



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for
Holy Cross Catholic Voluntary Academy

URN: 138297

Carried out on behalf of the Right Rev. Patrick McKinney, Bishop of Nottingham on:

Date: 13-14 December 2023

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The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	✓
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	✓
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- Holy Cross is a welcoming, inclusive Catholic school which promotes the welfare and wellbeing of all pupils and staff.
- The school is a hub for the community which brings parishioners and the school family together.
- Leaders are approachable, respected and committed. They are ambitious for the future success of the school.
- Pupils enjoy religious education lessons and make strong connections between what they learn about Jesus and how they apply this to their daily lives.
- Prayer is central to school life. Time and care are devoted to ensuring that pupils are exposed to a range of prayer and liturgy opportunities.

What the school needs to improve:

- Develop pupils' independence in planning and leading whole school and class celebrations of the word.
- Develop clear systems of relevant and specific feedback so the pupils understand explicitly what they need to do to make progress in religious education.

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

Pupils play a central part in shaping the Catholic life and mission of the school. They work hard and are proud of their school. They live out the school motto, 'in the light of Jesus we love, listen and grow'. Pupils are happy and feel supported in a community where they, 'all link together and do everything in God's name'. House captains lead pupils in the raising of money for chosen charities and an active eco team demonstrates a clear understanding of the necessity to respond to Catholic Social Teaching by protecting the environment, with activities such as litter picking. Pupils work closely with outside agencies, such as local food banks, as well as financially supporting charities such as the British Heart Foundation, Menphys and Rainbows. They also support international appeals through Cafod. The church and school share the same grounds, which enables pupils to attend feast day Masses and community events. Pupils sing for parishioners and support fund raising events. Pupils are very caring towards one another: Christian values underpin how they act and relate to their peers. Their behaviour is exemplary throughout the school day and there is a tangible respect for self and others. The well-established chaplaincy team is spiritually active, supporting other pupils in their faith development and promoting the school's Catholic mission.

Staff are invested in the mission of the school to provide a faith-filled and safe environment for all pupils. They say, 'Catholic life is important in our school and children know that we live out our faith through our words and actions'. The school reaches out to the most vulnerable families, ensuring that they feel supported and valued. The lay chaplain is establishing herself as a positive role model, working across all year groups and providing support and guidance. Displays promote many aspects of Catholic life: the lives of special saints are celebrated and there are defined sacred spaces within the school environment which allow pupils the opportunity to reflect and interact with their faith. Protected characteristics are highlighted, encouraging pupils to show respect for all people. The school's relationships, sex and health education curriculum meets statutory and diocesan requirements and staff have benefitted from training in this area.

Leaders and governors are committed and driven to ensuring that the Catholic faith permeates daily practice. They engage fully with the diocese and strive to ensure that the parish is closely involved throughout the liturgical year. All stakeholders feel welcome in the school, which is a hub for the parish. A number of fundraising initiatives and charitable events welcome parishioners into the life of the school. The newly formed governing body expresses excitement about building and sustaining the school for future generations. Staffing structures and personnel have changed over the last few years and there is now a stability and continuity that has created a strong base of faith promotion. Links with the local Catholic partner school have been established and this has led to the sharing of expertise. Staff are role models who attend diocesan training and formation ensuring that they stay up-to-date with new initiatives. The induction of new staff is prioritised, ensuring attendance on diocesan courses and the allocation of a mentor for guidance and support.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

2

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....

2

On entry, pupils have a limited knowledge of religious education. They make good progress through to the end of Key Stage 1, particularly if they have come through the school nursery. The vast majority of pupils make expected progress by the end of Key Stage 2 and attainment is in line with other core curriculum subjects. Pupils say that they enjoy their lessons and they participate with enthusiasm. As topics evolve, lessons build upon previous learning and this motivates pupils to achieve well. Pupils' engagement in lessons and commitment to learning allows them to know, remember and do more as they move through the learning programme. A good example of this can be found in how well pupils develop their knowledge of scripture. Pupils are religiously literate and can articulate their learning confidently: they think deeply and can say how what they have learned in religious education lessons might affect their religious commitment in everyday life. Pupils are able to articulate the key vocabulary around religious seasons such as Advent. Pupils' workbooks are well presented, showing pupils' pride in producing and completing their best work; assessed pieces illustrate that pupils retain what they have been taught. Pupils find religious education is as challenging as their other core subjects. Although they know that they are expected to do their best, pupils are not clear about the success criteria for their work or know how to fully achieve, or exceed, expectations. Marking is being developed in order to give pupils a clear understanding of what they have achieved.

