



# The Holy Cross School

URN: 138459

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of Most Rev. John Wilson, the Archbishop of Southwark

14–15 March 2024

## Summary of key findings

### Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

1

#### Catholic life and mission (p.3)

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission

1

#### Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

1

#### Collective worship (p.7)

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

1

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

## What the school does well

- Catholic social teaching is embedded across the curriculum and throughout the school.
- Staff and students are provided with opportunities to lead and have their views listened to and actioned.
- Student engagement and progress in religious education is excellent.
- Leaders ensure that religious education is thoughtfully and creatively planned and delivered.
- The collaborative work of the chaplaincy team, to "walk alongside the young people" in their journey of faith.

## What the school needs to improve

- Develop a retreat programme for Key stage 4 students which allows all opportunities to reflect and broaden their spiritual experience.
- To promote A-level religious studies with the intention of improving the uptake of the subject.
- Share the expertise of the religious education department staff to the benefit of other diocesan schools.

## Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

### Catholic life and mission key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

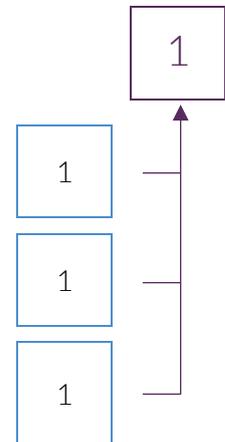
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school



The seven principles of Catholic social teaching permeate through every aspect of life at The Holy Cross School. Staff and students are rightly proud of the work they have done to attain the Romero Award Developer Level, with leaders at all levels working collaboratively to evaluate how their area of responsibility can contribute to the ethos of the school. One student explained that the focus on Catholic social teaching encourages students to see how religion and their faith "is relevant to our daily lives and our plans for the future." All students are cared for equally and this reflects the inclusive nature of the school's mission statement. The sense of community cohesion is very strong and is celebrated by students who acknowledge the richness that diversity brings to the community as a whole. Students, staff and leaders are appreciative of being part of the community of the Sisters of the Holy Cross and welcome links with other Holy Cross Sisters and communities in different countries. Students are aware of their responsibility to help those less fortunate and demonstrate genuine concern for everyone around them through charitable activities, planned by the student leadership, including support for the Holy Cross community worldwide as well as Catholic charities such as Cafod.

Staff provide the highest levels of pastoral care. They are supportive and actively encourage every pupil to be the best that they can be. The majority of parents are extremely positive and appreciative of the opportunities the school provides for their children and the inclusive nature of the community. One parent said, "The Catholic life and mission shines through in every interaction. I, as a parent of a daughter with SEN, could not have asked for a school that better exemplifies the life and teaching of Christ." Staff feel very valued; they readily serve the community and participate in activities and routines which promote the school's high standards, and especially those which reinforce Catholic social teaching. Open dialogue and good communication are appreciated between the school, and the parish. The school works hard to ensure a strong partnership with the local parishes in order to help pupils to participate more fully in liturgy by having school masses in the local churches. Provision for relationships, sex and health education, meets both the statutory and diocesan requirements. Support and resources are provided for tutors to ensure that there is consistency of practice in

delivering the programme across all groups. As a result, pupils are able to make informed choices about remaining safe and have a strong sense of right and wrong.

Leaders have created an environment, in keeping with the principle of the dignity of the human person, where a huge number of leadership opportunities for staff and students are not only offered but quickly accepted and taken up. Policies and structures are in place to provide the high levels of pastoral care for staff, with a clear commitment to the wellbeing of staff. The vast majority of staff agree that the physical and mental health of staff is well supported at the school, with one staff member stating, "This school is excellent at providing both staff and pupils alike the opportunity to make the world a better place." Governors are highly ambitious for the Catholic life of the school and are actively involved in its evaluation. Governors provide appropriate support and effective challenge to the headteacher and other leaders. The link governor for religious education is knowledgeable and Catholic life is monitored through the Faith, Mission and Ethos committee and reports to the full governing body.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

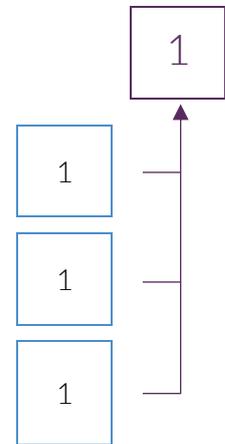
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education

#### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education



Students are developing excellent knowledge, understanding and skills that exemplify the learning required by the *Religious Education Directory* and the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. Students make consistently good progress and achieve the best possible outcomes. Students are aware of what they are doing well, what they need to do to improve, and which techniques will serve their individual needs well. Students enjoy their religious education lessons and are reflective with a high level of engagement. Key stage 4 students attend numerous extra-curricular intervention sessions, as they see the value in this additional time with the knowledgeable and highly skilled staff. Students are religiously literate, speaking confidently using key concepts and subject specific vocabulary. Outcomes are outstanding, relative to their starting points and capabilities. At the end of Key Stage 4 students in religious education make excellent progress compared to other core subjects and national averages. Students also make excellent progress at the end of Key Stage 5, although cohort numbers are low. They achieve above average attainment when compared with other core curriculum subjects or using national data. This has been sustained for the last three years. The majority of students' books demonstrate content of a high standard with presentation being exceptional. This, in turn leads to high performance from others through the modelling of creative and imaginative work.

Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and have a good understanding of how students learn, appropriate to the phase in which they are teaching. They are committed to the value of religious education, and they communicate this effectively to their students. Teachers have a focus on high order questioning which is delivered expertly in lessons to identify where students are in their understanding. For example, in Year 10 where students are able to easily recall and explain concepts such as contingency, omnipotence and immanence. Teacher and peer feedback provide students with clear and useful guidance which ensures that students understand what they need to do to make

progress. Teachers give students space and time for purposeful reflection in lessons. Teachers' planning is linked to their knowledge of students' current assessment and their understanding of the individuals they teach. Such is the success of the religious education department, staff should now consider how best to support and share good practice with colleagues in other departments and within other diocesan schools.

Leaders and governors ensure that the school curriculum for religious education is a faithful expression of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. The subject leader has a clear vision for teaching and learning and high level of expertise in securing this vision; the department is committed to the highest standards of work ensuring all students benefit from these expectations. The subject leader meets regularly with the department staff and the link senior leader and governor to discuss the department's work, including students' progress and teaching and learning. This prompts strategic action and well-targeted planning which leads to outstanding outcomes. Leaders and governors ensure that religious education is comparable to other core curriculum subjects, in terms of professional development, timetabling, staffing and accommodation. Leaders and governors have shown a commitment to ensuring that religious education is imaginatively and thoughtfully planned by a team of subject specialists, resulting in teaching that is consistently good and better. This is supported by learning walks, work scrutiny and pupil surveys being used effectively to ensure consistency across the department. Department evaluation is robust and provides an honest evaluation of the strengths and areas for development. Leaders and governors support all diocesan events and participate in all training provided, attending the annual leadership conferences facilitated by the diocese.

## Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

### Collective worship key judgement grade

**Pupil outcomes**

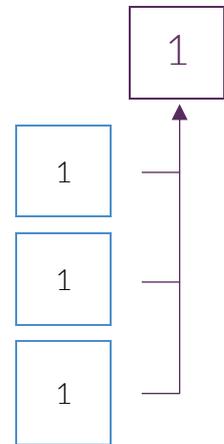
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

**Provision**

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

**Leadership**

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship



Students show reverence in all acts of prayer and liturgy. The school has developed a group of young chaplaincy leaders known as the 'Ignite' team, who are enthusiastic in their preparation of creative prayer and liturgy times. Students appreciate the opportunities to work as part of the chaplaincy team and value the experience this gives them to develop their understanding of how prayer helps them in their daily lives. Students are aware of different forms of prayer and appreciate the opportunity to take part in them. Staff prayer is available before school on one morning during the week, which is well attended. Staff facilitate these sessions on a rota. They feel well-supported. For example, every member of the maths department attended a reflection conducted by a member of their team. Students take advantage of voluntary worship experiences such as the prayer vigil which is well attended and offers a wonderful opportunity for reflection for those who attend. Students in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 5 are able to reflect during annual retreat experiences. Similar provision should be offered to all students within Key Stage 4 on a consistent basis, in order for students in Year 10 and 11 to receive moral and spiritual development through experiences such as retreats, pilgrimages, and days of reflection.

The dedicated and skilled chaplaincy team work collaboratively to create consistently high-quality prayer and liturgy experiences for the whole school community. The school ensures that traditional prayer is used alongside more contemporary forms; for example, a booklet of common prayers is read from, by students at the beginning of each form time, as well as in some lessons. Prayer is naturally embedded into the school's daily life, which reflects the prayer life of the Church. There has been professional development training within the Performing Arts faculty to enable music to thrive and significantly add to the prayer and liturgy experience. The school benefits from a beautiful chapel that is well-used and decorated with student contributions from "The Holy Cross Badge Competition" over the years which links current pupils to the past in a unique way. The school site has numerous inspiring

quotes written on the walls, which includes various well-chosen Scripture passages to ensure that all staff, students and guests are suitably encouraged and motivated. The school benefits from the support of the local clergy who make themselves available for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Mass on holy days of obligation and other important feasts.

Governors and leaders have a clear drive for prioritising the importance of embedding prayer and liturgy into school life. This commitment to prioritisation of prayer and liturgy is evidenced by the investment in two lay chaplains, who provide models of excellent leadership through their provision. The oversight of the chaplaincy student group inspires student leadership by offering opportunities for students to develop their skills and confidence to construct and lead liturgy. Governors also visit the school regularly, attend whole school Masses and special events, and visiting key staff to quality-assure the accuracy of information provided to them. Holy days of obligation, observance of the sacraments and many other significant days and events are included in the school's calendar and annual routine. When significant dates in the liturgical calendar do not fall during school time, leaders ensure service times from the local parishes are sent out to parents and other stakeholders. One member of staff said, "I love working in a school that lives out its mission statement in everything that it does. The students are at the heart of this school and helping them on their spiritual journey (whatever stage they are at) is evident every day."

## Information about the school

Full name of school	The Holy Cross School
School unique reference number (URN)	138459
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3145402
Full postal address of the school	The Holy Cross School, 25 Sandal Road, New Malden, KT3 5AR
School phone number	02083954225
Head teacher	Dervla McConn-Finch
Chair of Trustees	Piers North
School Website	<a href="http://www.holycross.kingston.sch.uk">www.holycross.kingston.sch.uk</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	The Holy Cross School
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Date of last denominational inspection	9 <sup>th</sup> – 10 <sup>th</sup> July 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

## The inspection team

James Jukes	Lead
Patricia Horsman	Team
Bridget Durrant	Team

## Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement