



ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

INSPECTION REPORT

HOLY CROSS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

ST. HELENS

Inspection Date	Tuesday 24 April 2012
Inspectors	Mrs. Denise Hegarty, Mrs Angela Williams
Unique Reference Number	104804

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Catholic Primary
Age range of pupils	3 – 11 years
Number on roll	182
Chair of Governors	Mr. J. Connelly
Head teacher	Mrs. M. Matthews
School address	Charles Street St. Helens Merseyside WA10 1LN
Telephone number	01744 678319
E-mail address	holycross@sthelens.org.uk
Date of last inspection	Tuesday 17 November 2009

Introduction

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

The report of the inspection is produced for the Archbishop of Liverpool (Code of Canon Law 804 and 806) and for the governors of the school.

The inspectors are members of the Christian Education Department and their associates approved by the Archbishop of Liverpool for this purpose.

Information about the school

Holy Cross is a smaller than average sized Catholic Primary School serving the parishes of Holy Cross and St Mary's, Lowe House in the St. Helens district of the Archdiocese. There are 182 children on roll of whom 115 are baptised Catholic, 18 come from other Christian denominations and 13 are from Catholic families. Four pupils come from other faith or religious traditions. Thirty two pupils have no specified religious affiliation. There are 10 teachers at the school 8 of whom teach Religious Education. Eight teachers are Catholic and 8 have a suitable qualification in Religious Education. Since the last inspection the school has started a significant programme of remodelling, refurbishment and redecoration which is ongoing.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

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Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school.

Inspection Judgements

Overall effectiveness:

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main Findings:-

Holy Cross is a good Catholic school. There is a clear vision for Catholic Education driven by the headteacher and embraced by the whole school community. Since the last inspection the school has maintained and built on its previous performance with most priorities for improvement having been addressed. The school is continuously striving to improve provision and this is particularly evident in the improving learning environment. Self evaluation is comprehensive and accurate.

Outcomes for pupils are good. There is no significant difference in performance between groups of pupils. Outcomes for pupils with additional or special needs are also good. Pupils have a positive attitude to learning, are very happy and are proud of their school. They are keen to participate in school activities and take on responsibilities which significantly contribute to the life of the school. Pupils enjoy taking part in a variety of liturgical celebrations and respond reverently and respectfully.

Teaching and learning in Religious Education is good which promotes good progress. Staff members are good role models for the pupils and offer a range of opportunities for reflection, prayer and worship. The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is good.

The school is successful in addressing the areas it has identified for improvement. Senior leaders are deeply motivated and consistently communicate high expectations to staff in order to secure improvement to outcomes and provision. Staff members are supported in their ongoing development. The dedicated headteacher has total commitment to the ethos and mission of Catholic education where continuous improvement in every aspect of school life is an ongoing priority. Governors are justly proud of their school and are loyal to it. The school has excellent relationships with the parents, the parish and the local community. Parents are very supportive and appreciate all the school does.

Given the dedication shown by the leadership of the school and the commitment to continuing professional development, there is good capacity for sustained improvement.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- Improve pupils' learning opportunities and raise standards by:
 - making better use of information gleaned in assessments to inform planning and track pupil progress;
 - making use of the language of the levels of attainment and the driver words consistently across the school in planning, questioning and in tasks given to pupils;
 - moderating work to ensure levelling is consistent across the school;
 - ensuring all teachers plan each whole topic in advance to give each element of the process due consideration.
- Improve provision for Collective Worship by:
 - equipping children with necessary skills to enable them to plan and lead Collective Worship in an age-appropriate manner;
 - using the 'Listen' element in Collective Worship more consistently to directly share Scripture with participants thus enabling its message to impact on their lives.
- Continue to implement the targets set out in the school's Self-Evaluation Document. That includes:
 - reviewing the school's Mission Statement in consultation with the whole school community;
 - increasing the rigour of the monitoring and evaluation processes in Religious Education.