Teachers plan lessons well and are confident in delivering the 'Come and See' programme of study. Teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage are trialling materials for the new religious education curriculum, reflecting the commitment staff have to this core subject and the drive for continual improvement. Teachers have good subject and pedagogical knowledge; they are confident and follow agreed planning formats. Marking systems are being adapted to ensure year-on-year consistency. Lessons begin with prayer. 'Flashback questions' at the beginning of lessons revise prior knowledge and learning challenges are incorporated, which link to the relevant 'driver words'. The 'big question' and

reference to the 'head, heart and cloud' help pupils to reflect on their learning. Knowledge organisers include relevant vocabulary to aid pupils' understanding of key words. Teachers use praise effectively and this encourages pupils to offer their thoughts and ideas readily. A variety of teaching methods are used, such as role-play and art, which help to engage and enthuse pupils. Learning objectives do not fully show pupils what they need to do to produce work of the best quality. Teaching assistants are effective and are particularly good at supporting the vulnerable pupils, ensuring that all pupils are able to access and engage with the curriculum, and be part of peer group activities.

Religious education has parity with other subjects in terms of continuing professional development and financial resources. Leaders are committed to developing and implementing a rich and comprehensive curriculum for all pupils. They are supportive of all staff, ensuring that they receive relevant training. Teachers new to the school feel fully supported and are mentored effectively. They attend the necessary diocesan training and sessions. Standards are good rather than outstanding because of an inconsistency in outcomes across the whole school. Moderation takes place regularly, internally and externally, with the diocese as well as within the St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi-Academy Trust and the linked partner school. Governors are aware of standards in religious education through scrutiny of work and reports from pupil progress reviews. Leaders are ambitious to continue to improve current practice.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

1



Celebrations of the word are central to the life of the school, with all pupils participating each week. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to include their families in the school community's prayer life. Pupils participate fully in times for prayer and liturgy, thoughtfully responding to the messages shared and relating these to their own lives. They respond well to prayer and sing joyfully. During moments of quiet reflection, pupils behave reverently. Pupils say that prayerful experiences at school have had an impact on them, such as teaching them the importance of 'sharing': as a result, they say that they have been moved to act by donating to the parish food bank. The lay chaplain works with pupils one day a week to prepare celebrations of the word. The chaplaincy team provides prayer times both indoors and outdoors at break times. Whilst pupils' confidence to lead liturgy independently is not fully embedded, pupils are willing to undertake this ministry. They select appropriate passages of scripture and can explain how prayer areas reflect specific liturgical seasons.

There is a developed daily pattern of prayer within the school. Scripture is used well to support prayer and liturgy within the school, demonstrated when adults and older pupils confidently lead prayer and reflections. Evidence shows that pupils know how to structure celebrations of the word and that they understand the components involved, such as including a clear mission with time for appropriate pupil responses. Staff are articulate and confident leaders of the celebration of the word. They timetable a wide variety of opportunities for prayer and liturgy in different styles. The introduction of Lectio Divina helps pupils to pray together and discuss scripture. The 'LetUsPray2gether' resources have been introduced as a key planning tool and pupils are becoming more confident in using this resource to shape class celebrations of the word. All classes have large liturgical prayer books which capture previous liturgical celebrations and include pupil evaluation. The school environment has been creatively designed with spirituality in mind and is conducive to prayer. Each classroom has its own prayer space, but other zones, such as the chaplaincy area, are also quiet spaces where pupils are

encouraged to take time to reflect. Pupils appreciate these spaces and take ownership of them. 'The passion shown in worship time by both staff and pupils is lovely to be a part of' is a typical response from parents.

Leaders and governors are committed to ensuring that there is quality provision involving all pupils participating and taking more ownership of prayer and liturgy. They lead celebrations of the word with knowledge and confidence. There is an established structure for whole school prayer planned around the liturgical year. Leaders understand many ways of praying and are deeply familiar with the lectionary, missal, and liturgical calendar. There are times of focus upon the angelus, 'button prayers' and the rosary during the year. Prayer focal areas are thoughtfully created to support prayerful participation. Pupils and staff go to Mass in the parish church on holy days of obligation and for celebrations during the school year. The school fosters a flourishing partnership with the community to develop the prayer life of the school, providing opportunities to share faith openly and inviting parents into the school to pray and reflect together. Staff, including new teachers, receive professional development training in relation to liturgical formation and the planning of prayer and liturgy. The school's high quality of support for all staff ensures that prayer and liturgy at Holy Cross is of a high standard. The school has invested in religious artefacts and liturgical cloths to create a focal point for celebrations of the word. Self-evaluation correctly highlights areas for ongoing school improvement.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Holy Cross Catholic Voluntary Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	138297
Full postal address of the school	Parsonwood Hill, Whitwick, Coalville, Leicestershire, LE67 5AT
School phone number	01530 832 799
Name of head teacher or principal	Catherine Murphy, Executive Headteacher
Chair of governing board	Sarah Noon, Acting Chair of Governors
School Website	https://www.holycrosswhitwick.co.uk/
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi-Academy Trust
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Trustees	Nottingham Roman Catholic Diocesan Trustees
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	07 March 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Greg Hughes	Lead inspector
Robert della-Spina	Team inspector
Name of inspector	
Name of inspector	Lead/team

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement

