

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Fontenoy Street, Liverpool, Merseyside L3 2DU

Inspection dates

28 February–1 March 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher leads the school well. She is determined to give every pupil the best possible opportunities to succeed. Staff and governors alike share her vision and ambition for the school.
- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils are confident and happy. They feel safe and are extremely well cared for in school.
- Senior leaders have worked effectively during a period of significant changes to the staff team, to bring about steady improvements to the quality of teaching.
- The school provides a broad, engaging and stimulating curriculum. Pupils develop strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
- Teaching is effective. Pupils respond well to teachers' high expectations and regularly produce work of high quality in English and mathematics. As a result, they are making good progress and levels of attainment are improving.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve well. Work in their books and the school's own records show that they make strong progress from their different starting points.
- Governance is strong and pivotal to the school's success.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They enjoy school, work hard and are respectful towards each other and to the adults who teach them.
- Although attendance has improved this year, it remains below the national average because too many pupils are persistently absent.
- Children get off to a good start in early years. They are taught well and make good progress.
- Very good support is provided for pupils who join the school other than at the usual time. They catch up quickly and achieve as well as their peers.
- Pupils do not make consistently good progress in science, geography and history. Some teachers fail to address misconceptions and this limits the overall progress that pupils make in these subjects.
- Despite improvements to the teaching of mathematics, too few of the most able pupils make rapid progress and reach the higher standard.
- Teachers and other adults work closely together to support pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. However, their progress in mathematics is limited as assessments in this subject are not always used effectively to plan work that builds on their prior learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement in geography, history and science by ensuring that teachers regularly challenge misconceptions so that pupils learn more effectively.
- Ensure that teachers challenge the most able pupils more in mathematics so that a greater proportion of pupils are judged to be working at the higher standard by the end of key stage 2.
- Improve pupils' attendance by further reducing the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school.
- Ensure that assessment is used more effectively in mathematics to improve progress for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Holy Cross provides a safe, happy and nurturing learning environment for its pupils. Pupils of all abilities, regardless of their age, ethnicity or religious beliefs, are welcomed and cherished. Parents and carers are extremely supportive of the school and appreciate the lengths that staff go to in order to ensure that pupils thrive. Staff are fully supportive of the leadership team and morale across the school is high. Almost all parents would recommend the school to others.
- The headteacher and governors have ensured that the school has continued to improve during a period of significant change to the staff team. New appointments have settled in well and successfully embraced the requirements and challenges of their various roles. Although there were some weaknesses in the end-of-key-stage results in 2017, evidence seen during this inspection shows that current pupils are thriving and making strong progress in their learning.
- Leaders know the school's strengths and are aware of what needs to be done in order to improve further. For example, they recognise that teachers need to challenge the most able pupils more in mathematics. They have plans in place to address this issue. Leaders make frequent checks on the quality of teaching and intervene early if there are signs of decline. Effective systems are in place for managing teachers' performance. Teachers value the support that they receive and the training opportunities that are regularly provided.
- School leaders encourage teachers to look continually for ways of developing their knowledge and expertise. Work with external consultants and links with local schools provide good opportunities for teachers to share and learn from good practice. Teachers use these links regularly to share pupils' work, in order to ensure that they make accurate judgements about pupils' achievement.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a significant strength. The school is highly effective in ensuring that pupils have a strong moral grounding. Pupils learn to develop tolerance and respect towards those who are different from them. The school excels in developing pupils' understanding of different faiths and cultures, often using the different backgrounds reflected in the school community as a learning resource. There are clear links between the school's values and British values, which the school uses effectively to prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- The curriculum is well planned and ensures that pupils have regular access to a broad range of learning activities. For example, the school cook regularly teaches pupils about nutrition and how to make various types of food by following simple recipes. The impressive artwork on display around school demonstrates how many pupils excel in this area. Some of the work in pupils' science, geography and history books is impressive. However, in some classes, the standard of work in these subjects is not as good as it should be. Too often, misconceptions are left unchecked and pupils' progress in learning is limited as a result.
- The school makes excellent and imaginative use of the wide range of learning opportunities available in the close vicinity. For example, students from a local university recently worked with pupils across the school on a gender-equality project.

Links with local theatres and galleries have been used to provide pupils with exciting learning experiences and develop their awareness and understanding of the arts. Pupils also benefit from many educational trips and residential visits, which make a strong contribution to their positive attitudes to learning.

