



INSPECTION REPORT

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Dean lane, Bedminster, Bristol BS3 1DB

Telephone: 01173772199

e-mail address: holycrossp@bristol.gov.uk

DfES Number: 3401

URN: 109244

Headteacher: Mr Andrew Newport

Chair of Governors: Mr Chris Fayers

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Clifton
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of inspection: January 26-27th 2012
Date of previous inspection: November 2008

Reporting Inspector: Mr Joseph Skivington

Description of School

A smaller than average Catholic primary school, Holy Cross has 164 pupils on roll 38% of whom are Catholic. The children are mainly White British and drawn from mixed socio economic backgrounds. There is a higher than average percentage of Catholic teachers at 70%. On entry pupils' religious knowledge and experience is below average. The parish is a well established community with the church adjacent to the school. The links with the parish are strong and developing further.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1: Outstanding; Grade 2: Good; Grade 3: Satisfactory; Grade 4: Unsatisfactory

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 2

Holy Cross provides a good Catholic education for all its pupils and has some outstanding features. It is a fully inclusive community where all are welcome and accepted as individuals made in the image of God, and its ethos is characterised by openness to all, with strong and close links to the parents, the parish, and the wider community. Pupils participate enthusiastically in and respond well to the excellent faith enriching provision for prayer life and liturgy. Outcomes from the religious education programme are good, the result of good teaching and purposeful learning. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as the others, because of effective interventions, extra support in lessons, and tasks clearly suited to their learning needs. The religious education programme makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development.

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

Grade 2

The school's capacity to sustain the quality of care and education it provides is good. The school has maintained the previous good performance noted at the last inspection, and has a strong Catholic ethos and tradition which leaders and managers nurture tirelessly.

Self evaluation at all levels is grounded in accurate analysis and effective review. The processes for managing the performance of staff and for their professional development are used well. The areas for improvement from the last inspection were to encourage more extended, reflective writing, which has greatly improved, and to develop the quality of all teachers' marking to make it more challenging and helpful in showing pupils how to improve. This is still an area of comparative weakness where progress has been slowed by the unavoidable extended absences of the RE coordinator. The ongoing assessment and tracking of pupils' progress, although in place, has lost some momentum and impact for the same reason. The school's self knowledge and evaluation is good and both governors and senior leadership are refocused on the main priorities with clear and measurable objectives both medium and long term.

What the school should do to improve further

- Embed assessment and tracking data urgently and incisively, focussing on the progress over time of each individual pupil, and use this data more smartly to inform teaching strategies and better tailored lesson objectives.
- Replicate the quality of creative, reflective and imaginative writing in literacy, in the written tasks in religious education.

How good are outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups?

Grade 1

Pupils are fully involved in the Catholic life of the school and make an excellent contribution to it, not least by their excellent behaviour, which contributes to their own learning and the ethos of the school. They are able to explain what the school's mission statement means to them and what they can do to live it out. They know their voice is heard through the school council and they take responsibility for their own lives and the care of the younger children. They are always keen to become even more involved. They absorb easily the shared values lived out in the Catholic ethos of the school and have a sound awareness of spiritual and moral matters which they are able to articulate well. They respond generously to the needs of others beyond the school, and this makes a valuable contribution to the welcoming openness and inclusivity of the school. Many are involved in fundraising for a variety of charities both home and overseas, for instance, Cafod and Operation Christmas Child amongst many others.

Their response to and participation in the prayer life of the school is outstanding. They participate fully in liturgies, assemblies and the Mass, and they say enthusiastically that they would like to take ownership more fully of the planning and presenting of their own liturgies. They sing joyously, and compose beautiful personal prayers. Their demeanour and reverence at prayer during the inspection were exemplary, even the very youngest aware of the special time of prayer and the symbolism of the lit candle as Jesus the Light of the World

Achievement and progress in religious education is good overall. Prior attainment on entry is below expectation, but by the end of Key Stage 2 pupils attain in line with what is expected. This represents good progress. Progress at Key Stage 1 is particularly good thanks to the consistently high quality teaching here, with some outstanding teaching observed during the inspection. Progress of the older pupils, however, could be better than good if they were made more aware, through levelling, targets and formative feedback, of what stage they were at, and specifically what they must do to improve. Learning outcomes for all groups of pupils, especially those with special educational needs, is sound; particularly in learning from religion and connecting faith to life. The children have a grasp of the main tenets of the Faith, for instance, the significance of the Last Supper, or the divinity of Jesus, as well as understanding the message of Jesus through His miracles and parables. In lessons pupils work hard and enjoy the subject, particularly when they are challenged and engaged by effective teaching strategies which successfully involve them in their own learning.

How effective are leaders and managers in developing the Catholic Life of the school?