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils

Pupils' achievements in Religious Education are good. On entry to school many children have limited knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith and they make very good progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities. Pupils' attainment in Religious Education is good. Analyses of assessments undertaken to date, discussions with children and scrutiny of their work provides evidence of pupils generally attaining appropriate levels for their age and stage of development in each key stage and in some cases, attainment is above average. There is no real difference in performance between pupils of different gender. Outcomes for pupils with additional or special needs are good. Pupils are becoming increasingly more literate as they become more familiar with the key words from the topics and can relate their own life experiences to the Christian understanding of the topics. Their knowledge, understanding and skills are appropriate to their age or capacity and some exceed expectations. Pupils are developing the skills that enable them to think spiritually, ethically and theologically and are becoming more aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. Children work well independently, in paired/shared activities and collaboratively showing diligence, interest and enthusiasm. They enjoy learning together and respect each others' view and opinions. They have positive attitudes to their work, present beautifully and behave very well during lessons.

Pupils are proud of their school and all it offers them. They willingly and eagerly take on responsibilities within and beyond the classroom and speak confidently about their life and school activities. They take an increasing responsibility for their actions and are considerate of others both in school and the wider

community. They are very actively involved in outreach work locally, nationally and globally and are also developing an understanding of the common good and an awareness of global responsibilities. Year 6 pupils spoke proudly of their involvement as Junior Road Safety Officers in looking after younger children. Thus, the children, throughout the school, make an outstanding contribution to its Catholic Life and clearly benefit greatly from it.

Pupils respond to, and participate well in Collective Worship. They are reverent, prayerful, reflective and respectful. Their knowledge of prayer and liturgy is increasing and they are becoming familiar with a variety of prayer styles. They join in community prayers appropriately and confidently. No-one is expected to act in a manner contrary to their beliefs and all show mutual respect. Pupils now need more opportunities to acquire the range of skills which will enable them to prepare and lead celebrations, themselves.

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils	
How well pupils achieve in Religious Education	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pupils' standards of attainment in Religious Education 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality of pupils' learning and their progress in Religious Education 	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	1
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	2

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education

The quality of teaching is consistently effective in ensuring that pupils are interested and engaged in their work and make good progress. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to work independently and collaboratively. Effective use is made of time and the resources used are modern and well deployed. Teachers and other adults use a variety of strategies to sustain and motivate pupils e.g. in their use of praise and rewards and in the positive encouragement given when marking.

The assessment of pupils' work in Religious Education is satisfactory. The school has undertaken strategies which provide information on the achievement of all the pupils. Teachers are becoming increasingly aware of the levels of attainment, and how to use assessment to identify and tackle underachievement. They need to use the information gleaned in future planning to ensure that given tasks are pitched at correct levels. Formal assessment tasks are undertaken appropriately and should be consistently recorded in line with guidance given by the Archdiocese. Work should now be moderated across the school to lead to more accurate levelling. Assessment information should be tracked and shared with governors to enable them to know what standards in Religious Education are like within the school in order that they can provide support and challenge. Achievement and effort are regularly and routinely celebrated. Pupils are affirmed and know how well they are doing. They often know the next steps to take to improve further.

The curriculum meets pupils' needs well. The school using the *'Here I Am'* programme recommended by the Archdiocese meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory for Religious Education. A whole school approach is used and appropriate levels of the programme are being followed in different classes. This ensures complete Religious Education entitlement for each child and meets National and Archdiocesan requirements. Of the total curriculum time 10% is allocated to Religious Education. This fulfils the requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales. Imaginative and well-planned strategies are deployed to enrich pupils' learning. The school implements new curriculum developments as appropriate, and adapts its curriculum accordingly to meet the varying needs of the pupils. A wide variety of enrichment and extra-curricular activities has a positive impact on the curriculum and ensures the children receive a holistic education regardless of their backgrounds. The 'Wednesday Word' is provided for families to share at home. The Religious Education curriculum provides outstanding opportunities for pupils' spiritual and moral development.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is good. It reflects the Catholic character of the school and takes into account the variety of faith backgrounds among the pupils. There are lovely focus areas in each classroom and devotional areas around the school. Collective Worship plays a key part in meeting the spiritual needs of the pupils. Children are enabled to pray formally and informally. The school provides opportunities and in-service for staff to develop the skills in planning and leading Collective Worship. Adults should now provide the necessary resources and opportunities to help children, themselves, to develop the skills necessary to plan, lead and participate more actively in Collective Worship. The parish priest is very generous with his time and provides many wonderful opportunities throughout the year for Class Masses and liturgies to which the parents and the parish community are invited. Other opportunities are provided for parents, carers and the members of the local community to join in a variety of celebrations of the *'Here I Am'* programme. A Celebration assembly takes place weekly to reward pupils for good work and behaviour.

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education	
The quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education	2
The effectiveness of assessment in Religious Education	3
The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	2

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

Leaders and managers promote and develop the Catholic life of the school well and show an excellent understanding of and commitment to, the Mission of the Church. This is reflected in the school's own motto, 'We Care, We Share, We value' and in its distinct Catholic ethos. The Mission Statement and its aims and practical objectives guide and direct every aspect of school life. Opportunities are provided for the staff and pupils to play an active part in Catholic life and mission of the school e.g. in outreach and charity work, in raising awareness of the needy etc. The school recognises the need to review

its Mission Statement with the whole community and to rationalise the aims and objectives that emanate from it.

There is deep commitment and drive for improvement demonstrated by the headteacher. Ongoing self evaluation ensures that continuous improvements are made in all aspects of the Catholic life of the school. The Self Evaluation Document provides evidence of the schools monitoring, searching analysis and self challenge. It is comprehensive and accurate. This analysis provides a basis to celebrate the schools strengths and outlines areas for development. If timescales and clear lines of accountability were included, it would become more rigorous and the school's priorities would be clearer. The school provides good induction and support for new teachers to enable them to understand the Church's mission in education and how to play their unique part in it. All members of staff are encouraged to continue their own professional development in Religious Education. A vast range of opportunities for Spiritual and Moral development are provided for staff and pupils.

Leaders and managers evaluate the school's performance, celebrate, and plan future improvements. The school has recognised the need to be more rigorous in the inclusion of Religious Education in its cycle for monitoring and evaluation. The co-ordinator has recently stepped down from her post and has previously fulfilled her role with enthusiasm and great commitment. New initiatives have been introduced when appropriate and good documentation guides and directs all staff in the delivery of the subject.

Governors are kept informed and discharge their responsibilities in a satisfactory manner. They have helped to shape the direction of the school by, for example, striving to promote and support the school's Catholic identity. They are loyal and committed to the Catholic life of the school and visit regularly. As the school tracks pupil achievement more formally in Religious Education, they will have the data to be able to understand the school's performance in the subject and monitor what is done to further raise standards. Governors are encouraged to attend Archdiocesan training sessions to enable them to further develop their roles.

Leadership at all levels respects difference, values diversity and ensures equal opportunities for all. Prayer, worship and the liturgical life of the school reflects and respects the religious diversity within the school community. There are positive relationships which lead to a caring learning environment for staff and pupils where all are valued for what they bring to the school community. Leaders and managers facilitate pupils' involvement in service to the immediate neighbourhood and the wider community. The new House System will have a further impact on this as each of the Houses has been allocated a worthy cause to support. Children have had opportunities to sing at a Carol Concert for the elderly. The school has close links with the parish and the parish priest is a frequent and welcome visitor. The 'Wednesday Word' is provided for families to share the Word of God at home.

Dialogue and collaboration is encouraged with people who hold different beliefs and values as far as possible. The use of the Religious Education Programme, '*Here I Am*', provides support to community cohesion. Children have had opportunity to explore the beliefs and values of other religions. These experiences have helped the children understand how others make sense of the world in which we live. This helps to promote tolerance and respect for

those who think differently and can be further enhanced and enriched by more visits from members of these communities or by visits to other places of worship.

The school community shows a concern for the well-being of those less fortunate than themselves both by becoming better informed and by raising funds and resources for local, national and global charities e.g. in their donations to the British Heart Foundation, Willowbrook Hospice and CAFOD. The school is committed to Fair Trade.

Leaders and managers thus promote community cohesion in an outstanding manner.

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic Life of the School	
How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	2
How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	3
The extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so areas needing development are addressed decisively and responsibilities met	3
How effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion	1