- The school makes good use of the additional primary physical education and sport premium that it receives. Sports coaches are used to enhance teachers' skills and broaden pupils' experience of different sporting activities. The funding has also been used to increase pupils' participation in competitive sport, through engagement with the local network of schools.
- The pupil premium funding is used well to improve the progress that disadvantaged pupils make in their learning. Targeted support is provided for disadvantaged pupils, and leaders undertake regular reviews of the impact of this work to ensure that it is having a positive effect on pupils' progress.

Governance of the school

- Governance of the school is strong. Governors have an excellent range of skills and they support and challenge the headteacher in equal measure. Governors are deeply committed to the school. They have appropriate experience and they ensure that they attend relevant training. They visit the school frequently in order to gain an accurate understanding of pupils' experiences of school.
- Documentation seen during this inspection shows that governors' scrutiny of the school's work is thorough, particularly in the areas of teaching and pupils' achievement. Governors regularly hold the leadership team to account for progress against the school's improvement priorities.
- Governors monitor the school's appraisal system closely. Along with the headteacher, they have ensured that the quality of teaching has remained of a good standard during a period of significant change to the staff team. They also help to ensure that staff have access to appropriate support and training.
- Governors make the necessary checks to ensure that the additional funding that the school receives is spent effectively. They ask searching questions of the headteacher to ensure that the strategies employed, for example to support disadvantaged pupils, are effective.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School leaders have ensured that all members of staff are fully aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding pupils. They provide regular training and clear advice to staff about how they should respond to any concerns that they might have about a pupil.
- Leaders meticulously keep records of any concerns that are raised by staff and the steps that are subsequently taken to resolve matters. Where necessary, leaders ensure that concerns are shared with external agencies in order to support and protect those involved.

- The governing body takes its safeguarding role very seriously. Governors attend relevant training and make regular checks on the school's policies and procedures.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers use questioning skills well in lessons to draw out information from pupils and to guide their learning. As a result, pupils regularly demonstrate good attitudes to learning and there are high levels of engagement during lessons.
- Improving the teaching of reading has been a priority for the school over the past 12 months. It is now taught well and older pupils gain a lot of pleasure from reading a wide range of fiction and non-fiction. In key stages 1 and 2, teachers regularly provide pupils with stimulating and relevant reading material, including class novels written by famous authors. Teachers' good subject knowledge supports the progress that pupils make in the development of key reading comprehension skills.
- The teaching of phonics is highly effective. Children develop their early reading skills extremely well in early years and key stage 1. Teachers keep a careful check on the progress that is being made and build systematically on pupils' prior learning by ensuring that they challenge all ability groups sufficiently.
- In mathematics lessons, teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical knowledge and skills to investigate and solve problems. Pupils are confident in their use of number and are increasingly competent at meeting the challenges that teachers set. However, in some classes, teachers do not challenge the most able pupils enough and their progress is not as rapid as it could be across the school.
- The teaching of science, history and geography is effective in most classes. Teachers follow a well-planned programme of study for each subject and pupils record their work well. However, in some classes, there are too many instances where misconceptions are not challenged by teachers and pupils' progress is limited as a result.
- Almost all of the parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were positive about the quality of teaching in the school and the progress that their children are making.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Holy Cross is a school where each individual pupil is respected and the school environment is free from discrimination. Pupils appreciate the interest that teachers take in all aspects of their achievement and welfare. Pupils say that they feel safe at school because they trust the adults around them.

- Pupils learn to respect and celebrate each other's differences. They develop an excellent understanding of the cultural and religious diversity that exists both within and beyond their immediate experience. A recent whole-school project encouraged pupils to reflect on the positive impact that diversity has on their lives.
- Pupils are confident and self-aware. They are proud of their school and keen to make a positive contribution to school life. Pupils enjoy the different roles available to them, such as the mathematics ambassadors, who work with pupils across the school and regularly set mathematical challenges for their classmates. There is an active school council and older pupils recently participated in a debating competition with pupils from other local schools.
- Pupils spoken to during the inspection demonstrated a good understanding of what bullying is. They learn about the different kinds of bullying and regularly discuss how to deal with it. They also showed a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe while using the internet. Pupils say that bullying rarely occurs at the school and that staff resolve all behaviour issues quickly and effectively.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are courteous, welcoming and polite to their friends, staff and visitors. Almost every parent who responded to Parent View, and all of the staff who responded to the Ofsted survey, said that behaviour is good and that pupils are well looked after.
- Pupils behave well, both in class and around the school. In lessons, pupils have good attitudes towards learning. They show pride in their work, particularly in their writing and mathematics books. However, in some classes, they do not take as much care with their topic books. Too often, careless errors are made and work is not presented neatly.
- A small number of pupils occasionally exhibit challenging behaviour. The school has good systems in place to deal with such incidents and has had success in helping these pupils learn to manage their own behaviour more effectively.
- The school has worked successfully to improve attendance, mainly with a small minority of parents who take their pupils out of school during term time. As a result of this work, attendance has improved significantly this year, but remains slightly below the national average. School leaders have good plans in place to make further improvements in this area.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Strengths in the quality of teaching, supported by effective staff recruitment, have resulted in the large majority of pupils currently at the school making strong gains in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils achieve well in writing. Pupils are given regular opportunities to write at length and they develop good writing stamina as a result. The proportion of pupils who achieved or exceeded the expected level at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 increased significantly in comparison with the previous year and was slightly above the national

