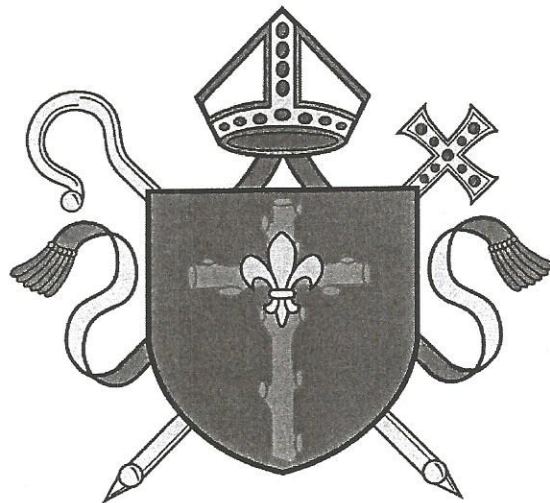


DIOCESE OF NOTTINGHAM INSPECTION SERVICE



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT (Section 48, Education Act 2005)

Holy Cross Primary Catholic Voluntary Academy
Leen Mills Lane
Hucknall
Nottinghamshire
NG15 8BZ

31 January 2013
Spring Term 2013

URN: 122814

SECTION 48 DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT

School:	Holy Cross Primary Catholic Voluntary Academy
Headteacher:	Mrs Pat Snowdon
Chair of Governors:	Mrs Christa Bales
Date of Inspection:	31 January 2013
Inspection Team:	Mrs Anne Recchia & Mrs Jane Monaghan
URN:	122814
Overall Grade Awarded:	2

Description of the school

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School is an average sized primary school. It is a convertor academy, established in October 2012 and is a member of the Pax Christi Catholic Academy Trust made up of three other primary schools and one secondary school. It serves the parish of Holy Cross, Hucknall and is situated on the northern edge of the city of Nottingham. There are currently 225 pupils on roll of which 43% of the pupils are baptised Catholics. 48% of all pupils are baptised Christians from other denominations, 7% are from other faiths and 13% come from families with no religious affiliation. The school is oversubscribed and has a waiting list for each year group. The proportion of pupils entitled to support through the Pupil Premium (additional government funding for looked after children, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families) is below the national average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action and at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average. A higher than average proportion of pupils join the school at times other than at the beginning of the year.

Common grading scale for all inspection judgements	
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness

Holy Cross is a good school with many outstanding features. The attainment and progress of pupils in Religious Education is good and improving. Their significant contribution to the Catholic life of the school ensures that the school is a harmonious and inclusive community with Christ at its centre. Leadership and management of the school is good. The highly committed headteacher and senior leadership team have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and actively work to improve outcomes for pupils. Governors are supportive and knowledgeable, they use their skills well to hold the school to account especially in the attainment and progress of pupils in Religious Education. The role of the Foundation Governors however needs further development in order to ensure that canonical responsibilities are understood fully and that diocesan requirements are followed. Teaching is good overall with a significant proportion being outstanding. Assessment and guidance is used effectively to improve standards. Pupils are beginning to have an input into evaluating their own work as they grow in understanding and knowledge of levels in Religious Education. The curriculum is well planned and sufficiently differentiated to meet the needs of all the pupils. Provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.

Overall effectiveness	Grade: 2
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What does the school need to do to improve further?

The school should focus on the following areas for development:

- The outstanding practice in the use of Assessment for Learning should be shared so that it is used consistently throughout the school to raise standards.
 - To ensure that all pupils actively seek to improve their skills in evaluating their own knowledge and understanding in Religious Education.
- To improve the quality of teaching further to match that of the best by sharing outstanding practice, particularly by developing a greater emphasis on open-ended tasks, higher order thinking and elements of risk taking to enhance independence and research skills throughout the school.
- To develop the strategic and canonical role of governors further by:
 - Creating a more structured approach to the formation of committees with designated chairpersons;
 - Ensuring that diocesan guidance regarding the appointment of the chair of governors is followed in full.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Leaders and managers have good systems for monitoring and evaluating the Catholic life of the school and Religious Education. The school improvement plan sets realistic and achievable targets that are grounded in accurate analysis of performance. Actions to overcome areas for development have been concerted and effective - and as a result, outcomes for pupils in Religious Education have remained high since the last inspection. The headteacher and senior leadership team is highly motivated and consistently communicates high expectations to staff about securing improvement. The school has a good capacity to improve further.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement
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Grade: 2

PUPILS

How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups

Pupils enter school in the Foundation Stage Reception Class with little or no religious knowledge and understanding. Pupils progress swiftly as a result of outstanding teaching and were observed retelling bible stories, recognising key characters, using simple religious language and participating in traditional prayers of the Church. This good progress continues throughout Key Stage 1. Pupils' standards in Religious Education achieved by the end of this key stage are at least in line with national expectations with a third of all pupils consistently attaining levels above. The school is addressing inconsistencies in attainment across this key stage due to staff absence and this is already having an impact on attainment and progress in the class affected. The school has set challenging targets for pupils and as a result of careful monitoring and support is on target to achieving these which will improve overall attainment in Religious Education and be more in line with levels achieved in English.

