

Inspection of Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Millfield Avenue, East Cowes, Isle of Wight PO32 6AS

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 June 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

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?

Pupils are happy at Holy Cross. They build strong relationships with school staff and each other. Pupils know their routines. They behave well and feel safe at school. Pupils enjoy their breaktimes, playing on the adventure playground or chatting with their friends. They are polite and well-mannered in their interactions.

Pupils enjoy many opportunities to work with the local community and to make a difference. Year 5 pupils talk with enthusiasm and empathy about their recent art project at a nearby hospice. They are proud of the joint artwork they created and the relationships they built with the staff and patients. Pupils participate in other activities to fundraise for local charities and food banks. They value being part of a supportive community.

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils to achieve well. They have rightly focused on improving English and mathematics, and pupils now learn well in these subjects. However, many other subjects are still being developed and, consequently, pupils do not always achieve as well as they should across the whole curriculum. Parents and carers are supportive of the school's improvement journey. Many of them commented on the positive changes made by the new leadership team.

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

There has been significant turbulence in the school's leadership and staffing since the previous inspection. Since September 2022, the interim executive headteacher, governors and other senior leaders have brought much-needed stability. They have acted swiftly and effectively to improve the teaching of English and mathematics, engaging well with the extensive support offered by the local authority. In these subjects, leaders have identified precisely what pupils should know and be able to do.

However, there are still substantial improvements needed across the other subjects. In mathematics and reading, leaders have identified the small steps of knowledge that should be taught and how these link together. In other subjects, this work is not yet complete. This means that teachers do not always know what to teach and assess, and pupils cannot always recall essential learning.

Leaders rightly prioritise teaching pupils to read. Staff have been well trained in delivering the school's phonics programme. As a result, pupils become confident and fluent readers. Their reading books match the sounds they learn. Pupils are skilled at 'chunking' words into sounds and then blending them together to read. Struggling readers receive the help they need to catch up. Many pupils enjoy the books they study in lessons and their frequent story times. In early years, the daily 'line leader' delights in the privilege of being able to choose the class story.

Children get off to a strong start to their school life in early years. They are highly motivated to learn and greet their activities with enthusiasm. This is because leaders

have carefully designed the early years curriculum. Teaching staff skilfully shape learning to reflect and build on children's interests. There are an abundance of literacy and mathematics opportunities in the environment. Children work together to problem-solve and are resilient learners. They show high levels of concentration and curiosity about the world around them.

Leadership of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has strengthened. Pupils with SEND are identified quickly, and parents are fully involved in this process. Staff make appropriate adaptations to tasks and activities to ensure that these pupils access the same curriculum as their peers. However, due to the varying stages of subject development, pupils with SEND do not experience a clearly defined curriculum in all subjects.

Pupils live up to leaders' high expectations for behaviour. They know the school rules and show respect to staff and each other. In lessons, pupils are attentive and work hard. There is a positive attitude towards learning, shown by all. Pupils enjoy their celebration assemblies and value being able to share their achievements from outside school.

Pupils' wider development is well considered. Leaders create opportunities for pupils to develop their interests through a range of after-school clubs, including the popular book club. Pupils enjoy representing the school in a range of competitive and inclusive sporting competitions. They share each other's success with pride. Leaders provide pupils with a range of leadership opportunities. The democratically elected school councillors take their responsibilities seriously and value their role in representing their classmates.

Members of the governing body have an accurate view of the school and know its strengths and what needs improving. They support the school's leaders in implementing change to bring about improvement. There is a shared determination for pupils to leave Holy Cross fully prepared for their next educational steps.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are rigorous in the way they ensure there is a strong, school-wide culture of safeguarding. Staff are well trained and know how to identify and report any concerns. Record-keeping is meticulous, and allows leaders to identify themes and appropriately refer concerns to external agencies. Leaders follow up concerns to check families receive support. Governors routinely monitor the effectiveness of leaders' procedures.

Pupils know whom they can talk to if they feel worried. They value the safeguarding posters around the school which provide them with useful information. They are confident that staff will listen and help them with any worries.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum in wider subjects is not sufficiently developed. This means that the key knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn are not clearly defined. Leaders must ensure that curriculum development is completed in all subjects so that pupils are fully prepared for their next stage of education.
- Assessment processes in many subjects are not well developed. Consequently, leaders do not know how well pupils learn. Leaders should improve the effectiveness of assessment to ensure that pupils know and remember more across the school's curriculum.

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	118198
Local authority	Isle of Wight
Inspection number	10268276
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	146
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Stephen Hendry
Headteacher	Sharon Freeley
Website	www.holycrossrcpri.iow.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	16 and 17 July 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a Roman Catholic school and is part of the Diocese of Portsmouth. The school's religious character was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in November 2021.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The interim executive headteacher was appointed in August 2022.

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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with the subject leader, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils

about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work. Inspectors also met with other subject leaders.

- The lead inspector met with the interim executive headteacher, the head of school and members of the governing body. She also had phone calls with representatives from the diocese and the local authority.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspectors studied documents and records, including the school's single central record and child protection referrals. The inspectors spoke with the designated safeguarding leads, staff and pupils.
- The inspection team considered responses to the staff survey and spoke to a range of staff about their views of the school.
- Responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and additional free-text responses were considered by the inspectors. An inspector also spoke to parents on the morning of the second day of the inspection.
- The inspectors met with a range of pupils to learn their views about the school. They also took into account the responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Kate Fripp, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Caroline Clarke

His Majesty's Inspector

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