



Holy Cross RC Primary School

Coniston Road, Wallsend, Tyne and Wear, NE28 OEP

School Unique Reference Number: **108623**

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| Inspection dates: | 06 07 October 2015 |
| Lead inspector: | Barbara Simpson |

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| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Good | 2 |
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Catholic Life: | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Collective Worship: | | Good | 2 |
| Religious Education: | | Good | 2 |

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

Holy Cross RC Primary School is a good Catholic school because:

- The Catholic Life of the school is outstanding because the well-being and personal and spiritual development of each pupil is at the heart of the school's vision and the staff and governors are united in implementing this across all areas of school life.
- The quality of Collective Worship is good because it is central to the life of the school and all pupils, from a very young age, are reverent, respectful and enthusiastic during worship.
- The quality of Religious Education is good because pupils enjoy their Religious Education lessons, can explain their value and are keen to do well, leading to good progress in most lessons.

It is not yet outstanding because:

- Pupils across the school are not yet skilled in planning and leading Collective Worship independently in a variety of forms.
- In Religious Education there are inconsistencies across the school in the range and variety of activities provided for pupils.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- Holy Cross is an average-sized primary school.
- Pupils are taught in seven single year-group classes from reception to year six.
- The school has part-time nursery provision.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the Pupil Premium is above average.
- A below average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, while an average proportion speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Improve the quality of Collective Worship by:
 - Developing opportunities for pupil involvement in planning, preparing and leading Collective Worship independently across the school.
- Improve the quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education by:
 - Ensuring a wider and more creative range of teaching strategies are implemented throughout the school.
 - Ensuring that additional adult support consistently contributes to pupil progress.
 - Ensuring that appropriate levels of challenge and questioning are integral to teaching and learning, and that this is also reflected in marking prompts for the most able.

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 is outstanding.

- Pupils and their families are at the centre of the school’s mission statement. All the pupils from reception class are able to recite the statement and most have a good understanding of how to live it out through their actions.
- Pupils have a deep sense of belonging to their school family. They speak confidently of the school’s Catholic character and what this means. ‘We believe in Jesus and live as Jesus wants us to’.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the liturgical calendar and the key events and celebrations of the Church’s year.
- Pupils enthusiastically take a leading role in activities which support the Catholic ethos of the school and benefit the wider community, such as Mini Vinnies, growing vegetables for CAFOD lunches, and supporting the People’s Kitchen. Some pupils have spontaneously instigated fundraising activities from home.
- Holy Cross is an inclusive school. The whole community enthusiastically welcomes newcomers and is very supportive of families in difficulty.
- Links between the school and parish are strong, effective and nurtured.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary because pupils develop the skills of negotiation, tolerance and forgiveness.
- Pupils contribute to the monitoring and evaluation process through the school council. They are listened to and their suggestions acted on.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- The core of the school’s mission statement, ‘... the promotion of equality, dignity and the love of learning through following Jesus in all that we do’, is lived out in the provision of the Catholic Life of the school and is particularly evident in relationships between pupils and between staff and pupils and their families.
- There is a very strong emphasis on welcoming and supporting families, which is strongly facilitated through the recently established pastoral team. Parents talk very warmly about the help and support they have received from the school, such as following bereavement and how much they value this.