In Key Stage 2, progress remains good. Attainment is consistently good throughout the key stage and improving over time. By the end of the key stage, the majority of pupils are at least working at levels in line with national expectations with a considerable proportion attaining levels higher than expected. The quality of assessment and tracking of pupils' progress has become more robust since the last inspection and is having a positive effect on improving attainment and progress in Religious Education. As a result, pupils are on target to meet the challenging targets set for the end of Key Stage 2.

Pupils from different groups make at least the same level of progress as their peers. There are a significant number of pupils entering the school from other schools both in Key Stage 1 and 2. The school has tackled this inward mobility very effectively ensuring these pupils quickly 'catch up' with their peers and make good progress. Pupils generally apply themselves well in lessons working cooperatively in groups or individually. They are keen to do well and use comments made by their teachers to improve their work. In classes where assessment and marking are outstanding, pupils actively engage in their own assessment, are aware of the levels of attainment and know how they can improve their work. This outstanding practice should now be used more consistently across the school.

Pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school to an outstanding level. They willingly take on responsibilities and play an active part in developing the Catholic character of the school especially in its prayer and worship. They are able to articulate the school's distinctive nature and confidently refer to the teachings of Jesus as a source of moral, spiritual and social guidance. Pupils form positive relationships with one another which cross economic and cultural boundaries as a consequence behaviour is outstanding and incidents of bullying and racial harassment are very rare. The pupils are confident that teachers are able to tackle any incidents of misbehaviour and value the level of commitment and pastoral care they show. They respond very positively to the praise they are given and as a consequence are quick to congratulate others, Pupils are aware of the needs of others both within the school community and beyond and enthusiastically take part in charitable fund raising.

Pupils respond and participate in the school's Collective Worship to an outstanding level. From the very earliest years they are encouraged to plan and lead their own liturgies. Appropriate skills are developed over time so that by the end of Key Stage 2 they are adept in using scripture, religious artefacts, gesture and prayer very effectively in their worship. Vibrant Acts of Collective Worship engage the pupils and their message and mission are to be seen lived out in the classroom and playground. Collective Worship contributes significantly to the moral, spiritual and social development of the pupils.

How good outcomes are for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups	Grade: 2
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LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils

Leaders and managers demonstrate a commitment to the mission of the Church by providing a broad and balanced curriculum where pupils can achieve positive outcomes. Spiritual and moral development is a priority within the school. Leaders and managers at all levels are involved in a range of monitoring activities ensuring that they gain an insight into the school's areas of strength and also where improvements need to occur. There is ongoing dialogue between managers at all levels focussing on the development of the school's religious character and also outcomes for pupils in the subject of Religious Education. This dialogue and information is disseminated to staff and in turn impacts on outcomes for pupils.

The Mission Statement is reviewed annually with all stakeholders providing input. The impact of this is the introduction of a 'child friendly' version introduced to the pupils who are now able to articulate its essence. The parish priest reported favourably that the school is held in high regard in the local community. The impact of this is evidenced in waiting lists for admissions to each year group.

In Holy Cross School there is a strong sense of belonging, pupils reported 'it doesn't matter where you are from' pupils are given opportunities to work together and there is an open invitation to share faith, culture and belief. The school welcomes partners from the wider community. The Anglican vicar is a regular visitor along with the Rabbi from the Nottingham Hebrew congregation and an Imam from the Blue Coat School. The

impact of these visits to the school community is an acceptance by all pupils of the diverse makeup of Holy Cross and a growing awareness of the area beyond Hucknall. This needs to continue to be fostered by all leaders and managers. The school is currently establishing links with a school in Belarus and this is impacting on pupils' understanding of the lives of children in an environment very different from their own. Themes explored in Collective Worship celebrate and reflect the religious diversity of the school community.

Included in the school improvement plan are detailed targets for the development of Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school including Collective Worship. The three-year plan shows points that have been clearly actioned and together with the recent systematic monitoring of data, target setting and building on areas of strength are beginning to impact on outcomes for pupils. The Religious Education co-ordinator brings energy and clarity to the role, other staff seek her advice in matters of subject delivery in Religious Education and the development of the Catholic life of the school. The views of parents and pupils are sought and acted upon. The impact of a recent questionnaire was the introduction of more 'awe and wonder' elements to lesson delivery. Drama and artwork are also highly valued by the pupils as an aid to build their knowledge and understanding of the subject.

