

# Inspection of Holy Cross Catholic School, a Voluntary Academy

Stonesby Avenue, Leicester, Leicestershire LE2 6TY

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Inspection dates: 21 and 22 March 2023

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils at Holy Cross Catholic School are happy and safe. They are proud of their school. They appreciate the support they receive from the adults in school. One pupil said: 'Everyone here cares for you.'

Leaders have worked tirelessly to improve pupils' behaviour. Pupils who keep the 'golden rules' receive stickers to add to their star chart. When they reach the target number of stickers pupils are invited to a 'golden lunch' as a reward. Pupils know that there will be consequences if their behaviour does not live up to leaders' high expectations. They say that if their teachers give them a 'time out', it is fair. Pupils understand what bullying is. They know to 'start telling other people' if they think it is happening to them.

Pupils learn about the personal qualities that will help them to be positive members of society. Each Monday morning starts with a 'mission circle' time. Pupils are given a challenge for the week ahead. For example, staff ask pupils to think of ways they make 'sacrifices' for each other. At the end of the week, the school comes together to celebrate pupils who have exemplified this quality in their work and play.

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

Leaders have worked with determination and focus to improve the school. Staff and governors are proud of what they have achieved. Staff say they have been well supported by leaders as they have worked together to make improvements. They say that leaders have been considerate of their well-being and workload. Leaders know there is still more to be done to improve the school. A significant number of Year 6 pupils did not reach the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they left the school in 2022. However, the school's hard work meant that these pupils made better than expected progress and were catching up quickly.

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is broad and ambitious. They have identified the important knowledge they want pupils to learn. This knowledge is organised in a logical order so that pupils' knowledge builds up over time. Teachers make sure that pupils have opportunities to revisit prior learning. Pupils remember what they have been taught. In geography, Year 2 pupils can locate countries and capital cities in the United Kingdom. Year 6 pupils name and locate countries in South America.

Children in the early years also benefit from an ambitious curriculum. Staff provide activities that support high-quality learning. Children learn how to communicate with confidence and how to problem solve. They show curiosity in the world around them and learn how to resolve any social difficulties they may have.

Leaders promote a love of reading. Teachers make time every day to read to pupils from a wide range of texts and genres. Pupils learn poetry 'off by heart' and perform

for parents on World Poetry Day. Pupils are positive about reading. They appreciate their attractive school library that is full of books they can borrow.

Phonics is taught well. Children learn to read as soon as they start in the Reception Year. Pupils practise the sounds they already know as well as learning new sounds. Teachers check that pupils remember these sounds. Pupils who struggle to keep up receive extra help. Teachers match the books pupils read to the sounds they know. Adults who read with pupils insist that pupils read with accuracy. However, while they support pupils to read fluently, they do not use these opportunities to develop pupils' comprehension skills.

Holy Cross Catholic school is an inclusive school. Leaders have effective systems in place to identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers know the barriers that pupils with SEND have and provide them with targeted support. They meet the needs of pupils with SEND exceptionally well.

Pupils' learning extends beyond the academic. Pupils are enthusiastic about the clubs they can join. They learn about how to stay healthy 'in body' and 'in mind'. Leaders provide strong pastoral support for pupils who need it. Pupils who find the busy lunchtime environment difficult can attend lunchtime club. Pupils who sometimes struggle to manage their feelings can use 'time out' areas. Pupils learn how to recognise their feelings. Staff support them to develop the strategies they can use to calm down if they feel overwhelmed.

Parents support the school. A very large majority agree that their children are happy and safe. One parent commented that their child had been 'welcomed at the school with open arms'.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are acutely aware of the risks that pupils may face. Staff are trained to recognise the signs that a pupil might be at risk of harm. They pass their concerns on without fail. Safeguarding leaders act on these concerns. They offer prompt support to families. They step in before small concerns escalate to more significant ones. They liaise with external agencies to find the right help for pupils and their families.

Pupils know that there will always be a trusted adult in school who will listen to them and help them if they have a worry.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Staff who read with pupils do not routinely check that pupils understand what they have read. As a result, pupils' comprehension and inference skills do not

develop as quickly as they could. Leaders should ensure that staff take every opportunity to develop these vital skills as they read with pupils.

- While the progress that pupils make from key stage 1 to key stage 2 has improved considerably in 2022, outcomes for pupils at all key stages are still not high enough. There is still a significant number of pupils who do not work at the standards expected for their age. Leaders should continue to rigorously monitor and evaluate the impact of the actions they have taken to improve the curriculum in order to ensure that pupils are adequately prepared for the next stage in their education.

## 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.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	146224
<b>Local authority</b>	Leicester
<b>Inspection number</b>	10254744
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	238
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Sarah Noon
<b>Headteacher</b>	Karen McVea
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.holycross.leicester.sch.uk">www.holycross.leicester.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school joined St Thomas Aquinas Catholic multi-academy trust in October 2018. This was the school's first inspection since it joined the trust.
- When the predecessor school, Holy Cross Catholic Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, in May 2018, it was judged to require improvement.
- Holy Cross Catholic School is part of the Diocese of Nottingham. The school's last diocesan canonical inspection took place in June 2017.
- The headteacher was appointed in April 2021.
- The school runs a daily breakfast club.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team.
- The lead inspector met with two representatives of the trust, including the chief executive officer. A further meeting was held with two governors, including the chair of governors. The chair of trustees joined this meeting remotely.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, science, geography and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector listened to pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 read to a member of staff.
- The lead inspector met with those responsible for safeguarding. She scrutinised a range of documentation in relation to safeguarding. She also spoke with governors, staff and pupils about safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils to gather their views of the school. They took account of the responses to the staff and pupil online surveys.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, around the school and at playtime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, attendance data and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors spoke with parents at the start and end of the school day. Inspectors considered the parents' views shared through Ofsted Parent View and free-text service.

## Inspection team

Caroline Poole, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Chrissie Barrington	Ofsted Inspector
Gayle Bacon	Ofsted Inspector

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