

# Inspection of Holy Rood Catholic Primary School

Greenbank Road, Watford, Hertfordshire WD17 4FS

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Inspection dates: 20 and 21 September 2023

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

The headteacher of this school is Emma Braund. This school is part of All Saints Catholic Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Stephen Wheatley, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Tony Leahy. Some functions are delegated to a local governing body, chaired by Judith Shanahan.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Holy Rood Catholic Primary School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Holy Rood Catholic Primary School to be outstanding, before it opened as an academy.

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

Year after year, pupils achieve very well. The subject-specific learning ignites pupils' interest in academia, sports and the creative arts. Pupils happily talk at length about all that they learn. For example, younger pupils can explain what makes numbers odd or even, while older pupils describe each step of the water cycle. What is most impressive is how much pupils recall from lessons learned in years gone by.

Pupils benefit greatly from the rich and varied extra-curricular offer. This includes clubs such as chess, football and Irish dancing, to name but a few. Whole-school events, such as French Day, introduce pupils to different cultures. Such events open pupils' eyes to people and places they may not otherwise have come across.

All of the school's values are woven into everyday school life, though it is 'love and solidarity' that shine most brightly. Pupils relish the opportunity to nominate a peer for the 'Holy Rood Heart Award'. They take a lot of joy from celebrating their own and others' success. Through the buddy system, older pupils keenly welcome younger ones into the fold. Older pupils pass on the importance of being kind, working hard and using good manners. This serves to maintain the exceptional high standards of behaviour. It makes the school a happy and supportive place to attend.

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

Since the last inspection, the school has maintained a culture of high expectations. Those responsible for governance are strategic and thorough. They are strategic in how they actively recruit governors who have suitable skill sets, and thorough in how they visit the school to assure the accuracy of the information they receive. Leaders communicate clearly, evaluate honestly and welcome challenge readily. Pupils, parents and staff sing the school's praises. They recognise the school's relentless drive to ensure pupils' safety and high achievement.

Children in the early years slot seamlessly into school life. Staff's expertise ensures that the learning environment encourages purposeful play. For example, in mathematics, children learned how to count gems one at a time. Next, they matched the amount to the numeral it represented. Children then chose to count other objects, like toy farm animals, when playing. This progression is a regular cycle, ensuring children embed the knowledge they need for Year 1.

Pupils achieve highly in reading across the school. Expressive storytelling in the Nursery Year hooks children into reading. It readies them for learning the sounds that letters make. The training for staff and the workshops for parents encourage home-school partnerships. This is shown in pupils regularly reading suitably challenging books. Because staff watch pupils closely, they resolve pupils' misunderstandings within lessons. As a result, very few pupils fall behind the pace of the reading programmes.

The curriculum ensures pupils have a good grounding in related knowledge before they encounter new topics. For example, in history, pupils study the Ancient Egyptians in depth after they have learned about a range of other civilisations. Pupils eloquently explain what they know. This is owing to staff's clear explanations and the high-quality schoolwork pupils complete.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive high-quality care and academic support. This is because there is a collective drive to reflect on pupils' needs and to seek advice about how best to help them. It shows in the bespoke support being well thought through. For example, some pupils receive tailor-made storybooks that achieve two goals. First, pupils practise reading aloud the letter sounds learned to help embed them. Second, pupils communicate through 'key word signing'. This helps pupils to read and to express their thoughts and feelings.

Across the school, there is a palpable air of peace and kindheartedness. It filters down from leaders to staff to pupils and parents. There is consistency in how adults form positive relationships with pupils. Pupils then want to look and listen, both to learn from and to show respect, to adults and peers in school.

Pupils' attendance is high. All that the school offers encourages pupils to come to school. Even so, when the school has attendance concerns, they confront these head on. It resolves issues quickly before poor attendance habits bed in.

There is an extensive, exciting personal development programme. At its heart, its aim is to build pupils' self-esteem. Ample opportunities exist for pupils to talk, present and perform to others. Close ties with the community complement the curriculum well. Younger pupils get to meet a search and rescue dog, while older pupils hold discussions with various religious leaders. In addition, the school connects pupils' wider opportunities with what they learn in school. For example, pupils compete in inter-school sporting competitions. Before these, they hone their skills in physical education lessons. It helps pupils to achieve their best when competing.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	146903
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10288568
<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>	452
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Tony Leahy
<b>Headteacher</b>	Emma Braund
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.holyroodcatholicprimaryschool.co.uk">www.holyroodcatholicprimaryschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school is part of the Archdiocese of Westminster.
- The school has a religious character, Roman Catholic, and was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 on 15 and 16 March 2023. The school's next section 48 inspection will be within five school years.
- There is before- and after-school childcare for pupils attending the school. It is run by a separately registered and inspected childcare provider.
- 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- 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 and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, including the chief executive officer, two directors, two local governors, the headteacher, two deputy headteachers, the special educational needs coordinator and a representative working on behalf of the diocese. The lead inspector also considered correspondence sent by a representative working on behalf of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with senior leaders and subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- To further inspect the curriculum, inspectors discussed the subject curriculums for art and geography and reviewed many pupils' workbooks.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; examined records relating to safeguarding; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of other school documentation and policies, including the school development plan, the self-evaluation form and minutes from meetings of the trust board and local governing body.
- Inspectors gathered pupils' views by observing and speaking to pupils. The inspector also took account of the 121 responses to Ofsted's survey for pupils.
- Inspectors gathered parents' views by speaking to some of them at the start of a school day and by reviewing the 85 responses and 55 free-text responses submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors gathered the views of staff by speaking to several of them and reviewing the 41 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

### **Inspection team**

Daniel Short, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Julie Lawrence	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Fordham	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
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E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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