



# **DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT**

incorporating Section 48 and Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on  
behalf of the Archbishop of Southwark

**URN 102609**

**Holy Cross Preparatory School**

**George Road**

**Kingston Upon Thames**

**KT2 7NU**

**Inspection date:** 10<sup>th</sup> October 2019

**Chair of Trustees &  
School Advisory Body:** Sr Margaret Donovan

**Headteacher:** Mrs Sarah Hair

**Inspectors:** Mr Stephen Beck

Mrs Angela Pitcher

## **EDUCATION COMMISSION**

St Edward's House, St Paul's Wood Hill, Orpington, Kent BR5 2SR  
Tel 01689 829331

**Director of Education: Dr Simon Hughes**



### Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

## FULL REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Holy Cross Catholic Preparatory School was founded in 1931. It moved to its present site located in a historic house with eight acres of ground in a conservation area on Kingston Hill in South West London in 1971. It is a two form Catholic Independent day school for girls aged four to eleven years. The school is in the trusteeship of the Sisters of the Holy Cross who are the founders and proprietors responsible for the governance of the school supported by an Advisory Body which provides advice and guidance to them and the school's leadership team.

Some Catholic families attend St Ann's Parish Church, Kingston Hill with others attending other local parishes such as St Joseph's, Our Lady Immaculate, St. Agatha's, St. John Fisher and Sacred Heart. The school has a close relationship with the parish priest. The school's intake is 45% Catholic, 30% other Christian Faiths, 20% non-Christian Faith and 5% no faith.

Currently there are 283 pupils on the school roll with the majority being of White British Heritage although the community it serves is culturally diverse. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities at 8.7% is below the national average with no pupil having an education, health and care plan. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is generally above average. 18.8% of pupils speak English as an additional language, the majority of whom are not at a low level of fluency. The school has a diverse intake drawing from within a five mile radius.

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## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

Holy Cross is an outstanding Catholic school because:

- The well-being and personal and spiritual development of pupils and staff is at the heart of the school's vision and mission. The school is passionate about developing pupils through the love and teachings of Christ, into individuals who can advance spiritually, academically, morally and culturally. Pupils are very keen to participate and benefit greatly from the varied opportunities provided for them to contribute to the Catholic Life of the school.
- The quality of Collective Worship is outstanding. It is central to the life of the school and is given the highest priority. The impact of Gospel values is evident in liturgies, Collective Worship and strong relationships, which form the basis of the school community. Guided by staff, pupils are demonstrating an ability to confidently plan and lead prayer and worship and the school is developing their skills in this area well. All pupils act with reverence and respect, have the opportunity to pray reflectively and formally and speak with knowledge and pride about their faith.
- The quality of Religious Education is outstanding. Staff know their pupils well and consistently teach lessons which enthuse and engage pupils, ensuring progress and achievement is at the highest level. Leaders and managers ensure that monitoring and evaluation is accurate, timely and embedded in the work of the school.
- The leadership of the school and Religious Education by the headteacher, Religious Education leader, senior staff, chaplain, and Advisory Body is inspirational in their personal witness and commitment to the Catholic faith. There is a continuous drive for improvement for the good of the whole school community.

## WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

With no significant areas for improvement the school should;

- undertake the planned review of the school's relationship and sex education policy (RSE) in consultation with the Trustees, Advisory Body, staff and parents to secure a whole school programme in line with Diocesan guidance and a fuller awareness of the programme.
- Continue to develop cross school working within the Deanery.
- Undertake the planned development of the outside prayer area to further deepen the prayer life of the school.



## Overall Effectiveness

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.

1

### Catholic Life

1

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.

1

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

1

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

1

### Religious Education

1

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.

1

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.

1

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

1

### Collective Worship

1

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.

1

The quality of provision for Collective Worship.

1

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

1



## CATHOLIC LIFE

**The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.**

- Holy Cross is a welcoming school that makes all feel valued. Pupils are enthusiastic, caring, polite and well mannered. Behaviour, and behaviour for learning, are exemplary. The Catholic life of the school embraces and engages its pupils. They are willing and active participants in the school's Catholic life. They understand their responsibilities towards others and are proud to serve and share in the common vision of the school of true inclusion. They are aware of the needs of others evidenced through support of various charities at home and abroad, most notably support for the sister school in Zambia.
- All groups of pupils are very proud to belong to this strongly Catholic school. They aspire to follow what they describe as 'The Holy Cross Way'. This is exemplified in each classroom where there is a display of 'The Holy Cross Way' - this is a set of value statements which all pupils are encouraged to adhere to, whether they are in Reception or year 6. Pupils indicated that they valued these and felt that by striving to follow the sentiments everyone was guided on how to behave and that this created a harmonious, respectful and loving school community. Pupils say *"As a Holy Cross girl I will use my God given gifts to follow God's path and I am a Holy Cross girl wherever I am and in everything I do"*. This gives pupils a very strong sense of identity.
- There is also a strong sense of a community firmly rooted in Gospel values and the teachings of the Catholic Church. Adherence to 'The Holy Cross Way' develops in pupils a strong sense of social justice and responsibility to the wider community.
- The headteacher is an excellent role model and is well supported by the Trustees, School Advisory Body and her Senior Leadership Team. She has worked tirelessly to build on the school's considerable strengths and make it a centre of excellence in Catholic education.
- Pupils value one another and understand at an age appropriate level, how to live out the Gospel values. Pupils play a genuine role in developing the Catholic Life of the school. This is most evident through the general discussions in class where pupils are encouraged by their teachers to express opinions and value those of one another. Suggestions made are taken up by class councillors to the school council and faith leaders which both provide an opportunity for pupil voice to be heard and impact on the school. In the Spring term, the school House Captains proposed four charities (presenting their aims and activities at an assembly) for consideration by the school pupil body for the school's next Lenten charity.
- As a parent wrote, *'You can feel the strong Catholic ethos of the school the minute you enter. We are delighted our daughter can deepen her understanding of the Catholic values we live by at home. We are extremely happy with our daughter's spiritual and moral growth. Sharing and caring for others is really instilled in the children'*.



**The quality of provision of the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.**

- The Catholic ethos of the school is visibly evident from the point of entry to the school. High quality displays reflecting the Catholicity of the school are evident throughout the beautiful building in which the school is based. The displays reflect a high level of ownership by all stakeholders. The school website likewise celebrates the Catholic life of the school.
- The welfare of every pupil is clearly at the heart of all the school does as it 'goes the extra mile' to support each one of its pupils. A creative and very Catholic understanding is evident in the personal care offered to each pupil, especially in times of need.
- Pupils are challenged to be the best they can be, knowing that they are well supported by a caring team of staff. They know they are expected to behave well and work hard, but that the teachers and adults are always there to help them.
- The school has formally adopted 'A Journey in Love' as a scheme of work for Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) although this provision is being reviewed in the light of national developments and its use of 'Ten Ten' resources.
- The school lives out its stated mission that, *'In the spirit of Saint Francis, the School is a caring community, which strives to enable each person to realise their full potential spiritually, academically, personally and physically. To achieve this, the School welcomes all faiths and works in partnership with parents, teachers and children to develop the God-given gifts of each person.'* This is clearly evident in the school's *modus operandi* which is reflected in day to day operational matters and conversations with staff, pupils and parents.
- Pupils have a very good, age-appropriate understanding of the mission statement, as they evaluate it at the start of each academic year and live it throughout the year. A pupil described Holy Cross as, *"Not just a school, but a family"*.
- Relationships within the Holy Cross family are strong and purposeful, striving for the common good and supporting those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils, staff and parents willingly and eagerly use their gifts and resources to serve others, both in supporting charitable causes and by being involved with the school community both in and beyond school hours.
- The school is an extremely supportive community. Pupils support one another with compassion in their lessons. Staff go above and beyond to support pupils and their families, while the parent body actively rallies to support anyone in need of compassion at any given time, e.g. ill health or bereavement.

**How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.**

- Catholic life is passionately led by the inspirational and highly committed headteacher. She is very well supported by the hardworking Religious Education subject leader. Together with senior staff this highly effective team ensures that all areas of Catholic Life are given the highest priority.
- Leaders, Trustees and the Advisory Body share a strong commitment to the Church's Mission in education and they are very successful in promoting and developing the Catholic Life of the school.



- The monitoring and evaluation of Catholic Life takes place through lesson observations, learning walks, book scrutinies and professional conversations with staff and pupils.
- The Religious Education subject leader and the link Advisory Body member frequently meet to participate in monitoring activities.
- Trustees and advisors know the school well through their frequent visits and they regard monitoring its Catholicity and spiritual direction as their highest priority. They are highly ambitious for the future development of the school and are constantly seeking ways to improve the provision for Catholic Life.
- Systems used by the school for monitoring and evaluating the impact of Catholic Life provision are embedded. Leaders see self-evaluation as crucial to future improvement. They have conducted a thorough audit of Catholic Life in order to identify areas of strength and those in need of development.
- Information from this structured monitoring is used effectively by the headteacher, deputy headteacher and Religious Education subject leader. Consequently, they can make secure evaluations about the impact of the school's Catholic Life on pupils' spiritual and moral development and demonstrate a strong capacity for ongoing improvement.
- It is noteworthy that in the recent ISI report inspectors commented that, *'Pupils have an excellent knowledge of their own and other people's faiths and extremely high levels of spirituality across all areas and ages of the school'* and this is an area of strength.
- A very high number of positive questionnaires were returned on which one parent commented, *'The school welcomes and embraces other religions. It runs a group called 'Time for God' for parents, which is amazing and gives support that may be needed as sometimes as a parent we do not have all the answers'.*

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## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

**How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is outstanding.**

- The school provided excellent self-evaluation for this inspection that identified the school's considerable strengths. It would benefit from being less summative and more closely linked to the schools' three year strategic development plan identifying areas for development to make it more of a working document.
- The quality of learning and progress is outstanding. All pupils enjoy their learning, speak with passion, have very positive attitudes and work at a swift pace throughout lessons. They apply themselves with enthusiasm to the challenges set by their teachers. Evidence from pupil questionnaires reflects pupils' positivity as exemplified by statements such as; *'The things that make RE lessons special is that we learn about our faith so when I go to Church I understand what the priest means', 'You can learn about the inspirational life of Jesus and how we can learn to live like him and be a kind and loving person.'* and *"I like most things about lessons as you can share ideas and discover ways in how you can make yourself a better person. I enjoy learning from the Bible and seeing Jesus and his disciples", experiences*.
- Pupils make very good progress as a result of their needs being well met. They continue to make outstanding progress throughout all key stages as a result of very good teaching.
- They are proud of their work as reflected in their well-presented workbooks. They are religiously literate, articulate and reflective as evidenced in lesson observations, book scrutiny and whole school liturgy.
- Groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress.
- Teachers are adept at differentiating work and providing additional adult support.
- Pupils' skill development is very good with a wide range of examples in books. Samples included evidence of children being able to interpret sources accurately, to reflect and evaluate and to pose questions which were then investigated.
- Pupils' learning is supported by teacher's strong subject knowledge and confidence in delivery, very good and developing cross curricular links, deep and clarifying questioning, frequent use of scripture for research, well-chosen age- and ability-appropriate activities, consistent developmental marking and Religious Education teaching that underpins values.

**The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is outstanding.**

- The school adopted the 'Come and See' scheme of work in September 2018, which was quickly embedded. It is skilfully used as a scaffold on which to build personalised learning, based on pupil needs. Cross-curricular links with art, computing, drama, music and literacy, contribute to pupils' enjoyment and engagement providing meaningful learning experiences. Lesson planning is well supplemented and adapted by teachers to ensure learning is stimulating and engaging, whilst maintaining high standards and levels of attainment.





- Teaching and assessment is outstanding and as a result all pupils are making rapid and sustained progress. Teachers plan lessons very well. As a result of accurate assessment they differentiate their lessons and are highly effective in meeting the needs of all pupils, including those who have special educational needs.
- Teachers have very high expectations of work and behaviour, which are communicated effectively to pupils. They are also knowledgeable and confident in their teaching and use a range of appropriate resources creatively ensuring that pupils are highly engaged and motivated building well on previous learning.
- The thorough checking of pupils' understanding throughout lessons to identify misconceptions, challenge thinking or provide feedback, results in pupils being actively engaged throughout the lesson maximising learning. Achievement is regularly celebrated in lessons.
- Marking, assessment and feedback are of a consistently high quality and follow the school's policy. Feedback is positive, and developmental, related to content and learning objectives, celebrates success, questions and challenges thinking. The "Next Step" in learning is outlined and pupils are given time to read and respond (R&R) to feedback in order for it to have a positive impact on overall standards of attainment.
- Holy Cross is an outward looking school and as a result in November 2018, moderation of pupils' Religious Education work took place with all teaching staff at the Kingston Deanery schools' moderation meeting. Moderation of attainment was accurate and the school standards were well-placed among local Kingston schools.
- There is a rigorous tracking system which informs planning and ensures that pupils are continually challenged. To ensure Religious Education attainment is in line with other core curriculum subjects, it is tracked and monitored through the school Management Information System (Classroom Monitor). Curriculum coverage, progression and attainment are rigorously monitored, and outcomes analysed in order to evaluate teaching and learning.
- Religious Education benefits from high quality resources that are available and used throughout the school. All classes are well equipped with appropriate digital and printed resources, artefacts and teaching support materials. A range of age-appropriate Bibles and prayer books for class prayer areas, a well-equipped central resource area and well-resourced prayer room, enhance the learning experiences of pupils.
- Additional adult support is timetabled across parallel classes to ensure parity over the year group. This supports all learners and actively engages them in teaching and learning in the classroom and are an effective resource in moving pupils' learning forward. Their interventions are timely and discreet and have real impact on pupil progress.

