



DIOCESAN CANONICAL INSPECTION REPORT

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL, COLLECTIVE WORSHIP AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Holy Cross Catholic Voluntary Academy

Parsonwood Hill, Whitwick, Leicestershire, LE67 5AT

School URN:	138297
Inspection Date:	07 March 2016
Inspectors:	Fionuala Boucher and Anne Recchia

Overall Effectiveness	Previous Inspection:	Good	2
	This Inspection:	Good	2
Catholic Life:		Good	2
Collective Worship:		Good	2
Religious Education:		Good	2

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

Holy Cross Catholic Voluntary Academy is a good Catholic school.

- Holy Cross Catholic Academy is a welcoming school where pupils feel valued and part of an inclusive Catholic community. The strength of the positive relationships fostered within the community is a strength of the school. The school is well led and managed by the effective, committed headteacher whose clear vision has brought the school through a challenging period. The school's self-evaluation is both honest and accurate and based on sound evidence and consultation with all stakeholders.
- The quality of the Catholic Life of the school is good. Pupils are proud of their school and understand its distinctiveness. Their behaviour reflects the strong spiritual social and moral ethos of the school. The mission is prominent in the school's environment and spoken about readily by the pupils.
- The quality of Collective Worship in the school is good. Senior leaders are strong role models in their delivery of quality Acts of Worship. Pupils enjoy participating in Collective Worship, they show respect and reverence during times of prayer. Pupils' skills in planning and leading liturgy are being well developed. Leaders and managers understand the strengths and areas for development in this aspect of the school through careful monitoring and evaluation. The use of a wider range of prayer styles would further enhance pupils' response, engagement and participation in prayer and worship.
- The quality of Religious Education is good. Although there are some inconsistencies in teaching and learning, and in the volume and quality of Religious Education work produced in workbooks, pupils at Holy Cross become religiously literate, able to link their work in Religious Education to their lives in the school and the wider world. Pupils are engaged and enthused by good quality lessons led by knowledgeable and committed staff. Leaders and managers, including governors, are relentless in their drive to continually improve provision.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- Holy Cross School converted to become a Catholic Voluntary Academy in July 2012. The current headteacher has been in post since January 2013.
- Holy Cross serves the parish of the same name in Whitwick and is smaller than the average-sized primary school. 67% of pupils are baptised Catholics; 23% of pupils belong to other Christian faith groups; 3% of pupils have another faith background; 7% of pupils have no religious affiliation.
- The school population is more stable than in most schools nationally, with few pupils entering or leaving other than at the normal times. The vast majority of pupils move onto secondary school within the Catholic sector.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and only a few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, in local authority care or with a parent in the armed forces) is 13%.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities supported at SEND school support is high at 17%; the proportion of pupils with an Educational, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or Statement is 3%.
- School improvement plans include the development of nursery provision in the near future.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Improve systems for more accurately monitoring progress in Religious Education by:
 - Ensuring that baseline assessments are thoroughly carried out when pupils first enter the school in order to more accurately measure and monitor progress from starting points.
 - Ensuring that the volume and quality of work produced by pupils in Religious Education lessons across all year groups is consistent, taking into account pupils' age and level of attainment.
- Develop the use of a wider range of prayer styles to further enhance pupils' response, engagement and participation in prayer and worship.
- Further develop the monitoring and evaluation of the Catholic Life of the school by pupils.

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL	2
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- The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.
- The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school - good

- At Holy Cross Academy, it is evident from pupils' behaviour and positive relationships that there is an appreciation of what it means to be part of an inclusive community. Pupils understand and are able to articulate the school's distinctive Catholic ethos and are enthusiastic about their contribution to this. They are generous in their time and talents to raise money for local, national and global charities and have a good understanding of why it is important to support those who are less fortunate than themselves.
- As pupils progress through the school, they are given increased responsibilities with many eager to be members of the chaplaincy team and school council. They know and understand the mission of the school; they mention it often in class and are keen to live out its message in the school.
- Pupils understand the need to forgive and be forgiven. One pupil summed up what happens at the school, 'We learn that no one is perfect, everyone makes mistakes but if we ask God he will always forgive us'.
- Pupils in the chaplaincy team are particularly influential in developing positive attitudes. They say that pupils are able to 'open up to us' and they understand the importance of being role models for developing the school's mission.
- Pupils actively engage with the parish, wider community and the diocese. They were very proud of the fact that pupils from the neighbouring Church of England school came to Holy Cross to find out about their involvement in the Year of Mercy.
- The evaluation of the Catholic Life of the school by pupils is at an early stage and needs to be developed further.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school - good