average. Inspectors saw evidence in pupils' books that these improvements have been sustained and built on this year.

- Outcomes in reading are improving. All Year 1 pupils achieved the expected standard in the phonics check in 2017. The key stage 1 reading results improved and were around the national average. Progress across key stage 2 has been too slow for some pupils over recent years. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 was below the national average. However, during this inspection, inspectors saw clear signs of improvement in this area and current pupils are now making progress. A strong and effective focus on reading has led to pupils reading more widely and often, both in school and at home.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics across key stage 2 improved in 2017, but the proportion of pupils achieving and exceeding the expected standard remained below the national average. However, current pupils are now making stronger progress in this key subject. The work seen in books shows that pupils across the school are increasingly proficient in using number. However, school leaders recognise that teachers need to challenge the most able pupils even more to ensure that more achieve the higher standards.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school other than at the usual time is well above average. There is a wide variation in the ability levels within this group and the school ensures that each pupil receives the support required for them to settle into school. Many of these pupils make rapid progress as a result and achieve well.
- Leadership of special educational needs is generally effective and funding is used well to provide additional support for those pupils who struggle with their learning. However, sometimes the assessments that are made of pupils who find mathematics difficult are not as precise as they could be. As a result, teaching does not focus precisely enough on the gaps in pupils' learning and this restricts the progress that these pupils make in mathematics.

Early years provision

Good

- Children start in early years with skills and abilities that are generally below those typical for their age. Owing to effective teaching, children quickly settle into the school's routines and develop good attitudes to learning. They make good progress during their time in the Nursery and Reception classes. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of early years has been broadly in line with the national average for the past two years.
- Parents appreciate the frequent opportunities that are provided for them to visit school to learn about how different aspects of the curriculum, such as phonics, are taught. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress and are encouraged to support their children's learning and development at home.
- Leadership of early years is effective. All relevant safeguarding measures are in place and staff are well trained and deployed effectively to support learning. The additional funding that the school receives for disadvantaged children is used well. Leaders work with external agencies, where necessary, to support individual children.

- Good-quality teaching ensures that children learn well. Their progress is tracked carefully and monitored closely by school leaders. As a result, children, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, make good progress.
- Children’s behaviour is good and shows that they feel safe. They develop very good attitudes to learning and are highly motivated by the broad range of activities that are provided each day. During ‘circle time’, they listen carefully to adults and to each other.
- The curriculum provides a broad range of interesting and demanding experiences that meet children’s needs and help them make progress towards the early learning goals. The learning environment is of high quality and staff regularly provide a range of challenging activities to promote children’s learning. Children are well prepared for the next stage of their education when they start in Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	104633
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10045149

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	177
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	James Doyle
Headteacher	Helen Bannon
Telephone number	0151 236 9505
Website	www.holycrossliverpool.co.uk
Email address	ao@holycrossprimaryschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	20–21 November 2013

Information about this school

- Holy Cross Catholic Primary School is smaller than the average primary school. It has an on-site nursery.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above the national average.
- A much higher proportion of pupils than that seen nationally leave or join the school at other than the usual times.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average. However, many of these pupils join the school with a good level of proficiency in English.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment across a wide range of subjects and age groups. Some of the observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of pupils' written work.
- Inspectors looked at documentation, including minutes of governing body meetings, school improvement plans, attendance and behaviour information, and safeguarding records.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the early years leader and the special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector also met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and spoke with representatives of the local authority and the archdiocese.
- Inspectors observed pupils' conduct at break- and lunchtime.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils to listen to them read and discuss behaviour. They also spoke with many other pupils informally.
- The lead inspector spoke with parents in the playground before school. Inspectors also took account of the 33 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 16 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Paul Tomkow, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Moira Atkins

Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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