

Inspection of Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Charles Street, St Helens, Merseyside WA10 1LN

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 October 2021

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	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School is a happy, friendly and welcoming school. Pupils enjoy coming to school each day. They feel safe in school because staff care and look after them well. Pupils said that the school's mission statement, 'we care, we share, we value', is lived out by pupils and staff each day.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils. To this end, they have planned a broad and balanced curriculum that meets pupils' needs well. This enables all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to achieve well.

Pupils are keen to do their best and they behave well in class and around the school. They are polite and respectful to staff and each other. They are confident that bullying will be dealt with quickly by staff. Pupils told inspectors, 'No one is left out and everyone is included.'

Pupils appreciate the opportunity to hold responsibilities in school, such as being an 'e-cadet', a school councillor or a house captain. They take these responsibilities seriously and they wear their badges with pride. Pupils value the rewards that they receive for their efforts in class, such as 'star of the week' certificates.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum for pupils, including those pupils with SEND. In most subjects, leaders have organised the curriculum to ensure that new learning builds carefully on what pupils, including children in the early years, know already. For example, pupils in Year 4 were able to use their earlier scientific learning to deepen their understanding of physical and natural changes to the world. As a result, pupils achieve well. Curriculum planning is less well developed in a small number of subjects. This prevents pupils from making links in their learning and, at times, hampers their progress.

Teachers follow the curriculum plans carefully. They design appropriate learning activities to help pupils know and remember the intended curriculum. Teachers check that pupils' earlier learning is secure. They use assessment information well to address pupils' misconceptions.

Leaders have paid particular attention to the planning and teaching of the early reading curriculum. Staff are well trained. They deliver the carefully ordered phonics programme confidently and effectively. Children and pupils read books that match precisely to the sounds that they know. Staff provide effective support to help those pupils who fall behind in reading. Almost all pupils can read with accuracy and fluency by the end of Year 2.

Older pupils told inspectors that they enjoy reading. They understand its importance in allowing them to be successful learners. Pupils read regularly in school and at

home. They access a wide range of texts across the curriculum that spark their interests.

Leaders have clear and effective systems in place to identify the needs of individual pupils, including those with SEND. Pupils with SEND benefit from appropriate support from staff. This ensures that this group of pupils can access the same curriculum as their peers and achieve well.

Pupils, including children in the early years, benefit from a carefully designed programme that supports their well-being and prepares them for life in modern Britain. Pupils learn about other religions. They understand the importance of tolerance and respect for those cultures and backgrounds that are different to their own. Pupils relish the opportunities to develop their musical and sporting talents. For example, all pupils in Years 4 and 5 learn to play brass instruments.

Pupils work hard and behave well in lessons. They respond well to teachers' high expectations. This begins in the early years, where children settle quickly and happily into school life. Most pupils attend school every day. They are proud to win the class attendance trophy. However, a small proportion of pupils are absent from school too often. This means that these pupils miss out on learning.

Members of the governing body provide an appropriate level of challenge and support for leaders. Senior leaders have an accurate view of what the school does well and know which aspects require further development. Staff appreciate that leaders are mindful of their workload and well-being. Staff also value the opportunities to develop their curriculum expertise.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that staff receive detailed and comprehensive safeguarding training. This helps staff to remain vigilant for potential signs of abuse and neglect.

Staff know and understand the procedures that they must follow if they have a concern about a pupil. Pupils know whom to talk to if they are worried. Leaders have formed strong links with external partner agencies. This ensures that, when needed, pupils and their families get the help and support that they need.

Through the curriculum, pupils develop a secure understanding of relevant and potential risks. For instance, they understand how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, leaders have not ensured that curriculum plans make clear what pupils should be learning and when. This prevents pupils from making links in their learning and building effectively on what they know already. Leaders should ensure that curriculum plans in these subjects are structured and ordered well so that pupils can embed earlier learning and build securely on what they know and remember.
- A small proportion of pupils are absent from school too often. This means that these pupils miss out on key aspects of their learning. This stops them from achieving as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that the rates of attendance for this group of pupils improve so that they can make the most of their time in school.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	104804
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	10200782
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	167
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Theresa Butler
Headteacher	Carol Gillespie
Website	www.holycrossprimarysthelens.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	28 and 29 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The new headteacher was appointed in September 2020.
- The school makes no use of alternative provision.
- The school is part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool.
- The school's most recent section 48 inspection of religious education took place in May 2018.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this 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 the school leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with four representatives of the governing body, senior leaders, subject leaders and staff. Inspectors also took account of the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the Archdiocese of Liverpool.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils to gather their views about the school. They spoke with parents and carers at the beginning of the school day. Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors checked on safeguarding procedures and leaders’ safeguarding and behaviour records. Inspectors observed pupils’ behaviour around school and considered leaders’ attendance information.
- Inspectors considered a range of other school documentation, including leaders’ self-evaluation and plans for improvement.
- Inspectors did deep dives in early reading, mathematics, science and geography. As part of this work, inspectors visited lessons and spoke with subject leaders and teachers. Inspectors reviewed pupils’ work and spoke with them about their learning. The lead inspector observed pupils read to trusted adults.

Inspection team

Gary Bevin, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Gaynor Rennie

Ofsted Inspector

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