

Inspection of Holy Cross School A Catholic Voluntary Academy

Parsonwood Hill, Whitwick, Coalville, Leicestershire LE67 5AT

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 May 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils to achieve well, especially the most disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There is a clear focus on academic achievement. However, leaders also have a strong vision for how the school develops its pupils beyond the academic curriculum. As one parent typically stated: 'Although academic success is important, I am very happy to send my child to a school that has a more rounded approach.' All staff share leaders' ambitions for success.

This is a happy school. Pupils enjoy attending. They get on well together and care for each other. Leaders have established roles, such as the Year 6 school prefects, who look after the younger pupils. They help these pupils to settle during assembly and support them at playtimes. As one prefect said: 'It's like being a mini-teacher.' Pupils behave well. They learn how to regulate their behaviour and be respectful to others. Pupils make sure everyone has someone to play with at playtime.

Leaders ensure that pupils make good use of the school's extensive grounds. Staff create opportunities to place learning into context in their forest school. Pupils learn how to keep safe in the countryside and care for the environment.

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

Learning to read is a real priority at this school. Pupils learn to read as soon as they join in the Reception Year. Leaders are passionate about the importance of teaching pupils to be able to read well. There is a consistent approach to teaching phonics. Leaders make sure that all staff have the expertise to deliver the phonics programme. Leaders make regular checks on what pupils know. As a consequence, any gaps in pupils' learning are swiftly identified. Teachers provide appropriate support. Pupils quickly catch up if they fall behind. Beyond phonics, leaders have invested heavily to ensure that pupils have books to excite them to read. Teachers make reading fun. As one pupil said: 'Whole class reading sessions feel special.'

Leaders have established an ambitious curriculum. Subject leaders have a clear vision for their subjects. Curriculum documentation is clear, so teachers deliver it in the right logical sequence. For example, in physical education (PE), leaders ensure that the skills and knowledge learned about tennis in Year 3 are built upon across key stage 2. Teachers have good subject knowledge. In a few lessons, teachers are not as ambitious as they could be for all pupils. Teachers make sure that pupils draw upon previous learning at the beginning of lessons. They check what pupils remember and adjust lessons to fill gaps in learning.

In the early years foundations stage (EYFS), leaders focus on personal and emotional development. Teachers use books effectively to help children learn about their emotions and how to behave well. Adults model language and how to communicate with each other. The curriculum helps to build knowledge over time. Well-structured and organised activities engage children. Staff check what pupils can

do. They make adaptations to activities where children need more practise. Leaders encourage independence. Pupils can select their own resources, but they know they must clear up after themselves. Children enjoy their learning in EYFS.

Pupils with SEND are and feel well supported. Staff are clear on what help these pupils require. This is because they work with the pupils to write individual plans. Targets for pupils with SEND are simple and understood. Teachers adapt learning to make it accessible and achievable for pupils with SEND. They know staff have high expectations of them.

Pupils behave well. All staff apply the behaviour policy consistently. Pupils say the amber and red warning card system reminds them how to behave. There is little low-level disruption. Should it occur staff deal with it. Pupils get on well with each other and enjoy coming to school. As a consequence, pupils attend regularly.

Pupils enjoy the opportunity to hold positions of responsibility. The 'eco-team' make sure that staff and pupils consider the environment. Pupils and staff make changes in their behaviour as a consequence. For example, turning off lights and making draft excluders to stop heat escaping. Pupils learn to understand the concepts of equality and inclusion. They understand that there are many kinds of relationships. Pupils learn about different cultures and religions. Leaders use books effectively to enable pupils to recognise the importance of being themselves.

Leaders consider staff well-being. Subject leaders get time to undertake many of their responsibilities. In a few subjects, they have not had the opportunity to explore the impact of their intended curriculum. Governors undertake their role diligently. Leaders appreciate the support from the trust which has been timely and effective.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are vigilant to any potential signs of harm. They receive regular update training. Leaders ensure that staff remember what they have learned through mini quizzes. Staff use systems for recording any potential concerns effectively. These systems are regularly scrutinised by leaders. Leaders are swift to respond to concerns. They are tenacious to get the support pupils and families need. Leaders make sure that only appropriate adults work in the school.

Pupils feel safe. They learn how to keep themselves safe when working online. Pupils know they can share any concerns with trusted adults.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few lessons teachers are not as ambitious as they could be for all pupils. As a consequence, opportunities are lacking to deepen pupils' understanding of what they are learning. Leaders should ensure that the work they have started in this area has its full impact.
- In a few subjects, subject leaders have not had the opportunity to explore the impact of their intended curriculum. As a consequence, there are some inconsistencies in how the curriculum is delivered. Senior leaders should ensure that subject leaders have the time to check that their subjects are consistently delivered and make any necessary improvements.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

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

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	10254775
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	141
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sarah Noon
Executive headteacher	Catherine Murphy
Website	www.holycrosswhitwick.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	4 and 5 February 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school does not make use of any alternative providers.
- The school was last inspected under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in March 2016. This was undertaken by the Catholic Diocese of Nottingham.
- The school has appointed a new executive headteacher since the last inspection.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and the SEND coordinator.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in four subjects: reading, mathematics, PE, and art and design. To do this, they met with curriculum leaders, visited lessons,

looked at pupils' work, listened to pupils read and met with teachers and pupils. They also looked at curriculum documentation for history.

- The lead inspector met with two members of the local governing body, including the chair and the chair of trustees.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer and the director of performance and standards from the trust.
- The lead inspector took account of the responses to Ofsted's free-text service for parents and the Ofsted Parent View survey. An inspector spoke informally to parents outside the school. Inspectors spoke to pupils and staff.
- Records of attendance, behaviour and safeguarding were scrutinised. This included the school's single central record. Inspectors also conducted meetings with leaders to discuss the safeguarding of pupils.
- Inspectors considered pupils' behaviour at various times of day, including in lessons, around the school site and at lunchtime.

Inspection team

Mark Anderson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jay Virk

Ofsted Inspector

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