



**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION  
REPORT**  
(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

on

**THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL  
AND  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

**School:** Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

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**School URN:** 120225

**Headteacher:** Miss Julia Christy

**Chair of Governors:** Mrs Elizabeth Harris

**Inspectors:** Mr Gregory Hughes  
Mrs Anne Recchia

**Date of Inspection:** 19 March 2014

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The inspection of this school was carried out on behalf of the Bishop of Nottingham under Canon 806 of Canon Law and Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in accordance with the Diocese of Nottingham Schedule for Section 48 Inspections. 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 6 Religious Education lessons, 2 Acts of Collective Worship and a small prayer group.

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

The inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including assessment information and tracking data, financial data, the school improvement plan, monitoring information, governors' records and self-evaluation documents. Inspectors also examined the work in pupils' Religious Education books.

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. It serves the parishes of Holy Cross , Leicester, St. John Bosco, Eyres Monsall, St. Mary's, South Wigston and St. Edward's, Leicester. 45% of pupils are baptised Catholics, 25% are from other Christian backgrounds, 1% are from other world faiths and 28% of pupils have no religious affiliation. Almost half of the pupils are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. A quarter of all pupils speak English as an additional language. The ratio of boys to girls in each class varies considerably.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, there is a Nursery class each morning and one class of Reception children. Both of these classes share the same spacious accommodation. The proportion of pupils supported by additional government funding through the pupil premium is high. In this school, it mostly applies to pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.

Over the past two years, there have been significant staff changes and currently Key Stage 2 staffing is still not settled. Two teachers in the school are newly qualified and a senior leader is on maternity leave.

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# INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

**OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS**

**3**

**CATHOLIC LIFE**

**3**

**COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

**3**

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

**3**

## KEY FINDINGS

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School is a school that requires improvement.

The school has a caring ethos and is well regarded by parents. It caters well for pupils who are vulnerable and need the nurturing care that staff provide. Behaviour of pupils is good and relationships are harmonious and supportive within the school. It has good links with the local parishes and the local Catholic secondary school that most pupils feed into. Catholic Life has recently been a focus for school improvement, the mission statement has been revised and governors have formed a committee to specifically monitor this area. Consideration should now be given to seeking the views of other stakeholders including pupils so that they can also be part of the monitoring and evaluation process.

The majority of collective worship is planned and led by adults within the school. Pupils enjoy taking part and act with reverence. Mass is celebrated at key times throughout the year and non-Eucharistic liturgies follow the liturgical year and the 'Come and See' scheme. Provision requires improvement however, as opportunities for pupils to plan, lead and evaluate liturgies are still in their infancy. As a consequence, the development of pupils' liturgical skills are inconsistent. This was an issue for improvement at the last inspection and remains an issue. The monitoring of Collective Worship is undertaken mainly by the subject leader for Religious Education but is not sufficiently evaluative to ensure that areas of development are tackled effectively and in a timely fashion.

The school has been through a turbulent period where there has been instability in staffing which has led to inconsistency in the quality of teaching. Pupils' progress in Religious Education has been inconsistent and this has impacted on attainment. The Religious Education programme recommended by the diocese has been introduced and is in its second year of operation. It is not however being strictly adhered to which is leading to topics being missed, some confusion about year specific work and difficulties in tracking pupils' progress effectively. Self-evaluation is not rigorous enough to make use of data collected and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Assessment for learning is not consistently used to ensure that every pupil knows how well they are doing and what steps are needed to improve their work

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further. This remains an issue from the previous inspection. Plans for development are not effectively monitored to ensure that timely interventions leading to improvements in standards in Religious Education are implemented.

### **WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

- Use a rigorous process of self-evaluation to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the Catholic Life of the school, Collective Worship and Religious Education.
    - Develop a system of monitoring and evaluation that drives through improvements in an effective and timely manner.
    - Develop realistic and achievable targets for improvement that use data and information gathered effectively, are time constrained, realistically resourced and funded.
    - Involve all stakeholders in this process.
  - Develop the role of pupils in the planning and leading of worship and the contribution that they make to develop the Catholic ethos of the school.
    - Develop the liturgical skills of pupils consistently over time so that they become more independent and less reliant on adult support in liturgy and prayer.
  - Improve the quality of teaching in Religious Education to ensure that all teaching is at least good.
    - Develop a system that identifies groups of pupils and tracks their progress in Religious Education. Identify those pupils or groups that fall below expected levels and ensure interventions, differentiation and support strategies are in place to close the gap in achievement rapidly and hold teachers to account.
    - Ensure inconsistencies in the appropriate use of the 'Come and See' programme are addressed without delay and that all teachers are working from the age-appropriate material.
    - Ensure that World Faith topics are taught effectively in the time periods recommended by the diocese.
    - Develop effective assessment for learning strategies in order for pupils to know how well they are doing and how they can improve their work further.
    - Celebrate and share good practice effectively both within the school and with other local Catholic schools.
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# CATHOLIC LIFE

## THE QUALITY OF 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.
- 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 requires improvement. Although a minority of pupils have a superficial involvement in shaping the school's ethos, they have not been fully involved in evaluating and shaping its mission. Pupils therefore find it difficult to articulate the distinctive nature of the school and are passively involved in activities that promote the school's ethos. The behaviour of most pupils is good almost all of the time. They generally have good relationships with one another, are caring and considerate to those in need and responsive to requests for charitable giving. Pupils feel happy and secure; they receive good personal support from staff within the school. Nurture and intervention groups are effective in supporting those pupils at times when they are most vulnerable. A minority of pupils understand what it means to have a vocation but the majority do not fully understand how this connects with their everyday lives. They have limited understanding of the religious beliefs of others principally because the curriculum has not been followed appropriately in the past with specific world faith units which are clearly outlined in the 'Come and See' programme being omitted.

The mission statement has recently been revised and updated by governors and staff and is a clear expression of the Church's educational mission. This now needs to be used more effectively to develop a corporate image for the school in order for staff and pupils to identify with it effectively. Although most staff can identify with some of the demands of the school's mission statement, there are some inconsistencies mainly due to instability in staffing over recent years. Attention should be given to the outward signs of the school's Catholic identity so that the learning environment truly reflects the school's mission. The pastoral care of pupils is good and is a strength of the school. There are programmes in place for the delivery of PSHE and SRE although these are not necessarily given equal priority to other lessons consistently throughout the school. The pastoral needs of the staff are well met by the caring senior leadership team. The school regularly communicates high expectations of behaviour to pupils. There is an effective behaviour policy in place that is known and understood by teachers and pupils alike. To develop this further, pupils need to take some ownership of the policy and personal responsibility for their own behaviour and not rely too heavily on the direction of adults.

Leaders and managers demonstrate a public commitment to the mission of the school and take very seriously the care and welfare of all pupils. The school's self-evaluation cycle is in place and identifies areas for improvement but there is a lack of strategic planning to ensure that issues are dealt with in a timely fashion which would improve pupils' spiritual and moral development. The monitoring and evaluation of the Catholic Life of the school would

benefit from more depth and rigour. At times, there seems to be an over emphasis on the barriers that prevent improvements rather than developing the opportunities for growth and improvement. Issues arising from the last Section 48 inspection have not been effectively prioritised and dealt with. Governors have recently set up a committee focusing on the Catholic Life of the school but this is in its early stages and their monitoring and evaluation role is in the developmental stage whilst skills are being consolidated. The impact that this is having on the development of the Catholic Life is therefore minimal as there has not been concerted and maintained monitoring over a number of years. Local priests are regular visitors to the school and make efforts to involve the school in the life of the parish. Parents are generally supportive of the school. The school makes good efforts to involve parents in their child’s learning and offer adult education and support groups on a regular basis.

## COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

### THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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

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- The quality of provision for Collective Worship. 

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

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Pupils regularly take part in the prayer life of the school. They participate in opportunities to sing and pray quietly and join in community prayers. During the Act of Worship observed during the inspection on a Lenten theme, pupils joined in a signed hymn enthusiastically and contributed to the liturgy with prayers and readings. However, there was an over-reliance on adults planning and leading the worship and pupils were unable to relate the message of the liturgy to their own lives when asked to do so. From an early age, pupils are introduced to prayers of the Church and they begin to compose their own prayers. They are aware of the liturgical seasons, the major feasts of the Church and understand the difference between formal liturgies and non-Eucharistic liturgies. However, there is a lack of whole school liturgy planning which ensures that pupils can engage in liturgical seasons in a timely and personally significant way.

