

Inspection of a good school: Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Fontenoy Street, Liverpool, Merseyside L3 2DU

Inspection dates:

30 and 31 March 2023

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud and happy to attend this welcoming and harmonious school. A comment typical of those that pupils made to the inspector was 'Every day, everyone comes in with a smile.' The whole school community celebrates diversity of every kind, especially the rich variety of race, culture and religion represented in the school population.

Some pupils join this school at other than the usual time of year. Some arrive with little or no knowledge of English and some with no experience of school. All receive a warm welcome from pupils and staff and soon become a valued part of the Holy Cross family.

Staff, including leaders, have high expectations of how pupils should behave and what they should achieve. Pupils fulfil these expectations. They are polite, courteous and enthusiastic. They work hard and achieve well.

Pupils told the inspector that they feel safe because staff are always close by to look after them. From the Nursery Year, children learn about 'kind hands, kind feet, kind words'. Leaders do not tolerate any name-calling or bullying. They deal with these very quickly, so that they do not escalate or happen again.

Pupils enjoy the wide range of cultural, sporting and artistic activities which staff organise. For example, they spoke excitedly to the inspector about performing in a city centre theatre and about visits to see Roman roads.

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

Leaders have devised an ambitious curriculum. In every subject, they have made clear what teachers should teach and when they should teach it. The design of the curriculum allows teachers to build on what pupils have already learned.

In most subjects, teachers ensure that pupils remember what they have learned recently as well as their learning in previous years. Most pupils make links between subjects and

integrate their learning into the bigger picture. For example, in history some older pupils talked about their study of empires and linked it to the concept of invasion. As a result, they remembered what they learned about the Romans and Vikings when they were younger. However, at times, in subjects for which the curriculum has recently been changed, strategies to develop pupils' short- and long-term memory of essential knowledge are in their infancy. In these subjects, some pupils struggle to remember what they have learned recently and in the past. Consequently, they have difficulty understanding how what they have learned fits into larger ideas.

Teachers regularly check how well pupils are learning, so that they can adapt teaching to address any gaps in knowledge. Leaders identify accurately the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers use very effective strategies and well-chosen resources to enable these pupils to follow the same curriculum as their peers.

Leaders prioritise reading. Children begin to learn to read in the Nursery Year. The phonics programme is established and effective. A strong programme of training for staff is in place. All those who teach reading do so with skill. Staff choose reading books which match pupils' knowledge of letters and sounds. Leaders check how well pupils can read to make sure that teaching is well targeted. As a result, those who are falling behind quickly catch up. Teachers use effective strategies, such as silent signing, to make sure that pupils who are at the early stages of learning to speak English can keep up with their peers. Almost all pupils become fluent and accurate readers.

Pupils enjoy reading for pleasure. Teachers foster a love of reading, for example, by sharing their own enthusiasm for books. Pupils enjoy visits to Liverpool's Central Library to watch dramatisations of literary works and to borrow books with their parents or carers. Leaders' development of a language-rich environment, beginning in the early years, enables pupils to read and use a wide vocabulary, sometimes beyond their years.

Leaders make sure that pupils' development beyond the academic curriculum is very strong. They take full advantage of the school's location on the edge of Liverpool city centre with its rich cultural and historic heritage. Frequent visits to art galleries, museums, concert halls and theatres form an enriching part of pupils' everyday educational experiences. They enjoy learning to play musical instruments and performing in concerts. They undertake responsibilities such as being ambassadors for online safety and good attendance. Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND participate fully in everything that the school has to offer.

Pupils behave very well at social times and in class. On occasion, a small number of pupils who have specific behaviour needs struggle to remain on task. Teachers quickly and skilfully return these pupils to learning, so that they do not disturb other pupils. Staff help pupils to be aware of and manage their emotions.

Skilled governors contribute strongly to the school's development. Leaders make sure that staff know that they value their hard work. Staff appreciate the efforts that leaders make to ensure that their workload is manageable. They said that leaders are very

approachable. They said that leaders take staff well-being into account when making changes.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All at the school are vigilant and understand their role in keeping pupils safe. Leaders and staff undertake regular training, so that they know how to spot the signs of neglect or abuse. Leaders take swift action to protect pupils and to give them and their families the help that they need. They do not hesitate to involve external specialists when necessary.

Staff teach pupils how to keep themselves safe from physical and emotional harm, often with the involvement of external agencies, such as the NSPCC. Pupils spoke knowledgeably to the inspector about risks, such as grooming, drugs and inappropriate use of the internet.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At times, teaching of the recently introduced curriculums does not help some pupils to remember the essential knowledge that they have acquired or to integrate it into larger ideas. Leaders should ensure that, in all subjects, teachers develop effective strategies to help pupils to make connections between learning within and across subjects and to embed key knowledge into their memory.

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 school to be good in February 2018.

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	104633
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10283633
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	189
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Stephen McElroy
Headteacher	Helen Bannon
Website	www.holycrossliverpool.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	28 February to 1 March 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a much higher than average number of pupils joining at other than the usual times of year. Many of these pupils speak English as an additional language.
- Leaders do not use alternative provision.
- The school is part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in March 2019.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection of the school since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector discussed the school with a range of governors, including the chair of the governing body. She also had discussions with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the Archdiocese of Liverpool.

- She discussed the school with the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- She spoke with pupils about their work and school life. She also talked with pupils about the books that they like to read.
- She conducted deep dives in these subjects: early reading, science and history. She discussed each subject with subject leaders and teachers. Jointly with subject leaders or a senior leader, she visited lessons and looked at examples of pupils' work. With groups of pupils, she discussed learning. She listened to pupils from key stage 1 and key stage 2 reading to a member of staff.
- She looked at the school's safeguarding policy and related policies and documentation. She scrutinised the school's records of the suitability of staff to work with pupils. She discussed workload, welfare and training with a range of staff.
- She analysed responses to Ofsted Parent View and to staff and pupils' surveys.

Inspection team

Liz Kelly, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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