Grade 2

Good leadership and management promote the Catholic life of the school effectively, with frequent monitoring, reviews, appraisal, and focussed planning for future improvement. The Catholic ethos of the school colours all of its activities. Care is taken to keep alive and in the forefront of everyone's mind, the mission of the school, with re-energising exercises which involve everyone at the start of the year, as well as substantial Inset for staff and governors on spirituality and Catholic education. Prayer life and liturgies are monitored and reviewed effectively, with a strengthening liaison between parish and school. The head teacher reports regularly to the governing body on the quality of Catholic life. The school development plan objectives are linked closely to performance management and monitored frequently. The effectiveness of leadership and management is seen in the high morale of the staff, the pupil's good care for one another, and the very good relationships between staff and pupils.

The governing body, with a recently appointed chair, is made up of knowledgeable and increasingly challenging members who are totally determined and committed to sustaining high standards in every area of school life. In this they have been highly successful. They engage very effectively with parents, pupils and staff as a whole and are well informed about users' views of the school. They use these views to inform strategic priorities for development. Newly appointed governors receive Catholic induction training. The parish priest and RE coordinator meet regularly to discuss the religious education programme, and plan liturgical celebrations which involve both parish and school. This results in excellent provision for the spiritual life of the whole school community. There is a new focus on raising the standards and progress of pupils in RE with both concern and challenge. All statutory and canonical responsibilities are met.

There is a clear policy adopted by governors and senior staff to promote community cohesion which is highly effective. The school has an openness to all, all are included in its life, and its generous outreach to the local and the global community is a real strength. The very make up of the school, with pupils from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, brings the global dimension into everyday life. Pupils' friendship bonds cross cultural, faith, social and economic boundaries, and crucially the school is seen from outside as a genuinely cohesive community. Parents from ethnic minorities are excellently supported through translation services, particularly for the Polish community. The school collaborates well with other schools and participates in community undertakings, including local charities, and acts as a host for the Southville Artstrail. The curriculum provides an exploration of other faith as well as excellent enrichment opportunities such as the Caring Together week and the World Religion week. Those of other denominations or faiths feel that they are able to express their own beliefs comfortably, and all feel included and welcomed into every aspect of school life. Acts of worship leave room for the other person's spiritual identity, their modes of expression and their values.

How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?

Grade 2

Provision for prayer life is outstanding, a real strength of the school, because it meets very effectively the spiritual needs of the pupils, be it through assemblies and liturgies, or the opportunities for retreat, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and support for the preparation

programme for First Holy Communion. There are many occasions during the day for spiritual nourishment through prayer and moments of reflection. The liturgical year is well marked and celebrated, particularly Advent, Lent and Holy Week. All pupils participate with enthusiasm and willingness, and as they move up the school, with growing confidence and conviction, some develop the skills of planning and presenting their own liturgies.

The curriculum meets well the needs of all groups of pupils, as well as meeting the Curriculum Directory for Religious Education requirements, such as the allocation of time. The syllabus loses some impact because it is not always well translated into effective and engaging schemes of work and lesson plans. Relationship education is dealt with sensitively and clearly from a Catholic standpoint. The beliefs of other faiths are explored through topics and world religion weeks. Resources are well managed, and ICT, art and music particularly are used to colour and enrich the learning experience. The colourful art work displays around the school reinforce the topics or liturgical seasons they are covering in RE, affirm the creators and educate others, and visibly declare the Catholic ethos of the school. Resources to support teaching, and to enliven and enrich the schemes of work, are good.

The quality of teaching and purposeful learning presents a mixed picture, with strengths lying in the earlier years, but overall good, with aspects both outstanding and satisfactory observed. Group and paired work were especially effective strategies because they provided peer learning and assessment which gave the pupils ownership of their own learning. Proactive teaching assistants provide invaluable support especially in allowing the teacher to split children into smaller groups with differentiated tasks tailored to their learning needs. In the outstanding lessons, teachers systematically and effectively check pupils' understanding throughout the lessons, anticipating where they may need to intervene and doing so with real impact on the quality of learning. The scrutiny of written work shows that interactive, formative marking is not consistent. It does not therefore make a real difference over time to the presentation, length and quality of pupils' work. Pupils work well and willingly, and behaviour in lessons is invariably good. They are enthusiastic about the subject.

Assessment procedures are not yet effectively embedded and only embryonic use is being made of levels to begin to monitor individual progress and achievement. Tracking of individual progress and grading is being developed but not yet providing teachers with a clearer picture of each pupil's strengths and where support and guidance are needed, in lesson plans and marking. The school is well aware that this data must urgently be translated into the lesson plans and lesson objectives in order to meet the specific learning needs of every pupil and raise both attainment and achievement levels to outstanding.