Pupils are beginning to use the ‘Let us Pray’ resource to plan and lead their own worship but this is not a consistent picture across the school and is in its infancy in some classes. A developmental approach to this is now needed to ensure pupils’ enthusiasm and liturgical skills are nurtured and improved. Currently, most of the leadership and initiative in terms of worship is adult led and driven. Pupils are generally respectful of others with different beliefs but lack the knowledge and understanding of the difference and the need to accommodate this. Pupils know that prayer is important and that this is one aspect of the school that makes it distinctive. However, they find it difficult to articulate its effect on their own personal development.

Although effort has been made to develop resources for worship, they have not been given the priority needed to inspire and engage pupils. Liturgy boxes have been purchased and

now need to be used systematically and clearly for children to take ownership and develop their skills. Prayer opportunities are often routine. The subject leader for Religious Education takes the lead in planning and leading worship but now needs to be more conscious of the need to involve pupils more fully in the liturgical life of the school. Parents and other adults associated with the school are invited to attend key celebrations and some do respond to this. Staff also organise liturgies under the Religious Education subject leader's guidance. However, little time is spent on innovation and encouraging pupil leadership. Staff development opportunities led by the diocesan Religious Education Adviser have served to increase staff awareness and this is beginning to have an impact in some classes but is not consistently implemented in all.

Monitoring of Collective Worship tends to be a celebration and record of what has taken place rather than an analytical and evaluative process that identifies the strengths and weaknesses. A clearer focus on this will bring about more rapid improvements. Whilst the school sometimes seeks the views of pupils, parents and carers regarding the significance of Collective Worship and its impact on the spiritual and moral development of pupils, this is not carried out systematically or frequently enough. The analysis of this information does not contain enough rigour to identify the weaknesses and gaps in provision. Leaders and managers acknowledge and accept that there are areas for improvement following external evaluations however, action points are not acted upon and monitored with the necessary urgency to bring about effective change. Governors need to play a more active role in the monitoring of Collective Worship. They are a relatively new governing body, keen to develop their role as critical friend but need to acquire the skills to ask searching questions in order to challenge the leadership team and hold the school to account.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

### **THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

<b>3</b>
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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 (including governors) monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

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Most pupils generally enjoy Religious Education lessons, they concentrate well and behaviour for learning is good, disruptions to lessons are rare. Pupils are keen to do well and apply themselves diligently to lessons. Pupils on entry to Holy Cross School have little or no knowledge and understanding in Religious Education. However, they make good progress in the Foundation Stage and the majority are prepared for work appropriate to their age by the time they reach the beginning of Key Stage 1. By the end of Key Stage 1 last year, a very large majority of pupils reached age-appropriate levels in Religious Education with many exceeding these. However, progress is less consistent this year; pupils' books show that some work has not been covered and trends over time show inconsistencies in progress and a dip in the proportion of pupils reaching age-appropriate expected levels. By the end of Key Stage 2 last year, a large majority of pupils reached levels in line with diocesan and national expectations with a minority exceeding these. Although this is consistent with diocesan

averages, there are currently some gaps in progress where work in pupils' books show topics have not been effectively covered and some omitted altogether. In these instances pupils are not receiving their full entitlement to 10% of the curriculum given to Religious Education – a requirement of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. In one class, two thirds of the pupils have not made any progress since September 2013. With these inconsistencies in the quality of learning in both Key Stages 1 and 2, progress in Religious Education requires improvement.