- There are many other systems in place to support vulnerable pupils, e.g. the 'transformers' programme for boys and a popular breakfast club which is free for all pupils.
- The learning environment is a reflection of the school's Catholic character, evidenced through displays, artefacts and the creation of sacred spaces throughout the school. A newly developed chapel is highly valued by pupils, parents, staff and the parish community.
- Statements to live by are prominently displayed throughout the school and are clearly used to help pupils to live in the way Jesus wants them to.
- Personal, social and health education programmes and relationship and sex education programmes are in place and refer explicitly to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a very clear understanding of Catholic education and the role of the Catholic school in the mission of the Church. They act as positive role models and effectively monitor and promote the Catholic Life of the school through a range of means, including questionnaires, professional development, staff meetings and reviews. As a result they know the strengths and weaknesses of the school very well.
- The governing body is highly ambitious for the Catholic Life of the school and leads by example in its consistent emphasising of Catholic Life as a school improvement priority. Governors are deeply committed to the school's mission, are actively involved in its evaluation and are ready to set a challenging strategic vision as well as providing the appropriate level of support to achieve it.
- The Catholic Life of the school is included in the performance management cycle of all staff, when specific targets are set.
- By establishing the pastoral team, leaders have developed highly successful strategies for engaging with almost all parents and carers, including those who have been hard to reach in the past. This is a priority for Holy Cross school and is fully supported by all staff and governors.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.
- The quality of provision for Collective Worship.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

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How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship is good.

- Holy Cross is a very prayerful community. Collective Worship engages the interest of all the pupils and they respond with enthusiasm.
- All pupils from nursery to year six participate with reverence and respect; joining in prayers with confidence and singing with enthusiasm. They enjoy writing their own prayers too.
- Pupils know what constitutes the various elements of Collective Worship and are able to prepare and lead class worship with increasing confidence and say that they enjoy doing so. However, worship is largely planned and prepared by staff so pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to plan and lead worship independently in a range of contexts.
- Most pupils have a good understanding of religious seasons and feasts and very much enjoy using their newly established school chapel, which they treat with respect and reverence.
- Pupils enjoy school Masses and relish having a part to play in them. They are able to articulate what being part of a prayerful community means to them and Collective Worship contributes significantly to pupils' spiritual and moral development.
- Older pupils enjoy using their prayer journals.
- Pupils enthusiastically and respectfully talk about other world faiths that they have learned about in their Religious Education lessons and were learning about Judaism during the inspection. Very few pupils had met anyone of another faith, although several pupils mentioned taking part in Holocaust Day.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is good.

- The prayer life of the school is given a very high priority.
- Staff prayer is creatively planned, using background notes, prayers and readings from the Statements to Live By and Come and See. Reflections on church documents, such as the Joy of the Gospel and the Year of Mercy are shared in staff meetings.
- Pupils are given many opportunities to pray in different forms and settings, e.g. in class, in the school chapel and using prayer journals.
- There is a clear policy for Collective Worship and the school ensures that it is regular and inclusive. Themes are based on the liturgical calendar, the scheme of work and current topics. Families are involved in pupils' religious development through 'travelling cribs', Easter prayer bags and the Wednesday Word.

- Parents and carers enjoy attending whole school masses and they speak about them with enthusiasm, however they have limited opportunities to attend other school and class acts of worship.
- Acts of worship are well resourced and planned using diocesan guidelines. There is some good practice across the school in planning and preparing worship, however it is usually confined to the end of each Religious Education topic and is often very much teacher led. As yet not all pupils are presented with the opportunity to take age appropriate responsibility for creating liturgies or acts of worship.

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

- The headteacher and senior leaders are enthusiastic and know how to plan and deliver good quality experiences of Collective Worship. They have a deeply rooted understanding of the Church's liturgical year, its seasons, rites and symbols and ensure that displays and artefacts around the school reflect this.
- Through the school's monitoring and evaluation systems, including formal monitoring of class worship, leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development of Collective Worship and staff know that expectations are high. They also seek the views of parents and carers, pupils and governors to continuously strive to improve and enrich acts of worship.
- Monitoring and evaluation are underpinned by liturgical and spiritual development being part of the professional development for all staff. This is treated as a priority.
- Leaders model good practice for all members of staff through class and whole school Collective Worship and school Masses. They lead the school community in showing how Collective Worship can inspire their daily lives and that it is much more than a daily ritual.
- Leaders offer staff opportunities for professional development in Collective Worship through the diocese and the local cluster of Catholic schools, which are enthusiastically taken up.
- Governors are regular visitors to the school, taking part in Collective Worship and Masses and contributing to its monitoring and evaluation.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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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 is good.