- The school mission is lived out and evident in the effective relationships developed within the whole school community and the pastoral care offered to all. There is a tangible sense of the school's Catholic identity through, images, displays, photographs and religious icons and statues displayed throughout the school.
- Behaviour of pupils at Holy Cross Academy is good. The school has high expectations of its pupils in terms of behaviour and they in turn are testament to the efforts of staff and governors to promote Gospel values through policy and practice.
- The Relationship and Sex Education programme has been recently revised following diocesan guidelines. It has been thoughtfully designed and carefully planned, involving all stakeholders in its development. British values, The Personal, Health Social and Emotional (PHSE) programme and the Religious Education curriculum are closely linked and support the Catholic ethos of the school and the Church's social teaching.
- Staff at Holy Cross are committed to the Catholic Life of the school. There is a palpable desire from the head teacher, senior leadership team and staff to continually improve this. This was evident on the day of the inspection through discussions with pupils and staff and within the Religious Education lessons where the mission statement, 'In the light of Jesus we love, listen and grow' was referred to frequently.
- The headteacher and senior leadership team now need to reflect on the positive impact their work is having on pupils and staff alike and celebrate their achievements. This will impact on the confidence and morale of all.
- The parish priest sees the school as 'a vital organ of the parish'. He recognizes that the school population has changed over the years but sees the pupils as the parish of the future and is keen to encourage the strong parish school partnership.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school – good

- The headteacher and senior leadership team are deeply committed to the Catholic Life of the school. They understand their responsibility and are outstanding role models bearing witness to the mission of the Church.
- The monitoring and evaluation of the Catholic Life of the school is given a high priority by leaders and managers. A range of monitoring activities is used to gather evidence. These are analysed effectively to determine the impact of provision on outcomes for pupils. Consequently, the headteacher and senior leaders do have accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses in this area. Further pupil involvement in this process would ensure pupils have more of a voice in developing and improving the Catholic Life of the school.
- The leadership team has sought the assistance and support from the diocesan advisor in systematically improving the Catholic Life. This has raised the Catholic profile of the school and has ensured that pupils are able to articulate the school's distinctive mission well.

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- The views of parents are regularly sought through questionnaires and the termly breakfast focus groups led by the headteacher. They are supportive of the school and its ethos and are made to feel welcome at school events.
- The governing body is well informed and proactive in supporting the school. They are passionate about the mission and its implementation through both policy and practice. They have been increasingly more involved in the process of self-evaluation and are beginning to effectively hold the headteacher and leadership team to account.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP	2
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well pupils respond to and participate in the school’s Collective Worship. 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of provision for the Collective Worship. 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship. 	2

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school’s Collective Worship - good

- Pupils act with reverence and are keen to participate in Collective Worship. During whole school Acts of Worship, the older pupils support younger pupils and are able to model good prayerful and respectful behaviour. Pupils from a very young age are able to take part in the traditional prayers of the Church and reflect in silence. Prayer punctuates the day and is an integral part of the pupils’ school life.
- Pupils in the chaplaincy group regularly prepare and lead worship in the classroom. They work in pairs alongside each class group helping to develop the liturgical skills of the pupils. Pupils regularly evaluate the impact of their worship in order to improve provision.
- Pupils use a variety of approaches to prayer, which includes scripture, religious artifacts and liturgical music. The use of a wider range of prayer styles would further enhance pupils’ response, engagement and participation in prayer and worship.
- Most pupils have a good understanding of liturgical seasons and feasts. During the inspection pupils were obviously involved in Lenten activities, which reinforced their understanding of the Church’s season and their commitment to the poor and needy of the world.
- Pupils understand that prayer and worship have a significant effect on their moral and spiritual understanding. Many are able to articulate this and talk about how it ‘helps us to learn about Jesus and live like him’.
- The weekly rosary group gives pupils an opportunity to pray alongside members of the parish community and share their faith with the wider community.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship - good

- Prayer and Collective Worship is part of almost all school celebrations. Staff and pupils regularly pray together and this has a positive impact on the whole school community.
- Acts of Collective Worship are well resourced and planned to reflect the liturgical seasons and celebrations of the Church. The parish priest regularly invites pupils to the church for the parish Mass and takes this opportunity to talk to the pupils about the Eucharist.
- The school has prioritized the need to provide training to develop the skills of the chaplaincy team, using the expertise within the school and the religious community at Mount Saint Bernard Abbey. As a result, the team is becoming increasingly more skilled at planning and leading worship and improving the liturgical skills of younger pupils.
- Attendance at Acts of Collective worship by members of the wider community, including parents and carers is facilitated by the school. Parents report that they are made to feel welcome and their views are actively sought to improve provision.
- Classrooms reflect the school's ethos of prayer and worship. Teachers provide pupils with areas for reflection, where they amass a collection of prayers written to use in times of daily class prayer; these reflect both the church's liturgical year and the interests of the pupils.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship - good

- The headteacher and senior leaders know how to deliver quality Acts of Collective Worship; they are models of good practice for staff and pupils. They are responsive to the needs of the pupils and the liturgical rhythms of the Church and are keen to involve pupils in the wider Church as evidenced by the school's response to the Year of Mercy.
- Leaders and managers, including governors, effectively monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship as part of the school's self-evaluation cycle; as a result they have a clear view of the strengths and areas for development. Their plans for improvement are thus founded on sound evidence including the views of pupils, staff and parents.
- The headteacher and Religious Education subject leader use their knowledge and expertise to support staff and pupils in their liturgical development. Plans to further develop alternative forms of worship will improve provision and give pupils an even richer experience of liturgy.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION	2
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- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.
- The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

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How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education – good

- Pupils enjoy and achieve to a good level in Religious Education. Pupils clearly enjoy their learning in this subject and certainly know its value: ‘In Religious Education lessons, I feel closer to God and if I get stuck, he can help me’. Pupils are keen to do well, reporting that they find their lessons both challenging and interesting.
- Pupils are studious in their work. They engage with marking recommendations from teachers.
- Pupils can explain how they intend to improve their work; they can make links between what they are learning and how this can be applied to everyday life, showing a deep understanding of the relevance of the curriculum to their personal development: Key Stage 2 children say, ‘The teacher takes our ideas and makes them into a task, linking it to our life and her life – to put it into practical terms’. Visible progress is evident in lessons: for example within one lesson, Key Stage 1 pupils move from recognising aspects of a familiar Bible story to retelling it in greater depth and then successfully writing an ‘I was there’ account.
- Most pupils make good and consistent progress: an upward trend of results can be seen over the last three years, showing marked improvements across the school. Even in their early talking, role play and sharing of ideas in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 classrooms, pupils translate experiences and discussion into a firm basis for knowledge and understanding as they move upwards through the school. An extensive amount of work is produced from children in almost all classes: the school now needs to ensure that the volume of work produced in each year group is consistent, reflecting pupils’ ages and capacity.
- Young children in the school are developing the ability to use religious language: for example, they show an understanding of familiar Bible stories and can talk and record their knowledge, in simple words and pictures. By more carefully noting Religious Education attainment and understanding on entry to the school, pupils’ progress could be more accurately monitored from their various starting points.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education – good

- Teachers' subject knowledge is secure throughout the school, partly due to the support provided for staff and the clear focus that has been set for development in this area. The high value placed on Religious Education means that pupils and staff alike recognise its importance and centrality to the school curriculum.
- In the main, the curriculum is creatively adapted to meet the needs and interests of pupils. Pace in lessons can be variable, but it is mainly good. In the best lessons, teachers use a wide range of methods to engage learners, such as photos, drama and letters; they enable pupils to record their work in interesting ways, for example, through grids, posters, letters, annotations and charts, within varied individual, paired, group and class tasks; they ensure that pupil talk outweighs teacher talk during lessons. Where pace is slower, both the teachers' questioning and the learning intention are less sharply focussed, leading to compliant rather than deep learning taking place.
- Assessment in Religious Education is systematic, leading to good understanding of the attainment and progress of pupils: further improvements in the accuracy of baseline assessments would strengthen this area further. Marking is very consistent and is a strength within Religious Education: as a result, progress is becoming more accelerated. *'Signs of success'* are well established across the school and are evident in workbooks, clearly highlighting the criteria for successful learning; challenge is evident across all ability levels. This aspect is not yet outstanding due to occasional inconsistencies, such as work not being completed in some instances or there being less work in some pupils' books indicating some gaps in learning.
- Pupil evaluation is in place; achievement is celebrated regularly and pupils are able to discuss and recognise their own achievements and areas for development. Most pupils are on track to reach diocesan averages; they can talk with good understanding about 'where they are' and the levels to which they aspire.