The quality of teaching is inconsistent in both Key Stages 1 and 2 and requires improvement. These inconsistencies have not been addressed by the headteacher and leadership team with sufficient rigour to ensure that enough teaching is good. The teaching that is good can be celebrated and built upon, but there is some inadequate teaching. Teachers use a variety of teaching methods with varying degrees of success. Where teaching is good, teachers share the learning objective and highlight the relevant 'driver words' for the session. Success criteria are also shared making the expected outcomes clear to the pupils who are enthusiastic about their work and make good progress in lessons. Differentiation in these lessons is used to challenge children. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to scaffold learning and focus children on the tasks set. Where teaching is less than good and sometimes inadequate, the pace of learning is too slow and Religious Education content is limited. Pupils spend too long listening to teacher input and are not actively involved in a substantial part of the lesson to ensure that sufficient progress is made both within the lesson and over time. Differentiation in some classes is not evident, tasks are not well matched to the ability of pupils and there is no account of previous learning. Pupils in some classes are not sure of the title of the topic that they are studying. This illustrates a need for a whole school, coherent approach to the delivery and content of Religious Education.

Assessment is inconsistent and requires development. Level expectations, based on the Levels of Attainment document are shared in some classes but not in others. This has resulted in some pupils being unaware of their current progress and performance levels. Marking and assessment of Religious Education is inconsistent and is not having sufficient impact within the school to raise standards. Evidence of praise and self-assessment using traffic light colours is evident in some classes but not in others. Peer assessment opportunities are sometimes missed and teachers' comments are not always focused on target setting and future challenge. As a result, progress is not as rapid as it could be. Examples of good practice within the school need to be cascaded throughout to create uniformity and greater clarity of expectations for both teachers and pupils.

The Religious Education curriculum and the 'Come and See' scheme is not currently being adhered to as recommended by the diocese. In upper Key Stage 2, the school has decided to teach the current topic on a two-year cycle. However, the school is made up of single form entry groupings and therefore the Year 6 section of the scheme has been omitted. The weeks assigned to the teaching of other World Faiths have also been omitted across all key stages – this is a diocesan requirement. Tracking of pupils' progress is ineffective and work is not always set at the correct and appropriately challenging level for more able pupils. A closer adherence to the programme will ensure that year specific teachers build up their own bank of resources to be used and adapted to changing cohort abilities and sizes.

The subject leader for Religious Education and headteacher are aware of a number of issues to tackle from the previous inspection, however these areas for improvement remain. A coherent plan with timed deadlines needs to be drawn up as a matter of urgency. Tracking

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of pupil progress needs to be more effective with data collected used to inform pupils' next steps and to hold teachers to account. Some monitoring is undertaken but it is more of a 'commentary' of events rather than a critical eye on improvement planning. The subject leader for Religious Education is enthusiastic about her role. She has successfully mentored a number of newly qualified teachers and other members of staff. She engages with the diocese by attending courses and has a good understanding of what is required in terms of planning and what resources are available. For example, she is aware of 'Statements to live by' and their usage and relevance but has not, as yet, used them effectively as a tool to develop pupils' spiritual and moral growth. There now needs to be a clear drive to improve provision and a robust action plan implemented to promote a coherent whole school approach to the delivery, monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education.

Holy Cross works closely with English Martyrs' Secondary School on their SRE education and this has been successful, particularly with transition children. Working more with Catholic primary schools in the diocese, sharing good practice, undertaking activities such as learning walks as well as year group quality assurance through scrutiny of work and assessment of Religious Education would also be advantageous in accelerating confidence in monitoring and evaluating provision. The relatively newly formed governing body is becoming more informed about their responsibilities. They are aware of gaps in delivery of the scheme of work and are supportive of the headteacher and senior leaders in ensuring that all pupils make expected progress. Together rapid and sustained improvements can be achieved in the promoting, monitoring and evaluating of the provision for Religious Education.

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## WHAT INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS MEAN

Within the report, the following grades are used:

<b>Grade 1</b>	Outstanding
<b>Grade 2</b>	Good
<b>Grade 3</b>	Requires improvement
<b>Grade 4</b>	Inadequate

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

<b>Grade 1</b>	Outstanding	The school is a highly effective Catholic school. Pupils' needs are exceptionally well met.
<b>Grade 2</b>	Good	The school is an effective Catholic school. Pupils' needs are met well.
<b>Grade 3</b>	Requires improvement	The school is not yet a good Catholic school, it is not inadequate however, there are aspects that require improvement.
<b>Grade 4</b>	Inadequate	There are features in need of urgent and immediate attention. The school is not meeting the basic minimum requirement for adequacy. The school will receive a monitoring visit within twelve months.