The Governing Body shares the vision for the school and discharges its responsibilities in an effective manner. To develop their role even further, consideration needs to be given to the strategic role of the Foundation Governors and a more structured approach to the formation of committees with designated chairpersons. This should then be supported by the scheduling of all meetings to enable maximum attendance from all governors. It is also essential that the Governing Body urgently seeks further clarification from the diocese with regard to the role and status of the chair of governors in a Catholic school.

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the school

Grade: 2

PROVISION

How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic Education

Teaching in the lessons observed and from evidence in the pupils' workbooks and teachers' planning ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. Where teaching in Religious Education is good or better, it is effective in providing inspiration and independent learning activities for all groups of pupils impacting on the great majority who make good progress in the subject. In upper Key Stage 2 children responded well to open ended questioning and commented that the challenge 'to be pushed to the limit' and it is 'not easy to do what Jesus tells us all the time-that's the challenge'. Where teaching was outstanding there was minimal reliance on consolidation of learning and greater emphasis on open-ended tasks, higher order thinking and elements of risk taking to enhance independence and research skills. Pupils are encouraged to 'wonder' about elements introduced in the lesson and to share their ideas with the rest of the class. The impact of this was some delightful contributions provided by the pupils. Appropriate use of a range of technologies maximises learning and engages the pupils. In good and outstanding lessons, additional staff were used to support groups of pupils during the exposition and in main activities, the impact of this was effective with children being fully

engaged. The headteacher and Religious Education co-ordinator have ensured that the staff attend diocesan training, this is followed up in school with a planned programme of staff meetings where Religious Education is the focus. This training has impacted positively on teachers' subject knowledge, which is generally very good. The school has successfully introduced the 'Come and See' Religious Education programme. Planning is detailed ensuring differentiation, assessment for learning and opportunities with thought given to the extension of pupils' understanding and knowledge.

The school has detailed tracking systems providing information on pupil progress and achievement. Close scrutiny of this information over time will help staff to identify gaps and slippage so that underachievement in Religious Education can be addressed swiftly. The use of 'driver words' aids assessment and is evident throughout all key stages. Teachers mark work against the objectives of the lesson, the majority of pupils respond to the marking indicating they have a good understanding of what they need to do next to improve. Challenging targets are set by the school and are recently being monitored systematically during pupil progress interviews with the Religious Education co-ordinator. The school monitors closely the group of inwardly mobile pupils ensuring that underachievement is tackled and progress is in line with the rest of the cohort.

The school provides opportunities for the pupils to engage with the wider community, visits to school from other faith communities in the local area are a feature. The parish priest takes an interest in the school and contributes to the Catholic life by visiting and celebrating Mass. Members of staff provide good example to the pupils by their support of parish events thus impacting on the link between school and the parish of Holy Cross, Hucknall. Opportunities for spiritual development are provided by the prayer and care group/chaplaincy team. This is a vehicle for children helping children offering support in times of bereavement and a befriending service underpinned by prayer, liturgy and a love of the Bible.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is excellent, there are a range of opportunities for formal and informal prayer both in lessons and during key stage Acts of Collective Worship. During the observed Act of Worship with the theme of community, pupils responded appropriately and were actively engaged in answering questions, sharing their views and accepting the invitation to pray. Account is taken of the diverse cultural experiences of the pupils with some having the opportunity to respond through reciting extracts from the Koran. The Act of Worship in Key Stage 1 was equally effective in the way pupils prepared, led and responded to this prayerful experience. Good use of music and ICT enhanced the experience. The school is working hard at encouraging pupils to plan, prepare and deliver their own Acts of Worship and impacting on pupils who show a great eagerness to do this. Attendance by parents and the wider community to liturgies is positively encouraged and is appreciated as evidenced in parental comments and documentation. This impacts on the evangelisation in the school community where some families are exploring the Catholic faith further.

How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic education	Grade: 1
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Inspection Judgements Summary

Overall effectiveness – How effective the school is in providing Catholic education.	2
How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups.	2
How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the school.	2
How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic education.	1
How good OUTCOMES are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups.	2
How well pupils progress and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.	2
Taking into account:	
<i>pupils' standards of attainment in Religious Education;</i>	2
<i>the quality of pupils' learning and their progress;</i>	2
<i>the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress.</i>	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school.	1
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.	1
How effective LEADERS AND MANAGERS are in developing the Catholic life of the school.	2
How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils.	2
How effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion.	1
How well leaders and managers at all levels monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils.	2
The extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so areas needing development are tackled decisively and statutory and canonical responsibilities met.	2
How effective the PROVISION is in promoting Catholic education.	1
The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education.	2
The effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in Religious Education.	2
The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs.	1
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.	1