

Inspection of a good school: Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Daiglen Drive, South Ockendon, Essex RM15 5RP

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 July 2024

Outcome

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher is Sandra Power. The school is part of the Christus Catholic Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the Catholic senior executive officer, Joanna Seymour, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Bertrand Emechta.

What is it like to attend this school?

Holy Cross's values of respect, honesty, tolerance, justice and forgiveness are evident throughout the school. Pupils enjoy coming to school and the range of opportunities that are available. Pupils value the numerous clubs. They talk enthusiastically about the variety of trips and visitors to the school that support them with their learning.

Pupils' behaviour reflects the school values. For instance, pupils demonstrate forgiveness by resolving minor disputes with friends. There are very respectful, strong relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils feel safe and know who to go to if they have a worry. They show tolerance by warmly welcoming new peers, including those who join the school at different times of the year and from overseas. This helps to create a highly inclusive ethos in the school and broadens pupils' understanding of the world.

The school has high expectations of pupils. They typically respond well to these and achieve well. A few pupils sometimes find it hard to listen and behave appropriately. Skilled adults support them, ensuring a calming environment in which to learn. Good habits for learning together are formed from the early years. Overall, pupils of all ages have positive attitudes to learning and follow routines well.

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

Leaders have skilfully constructed an ambitious curriculum that caters for their diverse community. Subject leaders have identified the important knowledge and content that they want pupils to learn and remember. They have sequenced this knowledge to support pupils to build on what they already know and can do. With an emphasis on developing oracy, teachers build in a variety of opportunities for pupils to talk about their learning.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge and mostly use assessment effectively. This enables most pupils to make strong progress in a range of subjects. In some instances, teachers do not accurately identify what pupils have learned and, therefore, do not provide the next-step activities to move pupils on in their learning. As a result, some pupils do not make as much progress as they could.

Leaders prioritise early reading. They recognise how books spark creativity by introducing pupils to new words and worlds. Well-trained staff deliver an effective phonics programme with regular revision to reinforce sounds. Pupils receive books matched to their reading level. They enjoy, and learn from, hearing staff reading fluently and expressively. So, despite low starting points, many pupils go on to achieve well in reading throughout the school.

Leaders identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) promptly. Plans for this considerable number of pupils outline the strategies that staff should use to support them. For example, teachers make appropriate adaptations to tasks and activities by giving additional support, enlarging print, or seating pupils in specific places in the classroom. Therefore, most pupils with SEND learn the same curriculum as others. Experienced and skilled adults provide targeted support for individual pupils, particularly those with complex needs. This ensures pupils with SEND learn well.

Pupils behave well in class and when moving around the school. During breaktime and at lunchtime, pupils play happily together. This is because they learn from the early years upwards what adults expect of them. Adults use consistent language when they talk to pupils about their behaviour. If pupils' attention starts to wane, most adults are quick to refocus them. Pupils typically listen well and are eager to learn. However, on occasion, expectations are less clear. Some pupils struggle to listen attentively. It causes them to miss important demonstrations and instructions, which affects their achievement.

Leaders have ensured that the wider curriculum supports pupils' personal development well. They provide many enriching extra-curricular experiences and clubs that pupils enjoy. These include a residential visit in Year 6. Pupils are proud of their multi-cultural school, where difference is celebrated. They are tolerant and respectful of others, following Holy Cross's expectation. Pupils learn about each other's faiths and cultures and about those of others in the wider world.

Leaders, including governors and trustees, are attentive to staff workload and well-being. Leaders implement practical measures to support staff. For instance, adopting high-quality schemes of work reduces teachers' planning time. Staff appreciate leaders' approachability. It encourages them to share concerns and seek support. This reflects the school's value of honesty, as leaders welcome feedback to identify and resolve issues. Parents and carers also appreciate the clear channels of communication. They know, for example, what their child learns so that they can discuss it at home. The school's open and respectful approach helps it to operate effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- On some occasions, teachers do not accurately check pupils' learning and, therefore, do not provide next-step activities that move pupils on in their learning. As a result, some pupils do not learn as much as they could. The school should ensure that teachers chose activities that precisely match the next steps needed for all pupils' learning.
- Sometimes, teachers' expectations for pupils' learning behaviours are not as high as they might be. This means some pupils struggle to listen attentively. It causes them to miss important demonstrations and instructions, which affects their achievement. The school should ensure that learning behaviours expectations are clear and that all staff are equipped to ensure these are applied consistently, so that every pupil is ready and able to listen and learn.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour, or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Holy Cross Catholic Primary School, to be good in May 2016.

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 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

Unique reference number	146296
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	10345509
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	228
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
CEO of the Trust	Joanna Seymour
Headteacher	Sandra Power
Website	www.holycrossprimary.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Holy Cross Catholic Primary School converted to become an academy school in November 2019. When its predecessor school, Holy Cross Catholic Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- Nearly all leaders and many staff were not in post at the previous inspection. The current headteacher took up post in October 2019.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.
- The school has a religious character, Roman Catholic, and is part of the Catholic Diocese of Brentwood. The school's last section 48 inspection was in March 2019. The next inspection will take place within eight years.
- The school has a breakfast club and an after-school club operating on the site. The school manages these provisions.
- The school runs a nursery with provision for three-year-olds.

Information about this inspection

The inspector carried out this ungraded inspection under section 8 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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector conducted deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. To complete each deep dive, she discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, and spoke with teachers. She also spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work. This included listening to a sample of pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; 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.
- The inspector held meetings with leaders, including the headteacher, designated safeguarding lead, special educational needs coordinator, the trust's manager of SEND and a representative from the diocese. The inspector also met with those responsible for governance, including the chair of the trust board, the Catholic senior executive officer, and representatives of the local governing body.
- A range of documents were scrutinised, including behaviour logs, attendance records, minutes of trustees' and local governors' meetings, school improvement plans, the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness and various school policies.
- The inspector considered responses to surveys. These included 47 responses to the online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View, alongside 48 free-text responses from parents and 15 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Ruth Brock, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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