The extent to which leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education – good

- Leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of Religious Education to a good and improving effect. They are accurate in their judgements – even a little harsh, on occasion, due to their unrelenting focus on improvement. There is a good level of support for staff: this can be seen in the training provided for members of established staff as well as for those only recently appointed to the staff team. The subject leader, and senior staff, keep everyone up-to-date with current thinking and ensure that continual professional development is well focused; they are wholeheartedly committed to their roles.
- Good use of skilled teaching assistant support, aids learning and ensures that work can be carefully differentiated to the needs of groups and individuals. Part of the culture at Holy Cross is to ensure that Religious Education receives a high level of support time for learners in this important core subject. Adults in the classroom are therefore well prepared, involved and key facilitators of effective learning: this also reflects the governing body's commitment to quality provision for pupils.

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- Good use of support systems ensures that leaders and managers maintain strong links within and outside the diocese. High quality advice from the advisor for Religious Education has enabled the subject leader and staff to hone their skills in moderating pupils' work and further develop the consistency of expectations across the school. Joint working within the Trust has enhanced provision through shared in-service training and staff meetings, aligning Holy Cross pupil outcomes with those of other schools. Opportunities have not been missed by leaders and managers, who have been driven since the last inspection towards securing improvement.
- The curriculum for Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) has undergone significant review since the last inspection; plans are in place for the new programme to be fully rolled out imminently, following significant training and planning in line with diocesan advice. Senior leaders have agreed to deliver the first round of this teaching themselves, sharing good practice with colleagues and being role models within the school community.
- Members of the governing body show an unfailing drive and commitment in their support of the school community. Their own training needs have been addressed through, for example, attending sessions on being a Governor within Catholic education. They are heavily involved in school developments, such as the revision of the mission statement – 'In the light of Jesus we love, listen and grow'; they carried out a monitoring visit throughout the school to ascertain how evident and alive the school's mission is in everyday school life. Governors are clear about the latest advice about matters, such as British Values; they have had a positive impact on school/parish links; they are included in book scrutiny work; they link their termly visits to school improvement plan priorities. Governors are effective in carrying out their role and as such are well placed to sustain and build on further improvements, meeting the requirements of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales in almost every respect.

SCHOOL DETAILS

School Name	Holy Cross Catholic Voluntary Academy
Unique Reference Number	138297
Local Authority	Leicestershire

The inspection of this school was carried out on behalf of the Bishop of Nottingham under Canon 806 of Canon Law in accordance with the Evaluation Schedule for diocesan canonical inspections in the Diocese of Nottingham. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. The process begins with the school's own self-evaluation and the inspection schedule is in line with the criteria set by the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers (NBRIA).

During the inspection, the inspectors observed 7 Religious Education lessons, 2 Act of Collective Worship.

Meetings were held with the headteacher, the subject leader for Religious Education, two governors and the parish priest. Discussions were also held with pupils and parents.

The inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including reports of the governing body, action plans, the school improvement plan, monitoring forms, assessment data and tracking and parental response forms and examined the work in pupils' Religious Education books.

Chair of Governors:	Mrs Gillian Weaver
Headteacher:	Mrs Siobhan Minford
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WHAT INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS MEAN

Within the report, the following grades are used:

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

In the context of the whole school, the overall effectiveness grades have the following meaning:

Grade 1	Outstanding	The school is a highly effective Catholic school. Pupils' needs are exceptionally well met.
Grade 2	Good	The school is an effective Catholic school. Pupils' needs are met well.
Grade 3	Requires Improvement	The school is not yet a good Catholic school, it is not inadequate however, and there are aspects that require improvement. There will be a monitoring visit within the next 12 months and the school will be re-inspected within 3 years.
Grade 4	Inadequate	There are features in need of urgent and immediate attention. The school is not meeting the basic minimum requirement for adequacy as a Catholic school. The school will receive an annual monitoring visit and will be re-inspected within 3 years.