

Inspection of a good school: Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Laburnum Drive, Walmley, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands B76 2SP

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 December 2022

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a welcoming school. Pupils, parents and staff all feel part of the Holy Cross family. Pupils are happy. They love their school and are proud to be a pupil here. Children settle quickly into the early years because of the nurturing environment that staff have created.

Pupils are exceptionally well behaved. They have strong, respectful relationships with adults and each other. Pupils know that staff quickly sort out any problems and that leaders will not tolerate bullying. This means pupils feel safe.

Leaders have high expectations of all pupils, including those with special educational needs/disabilities (SEND). Pupils work hard to meet these expectations and achieve well.

Pupils have many opportunities to develop their character. They say that staff teach them how to 'act kindly'. They learn to build empathy and awareness of other cultures through the school's work as a school of sanctuary. Pupils understand and value what it means to be different from others. They enjoy contributing to the life of the school as 'Mini Vinnies' or junior PCSOs. Pupils learn to be responsible by becoming mental health ambassadors or playleaders. By Year 6, pupils are articulate, confident and ready for secondary school.

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

Leaders ensure that the ambitious curriculum identifies what pupils will learn over time. Staff are well trained, so that they teach the curriculum effectively. This begins in the early years when children develop their language and number skills well.

Leaders constantly review the curriculum to ensure that it includes the specific knowledge and vocabulary that pupils need to know. For example, in science the children begin learning to make predictions about ice melting in Reception. Pupils build on this learning over time, so that by Year 4 they are able to make complex measured predictions using scientific language, such as 'variable'.

Teachers plan activities to develop pupils' knowledge over a sequence of lessons. In mathematics, older children are able to subtract fractions successfully because they have built up to this in the previous lessons. Teachers use checks to identify what pupils know well. Pupils receive clear feedback that helps them to improve their work.

Leaders provide pupils with many planned experiences to enrich the curriculum. For example, a trip to a chocolate factory teaches pupils about the historical impact of a factory in an area of Birmingham. A visit to the zoo is an opportunity to learn about conservation but also enables pupils to develop map reading skills. Pupils remember what they learn on these trips.

The support that leaders provide for pupils with SEND is highly effective. Leaders have the same high aspirations for pupils with SEND as for other pupils. Staff swiftly identify pupils who need extra support. Leaders then carefully check that the right support is in place for these pupils. This ensures that pupils with SEND are included in all aspects of school life and achieve well.

Reading is prioritised and older pupils in particular talk with enthusiasm about a love of books. Reading and story sessions give pupils opportunities to read a wide range of texts. Children begin to learn letter sounds as soon as they join the school. Staff are well trained and feel confident to teach phonics. However, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to practise the sounds they are learning. As a result, some pupils do not become fluent readers as quickly as they could.

Leaders make sure that all staff follow a consistent approach to managing behaviour. This means that the behaviour of any unsettled pupils does not affect other pupils' learning. Pupils talk about how their behaviour links to the five 'golden threads'. They are clear about the rules and know that adults apply these fairly. Pupils follow staff's instructions and listen attentively. Classrooms are calm and productive. The playground is a lively and friendly place to play.

There is a range of clubs and activities for pupils to join. These include sports clubs and opportunities to learn musical instruments. These activities promote pupils' personal and social skills very well. Leaders and staff successfully encourage pupils to uphold the school's strong values, but pupils are less knowledgeable about fundamental British values.

Governors are well trained and informed about the work of the school. They check that the decisions leaders make have a positive impact on pupils. Leaders care about staff's well-being. They have put measures in place to improve staff workload. Staff appreciate this and are proud to work at the school. The staff team is united in its commitment and care for the pupils and for each other.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff and governors receive regular training. Staff know how to identify pupils who may be at risk of potential harm. There are clear systems in place to record concerns, and leaders use these rigorously. Leaders make appropriate checks on staff before they start working at the school.

Pupils learn about healthy relationships, road safety and keeping physically and mentally healthy. They know there are trusted adults in school to speak to with any worries. Staff also teach pupils how to stay safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not ensured that pupils have enough opportunities to learn and practise phonics. This means that some pupils do not learn to read fluently as quickly as they should. Leaders should ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunities to learn new sounds and practise blending them to enable them to develop their reading skills quickly.
- Some pupils do not have a detailed knowledge of the fundamental British values of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty and tolerance. Therefore, pupils are not as well prepared for life in modern Britain as they might be. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum contains a range of effective opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge of fundamental British values.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Holy Cross Catholic Primary School to be good in April 2013.

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	140525
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10205156
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	210
Appropriate authority	Board of Directors
Chair of Board of Directors	Maria Stirrop
Executive Principal	Teresa Cotter
Website	www.holycross-sch.net/
Date of previous inspection	22 November 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a Catholic Primary School and is part of the St John Paul II Multi Academy within the Archdiocese of Birmingham. The school's last section 48 inspection was in February 2022. The next section 48 inspection will take place within the prescribed period.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in the evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics and history. For the deep dives, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspector held meetings with the principal, the head of school, curriculum leaders and the special educational needs coordinator. She met representatives of the local governing body, board of trustees and spoke with a representative from the archdiocese.
- The inspector examined a range of school documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation, improvement plans, records of governance, and documentation relating to pupils' behaviour.
- The inspector met with the designated leaders for safeguarding to discuss the actions taken to keep pupils safe. The lead inspector reviewed a range of documents, including the school's single central record.
- The inspector listened to a sample of pupils in Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3 read to a familiar adult. The inspector met with groups of pupils from across the school.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View.
- The inspector spoke with groups of staff and took account of views shared through the staff survey.

Inspection team

Corinne Biddell, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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