inspectors met at the start of their visit, were unanimous in their praise for the school. The emphasis on spirituality and development of the Catholic faith is immediately apparent on arrival at the school through the large ceramic cross on display in the grounds, the Spiritual and Easter gardens and the outdoor Stations of the Cross. Holy Cross is an inclusive community which welcomes parents, carers and pupils into the school and reaches out through the close links it has established with the neighbouring church. The parish priest is a regular visitor to the school and his active participation at many levels helps to ensure that the school is a cohesive faith community. The dedicated headteacher offers outstanding leadership. She knows her school well and is ambitious for its further development. She sees her school as one which is deeply committed to the church's mission in education at all levels. As a result, learning links what goes on in school with life beyond the school gates and readiness for that life. For example, a carefully crafted assembly, based around the Ten Commandments, linked preparation for Easter with the readings from Mass the previous weekend and pupils' ongoing Lenten challenges. Opportunities for reflection were also connected to the tree of growth displayed around the school and the notion that development of any sort is continuous.

Pride in the school and respect for its fabric is evident at all levels. Very good behaviour and some outstanding displays give a clear indication of the standards expected at the school and put in place by the headteacher and her staff. Interviews with the School Council revealed an articulate group of pupils with clear ideas about how they could help the school. Pupils demonstrated their understanding of the school as a place which respects individual differences every day. Relations between pupils and with adults are strong. Pupils are fully confident that there is an adult to whom they can turn with any difficulty. The governing body has a very good understanding of the school and its needs. Governors demonstrate that understanding and their commitment through the very frequent interaction they have with the school community. They are prepared to challenge and support the school in order to ensure that the education provided, in religious education as in other subjects, is of a very high quality.

Religious Education (R.E.) is at the heart of the school's work. The R.E. curriculum is based on the 'Here I Am' Religious Education programme of study, recommended by the Bishop of the Diocese, and which is fully implemented. Teachers make very good use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) and a range of visual aids to engage pupils with the R.E. curriculum. It is also enhanced by different visits and visitors. Attainment is above average. In R.E. lessons, pupils are encouraged to reflect on their experiences and to apply the principles they are taught to their everyday life, as in the way they help to serve and clear up after each other in the dining hall at lunchtime. This serves to reinforce spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is a strength of the school. Most groups of pupils make good progress and some make outstanding progress. In an excellent Reception class lesson, pupils made rapid progress because the idea of Jesus' self-giving was carefully linked to the children's own promises about self-giving.

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in R.E. is good and improving. Lessons are well planned. Teaching is most effective in enthusing pupils in those lessons where they are given opportunities to lead the learning by reporting back on their reactions to challenge and where they give the reasons for their opinions. Teachers and support staff work closely together to ensure that pupils are well nurtured in learning and that pastoral care is of a very high quality. Display reflects the variety and opportunities for reflection presented by the curriculum on offer. Learning objectives are carefully stated; teachers check that they are understood. All exercise books are regularly marked. The best examples contain both praise and detailed guidance on the way to take work forward. The school is working to enhance its rigorous assessment procedures so that all pupils understand the next steps in their learning and can reach the highest levels in R.E. as in other subjects. Behaviour in class is exemplary because pupils have high expectations of each other, which are reflective of their teachers' expectations.

The Headteacher is also R.E. Co-ordinator which reinforces the role of religious education at the heart of the school. She is currently focusing on ensuring that R.E. lessons are more interactive, through further use of ICT and exploration of cross curricular links, while losing none of the rigour that the school expects from delivery in this high-profile subject. The school meets both the national and diocesan requirements for the allocation of curriculum time for taught R.E.

All aspects of spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding are outstanding. Pupils have a well-developed sense of right and wrong. Relationships throughout the community are excellent as exemplified by the way older pupils look after younger ones. The many cultures now represented in the community are highlighted by display and shared activities. All pupils live and learn together harmoniously. There are strong local and parish links as well as a well-developed connection with an inner-city London school which serves to enrich both school communities. Pupils are aware of their responsibilities towards global development and are always ready to raise funds for worthy causes. The prayerful atmosphere in the school is established through well-prepared assemblies at the start of each day attended by all staff and pupils and centred on Gospel values.

### **What needs to be improved?**

- **Embed cross-curricular links in R.E. by incorporating them in all R.E. lesson planning. Ensure that lessons provide consistently outstanding opportunities for pupils to reflect on their learning in R.E. and meet the school's rigorous expectations that assessment always allows all pupils to understand the next steps in their learning.**

The Inspectors endorse the areas identified by the school for improvement in the Section 48 Self-Evaluation Form.

Holy Cross Catholic Academy displays an outstanding Catholic ethos with an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement. All members of the community are committed to the school, as exemplified by the parent who stopped the inspectors because he simply had to tell them how good the school was and how happy his child was in it.