

Inspection of Holy Cross Primary Catholic Voluntary Academy

Leen Mills Lane, Hucknall, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire NG15 8BZ

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 May 2023

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 Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils say that they feel happy and safe at school. They say it is easy to make friends. Pupils understand the importance of being kind and respectful to everyone. They say that the teachers 'talk to us and help us sort out our problems'. The school's strong Catholic values and caring ethos contribute to its calm and happy atmosphere.

Staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. They encourage pupils to be thoughtful and care for each other. They expect pupils to apply themselves diligently in lessons. The small number of pupils who sometimes struggle to manage their behaviour and emotions receive support for their needs.

Pupils enjoy a range of opportunities to contribute to the wider life of the school. For example, pupils can act as peer mentors, prayer partners, librarians and 'eco-warriors'. The popular extra-curricular activities also serve to develop pupils' talents and interests. These range from music and sport to gardening and pet care, and many more. All of these opportunities support pupils' broader personal development very well.

Children in the early years make a strong start to their education. They settle quickly into the class routines. Children show high levels of focus and enjoyment in their learning.

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

In recent years, leaders have focused on updating and revising the curriculum. The aim was to ensure that pupils gain an increasingly rich store of knowledge and skills in all subjects, from the early years to Year 6. Leaders' work to revise the curriculum is almost complete. All that remains is to finish the finer details, in one or two areas.

Leaders have carefully considered the distinctive nature of the school and its core values. They have been keen to represent these values through their 'seven curriculum themes'. These themes, for example 'social justice' or 'keeping safe and healthy', underpin what pupils will learn in each subject. The themes enhance and enrich pupils' knowledge and skills. Each class takes ownership of a curriculum theme. Pupils enjoy planning and presenting what they have learned to parents and carers, at the end of the year.

The impact of the revised curriculum is clear to see. The work in pupils' books is of a high standard. Pupils speak confidently about what they have learned. They can successfully apply what they already know when faced with new concepts. This is especially evident in mathematics and history. For example, pupils in Year 4 thoughtfully compared what they knew about the ancient Romans and Greeks to the current Vikings topic.

Reading is a high priority at the school. Leaders provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop a love of books and reading. Children begin learning to read straight away in the early years. Staff follow a systematic phonics programme. More recently, leaders' actions have not resulted in positive outcomes for pupils in reading. In 2022, too many pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 did not meet the expected standard in the phonics screening check. Sometimes, pupils do not read from books that closely match the sounds they know. This hinders their progress towards becoming fluent readers.

Leaders act quickly to identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff care about these pupils. They are ambitious for pupils with SEND to play a full part in the life of the school. However, the individual 'pupil passports' for pupils with SEND are too general and hard to measure. They do not include precise targets for pupils to achieve.

Leaders have significantly enhanced the school's early years provision by the recent addition of the purpose-built Nursery class. Leaders quickly expanded the early years curriculum to include these younger children. Children in the Nursery and Reception areas flourish in this well-resourced, vibrant learning environment. Staff provide exciting activities that promote children's development across all areas of learning. Adults skilfully promote children's language development. Children in the early years are very well prepared for the next step in their education.

Leaders promote pupils' personal development well, through the curriculum and the school's core values. Pupils learn to understand equalities and respect differences. Pupils express mature views, such as 'Diversity means that everyone is unique and special'. They are well prepared for life in modern British society.

Staff enjoy working at the school. They value being part of a close, supportive team. A few feel that, at times, their workload is hard to manage. However, staff say that leaders and governors are approachable and listen to their views.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured a strong and caring culture of safeguarding. Pupils' well-being is at the heart of the school. Staff receive thorough training and regular updates. They understand the importance of noting any concerns straight away. Leaders take prompt, appropriate action in response to any concerns. There are strong, positive home-school relationships built on trust. Leaders provide pastoral support for pupils and their families.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe from the youngest age. They learn about online safety and how to form healthy relationships.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders' actions in response to the weak outcomes in phonics in 2022, for both Year 1 and Year 2, have not yet had a strong enough impact. Some pupils do not consistently read from books that match the sounds they know. Those pupils are given banded books before they are ready for that challenge. Some pupils do not learn to read as quickly as they should. Leaders should ensure that they continue their focus on the teaching of early reading and phonics, so that all pupils become fluent, confident readers.
- The 'pupil passports' for pupils with SEND are not precise enough. The targets set for pupils to achieve are not measurable and clear. They do not provide precise guidance for staff who work with these pupils. The 'passports' do not provide clear information for parents on exactly what is being done to support their children, when, and by whom. Leaders should ensure that pupils with SEND receive well-planned, focused support to access the curriculum and achieve as highly as possible.

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

Unique reference number	138812
Local authority	Nottinghamshire County Council
Inspection number	10254821
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	225
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Nigel Stevenson
Headteacher	Tammie McNamara
Website	http://www.holycrossschoolhucknall.com
Date of previous inspection	1 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed in September 2019. The deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2021.
- The school became part of the Our Lady of Lourdes multi-academy trust in September 2018.
- The school's provision was expanded to include a Nursery class in September 2022, following a building project. The Nursery class caters for up to 26 three- and four-year-old children.
- The school does not make use of any 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior and curriculum leaders.
- The lead inspector met with several members of the governing body, including the chair. The lead inspector also met with officers from the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading; mathematics; history, art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector observed some pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum, reviewed curriculum planning and samples of pupils' work in some other subjects.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at other times around school.
- Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding by reviewing the school's record of pre-employment checks and holding discussions with leaders, staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Christine Watkins, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Phil Abbott

Ofsted Inspector

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