- Most pupils enjoy Religious Education and can explain its value. They understand that it is a core subject and are keen to do well. They work hard during lessons and behaviour for learning is excellent. Pupils say that they enjoy lessons most when they include a variety of activities, including drama or role play.
- Pupils are able to use a variety of religious vocabulary and are able to make links between their own lives and experiences and the life of Jesus. The youngest pupils are able to articulate that Jesus wants them to live like him.
- Pupils in most classes acquire knowledge quickly and are able to identify links with previous learning. They are developing well in their knowledge and understanding as well as their ability to reflect on meaning and are able to consider the impact of religious ideas on their lives.
- All groups of pupils make good progress in Religious Education lessons and over time, given their starting points. Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities make similar progress to those without.
- Pupils have an understanding of how well they have done and how to improve, although the quality of suggestions for improvement do not stretch the most able. Most pupils work hard and presentation of work is of a high standard. They respond articulately and enthusiastically to questioning.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is good.

- The quality of teaching is mainly good with some outstanding practice. Therefore most pupils and groups of pupils make good progress over time.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and they use diocesan plans and guidance to good effect. Tasks are usually effectively differentiated to meet the variety of pupils' needs.
- The school has a good range of resources and strategies to promote learning. Lessons observed during the inspection included the use of video, talk partners, individual and group work, however the range of activities is not consistent across the school and in some lessons progress slows when pupils are required to listen to the teacher for extended periods, leading to loss of concentration.
- Most teachers have high expectations, although opportunities to extend pupils' learning through skilled questioning are sometimes missed.

- Additional adult support is mostly used well although in lessons which were centred on the teacher; additional adults contributed less to pupils' progress. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.
- Marking and feedback are carried out regularly across the school and pupils are given time to make improvements. There are examples in books of high quality feedback, leading to good quality improvements; however this level of quality is not consistent across the school. Pupils are increasingly involved in evaluating how well they have done and effort and achievement are celebrated.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is good.

- Senior leaders are committed, knowledgeable, enthusiastic and well informed about current developments in Religious Education.
- Leaders ensure that their vision for Religious Education is shared through staff meetings, briefings and staff attendance at diocesan training events. As a result Religious Education has a high profile in the school and is well planned to meet the needs of all the pupils.
- Religious Education compares favourably with other core subjects in terms of staffing, resources and time; although very few staff have the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies. Leaders are however, committed to providing training and support when there are staff changes.
- Through a programme of systematic and rigorous monitoring activities, including learning walks, lesson observation, work scrutiny and moderation, leaders have an accurate picture of achievement.
- Robust tracking and analysis provide a firm basis for diagnosing strengths and areas for development. Planning for improvement is therefore based upon sound evidence and data and the school is well placed to improve and support teaching.
- Governors hold leaders to account for performance in Religious Education and are regularly involved in monitoring activities.
- Pupils have access to good quality sacramental preparation led by parish catechists and supported by the school.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

HOW EFFECTIVE THE SCHOOL IS IN PROVIDING CATHOLIC EDUCATION:**2****CATHOLIC LIFE:****1**

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

1

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

1

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

1

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP:**2**

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

2

The quality of provision for Collective Worship.

2

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

2

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:**2**

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.

2

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.

2

How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

2

SCHOOL DETAILS

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| School name | Holy Cross RC Primary School |
| Unique reference number | 108623 |
| Local authority | North Tyneside |
| This Inspection Report is produced for the Rt. Reverend Séamus Cunningham the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle Diocese under canon 806 of Canon Law. For voluntary aided schools it also fulfils the responsibility the Governing Body has to inspect the school under s48 of the Education Act 2005. | |
| Chair of governors | Mr Nigel Huscroft |
| Head teacher | Mr Andrew James |
| Date of previous school inspection | July 2011 |
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