

Inspection of a good school: Holy Cross School A Catholic Voluntary Academy

Parsonwood Hill, Whitwick, Coalville, Leicestershire LE67 5AT

Inspection dates:

4–5 February 2020

Outcome

Holy Cross School A Catholic Voluntary Academy continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Holy Cross is a caring and nurturing school. All adults know the pupils well and help them learn to be kind to one another. Pupils do this through looking after the school pet gecko or through the charitable work they organise, such as setting up a clothing bank. The Catholic faith is important in the daily life of everyone in school. One pupil stated that everyone tries hard to live out the school motto, 'In the light of Jesus we love, listen and grow.'

Leaders want to broaden pupils' horizons through their curriculum. Pupils enjoy coming to school and say they learn something new every day. They develop a love of reading and most become fluent readers. Not all pupils get off to the best start in reading, as leaders have not organised the curriculum well enough.

Pupils work hard and focus well in lessons. Many take pride in their work. Pupils show respect to adults. They are well behaved, including at breaktimes. Pupils have extra help when they find it hard to control their feelings or behaviour.

Pupils feel safe in school. They say that bullying is rare but, if it happens, the adults sort it out effectively.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders know that reading is important. They have changed the way the youngest pupils learn to read. However, they have not made sure that phonics is taught consistently well. Teachers do not make sure that pupils have enough opportunities to practise the sounds that they are learning and blend them to make words. This means that they cannot read the books that they are given fluently. Leaders do not ensure that pupils who fall behind catch up quickly.

Teachers read to pupils every day. They ensure that pupils develop skills to understand what they are reading. Pupils are motivated to read regularly. Older pupils select books matched to their attainment. They enjoy online quizzes that check their comprehension after reading.

Leaders have an ambitious vision for the teaching of mathematics. They want pupils to be able to use what they know to think more deeply and solve problems. Some teachers understand the subject well. They break up the learning into manageable steps. They provide practical resources which help pupils understand. Often, pupils move on to more demanding tasks. However, this is not yet consistent in all classes. Not all pupils build well on what they learned before.

Leaders are changing the curriculum so that pupils develop the right skills and a deeper understanding of subjects. Staff are working together to develop the sequence for teaching each subject. This is helping teachers plan lessons to help pupils remember more and build on what they already know. In history, for example, older pupils connect learning about the Second World War with previous learning about the First World War. They explain the changes caused by the introduction of airplanes to warfare. They understand reasons propaganda was used in war time. Pupils enjoy visiting places such as Bletchley Park. This brings their learning to life. However, the work on sequencing the curriculum is at an early stage. The curriculum in some subjects is not planned as well. Leaders are in the process of reviewing the planning for these subjects. They have clear plans to address this.

Teachers adapt lesson activities for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) effectively. Specialist teaching assistants support some pupils with complex needs.

Staff in the early years develop positive relationships with children. Children are curious learners. They follow instructions and listen carefully to adults. Children are developing a good understanding of numbers and counting. Many children in the Reception class are confident with mark making and writing. They try hard to form letters correctly. Children become resilient and confident as they encounter new challenges. For example, during the inspection younger pupils were learning how to ride balance bikes safely.

Leaders want pupils to become 'outward looking'. They arrange visits to museums and National Trust locations to broaden their horizons. Pupils develop an understanding of a range of faiths and cultures. For example, pupils recently visited a synagogue. Leaders want pupils to understand and appreciate their local community. Pupils are motivated to improve their local area by picking up litter and raising their concerns with the local council. Pupils become active citizens and many have roles of responsibility. Staff ensure that pupils take part in a range of clubs and sporting activities. Pupils are proud to be sports ambassadors and organise lunchtime table tennis tournaments.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff have received up-to-date safeguarding training. They know the signs to look for which might mean that a child is at risk of harm. Leaders know families and pupils well, and respond quickly to concerns raised by staff. They work with the local authority and other agencies to ensure that pupils get the help they need.

Pupils learn how to keep safe. They understand how to keep safe when they are online. Older pupils talked about their recent visit to Warning Zone in Leicester. They found this enlightening and learned how to avoid many potential dangers.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not ensured that there is a coherent and systematic approach to teaching phonics. Teachers do not have the expert knowledge they need to teach phonics consistently and effectively. Pupils do not have the chance to practise blending the sounds they are learning so that they can read texts fluently. When pupils are falling behind they are not given the help that they need to keep up with their peers. Leaders need to ensure that staff have the training that they need to develop a well-sequenced and systematic approach to the teaching of phonics. They should ensure that it is effectively implemented to ensure that all pupils can become fluent early readers.
- Leaders have not made sure that the teaching of mathematics is consistent across the school. Not all teachers present new concepts clearly. As a result, some pupils struggle to understand and apply the concepts and skills they are learning. Leaders should ensure that teachers have the subject knowledge that they need so that they can help all pupils to know more and remember more.
- The school's curriculum is not yet sufficiently coherently planned and sequenced in some subjects. Pupils' knowledge and skills are not yet developed well in these areas. It is clear from the actions that leaders have already taken in relation to the history curriculum, and from their clear plans for reviewing the remaining subjects, that they are in the process of bringing this about. Leaders must ensure that subject leaders and teachers receive the training and support they need to develop and implement these plans effectively.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 4–5 May 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

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The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	138297
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	10121266
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	160
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sarah Noon
Headteacher	Siobhan Minford
Website	www.holycrosswhitwick.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 May 2016 under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi-Academy Trust.

Information about this inspection

- I met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and a range of subject leaders. I also met with the chief executive officer and a director of the trust and the chair of the local governing body.
- The following subjects were considered in depth: reading, mathematics and history. This involved speaking with leaders and teachers, visiting lessons, speaking with pupils and looking at samples of their work.
- I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school and spoke with pupils about their understanding of bullying.
- I considered a range of documents relating to safeguarding, and spoke with leaders, staff and pupils about safeguarding arrangements.

Inspection team

Claire Stylianides, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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