**How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is outstanding.**

- Leaders are outstanding in promoting, monitoring and evaluating the provision for Religious Education. They ensure that the Religious Education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference in every respect and in each key stage and that at least the required amount of curriculum time is given to Religious Education in each key stage.



- A Trustee, an Advisory Body member and a regular volunteer in school throughout the week in various capacities, including pastoral care, has direct access to the views of pupils and parents. If and when necessary she brings issues to the attention of the head, deputy and/or Advisory Body ensuring they are kept well informed.
- Leaders' self-evaluation of Religious Education is a coherent reflection of rigorous assessment, tracking, monitoring, searching analysis and self-challenge which is well-informed by current best practice in Religious Education. This results in well targeted planning and strategic action, taken by the school, which leads to outstanding outcomes in Religious Education.
- The curriculum leader for Religious Education whilst only having taken on the role at the beginning of the calendar year has demonstrated an inspiring vision of outstanding teaching and learning and a high level of expertise in securing this vision. These are used effectively to improve teaching and learning in Religious Education, resulting in teaching that is likely to be outstanding and at least consistently good. She is passionate about the subject and obviously puts her heart and soul into the role with a determination to build on the already excellent provision she inherited to make it even better. In all of this she is well supported by the headteacher, deputy headteacher and all staff members.
- Leaders and Advisory Body members ensure that Religious Education is imaginatively and thoughtfully planned to meet the needs of different groups of pupils and each key stage is creatively structured to build on and enhance prior learning.
- Leaders ensure that Religious Education has full parity with other core curriculum subjects including professional development, resourcing, staffing and accommodation.
- The teaching of other faiths is well developed and has included opportunities to visit other places of worship. Parents expressed considerable satisfaction with this aspect of the curriculum.

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## COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

**How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.**

- Collective Worship takes place every day and is led by both staff and pupils across the school. Pupils and staff show their understanding of the Gospel values by being living examples to these values.
- Acts of worship engage all pupils' interests and inspire them in deep thought and heart felt response. There is a palpable enthusiasm for Collective Worship, reflected in the quality of pupils' involvement as observed by inspectors in an assembly where pupils participated reverently with clear purpose and self-reliance. Pupils read exceedingly well with clarity and meaning. The celebration opened with pupils playing music and concluded with some beautiful singing that reflected the school's strength in music, which greatly supports quality worship.
- Pupils expressed how they felt valued when able to offer and participate in different roles during acts of Collective Worship. They cited roles such as altar servers, 'meeters and greeters', readers, actors, offertory procession. Pupils readily lead Collective Worship and enjoy finding creative ways to worship the Lord by writing prayers, choosing hymns and re-enacting the readings for prayer services, Masses and assemblies. Junior girls enjoy selecting readings and structure Collective Worship with increasing independence and complexity, including contributing their own ideas for sharing the Gospel message with their peers. For example, on Fridays, pupils within classes create their own, age-appropriate Collective Worship for their peers. Sometimes these take place in the prayer room.
- Evidence shared with the inspection team, demonstrated a great variety of Collective Worship that pupils participate in across the liturgical year. Appropriate to their age and ability, many pupils are able to create an atmosphere that is conducive to prayer.
- They are becoming increasingly skilled in planning, leading and evaluating acts of worship as they have more opportunities for pupil-initiated decisions in recent years, rather than staff directed.
- Pupils are thoughtful and reflective. For example, they were set a task to design a liturgy for a specific occasion of their choosing with one planning a wedding liturgy. A pupil said she had chosen the hymn 'Let us make peace in our hearts'. When asked why she said, *"I have chosen it because when you get married you have to be peaceful even when it is hard"*.
- The experience of being exposed to a praying community has had a profound effect on the development of all pupils, irrespective of ability or faith background. Praying together is part of the daily experience for all pupils and staff. Pupils understand that prayer and Collective Worship are at the heart of their school and are active participants in this aspect of school life. The prayer room and outside prayer areas are great assets and make a valuable contribution to the prayer life of the school.
- Charitable work is given high focus across the school and the school undertakes regular charity work involving not just raising funds but volunteering in various capacities. The focus of the charity work undertaken is not the amount of money



raised but rather, teaching the pupils the importance of helping each other and those in need and that everyone is their neighbour.

**The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.**

- A wealth of varied and inspiring worship and prayer opportunities are woven into the fabric of school life. Provision is of a high standard.
- Prayer is part of every school day. Pupils and staff start and end the day with prayer and staff and Advisory Body meetings always include prayer. Around the school many attractive displays and prayer areas invite and inspire pupils, staff and visitors to prayer and reflection.
- The school prayer room is a recent addition to the school spaces and provides a dedicated space for prayer and enlightenment with Christ. It is available to individuals, groups and classes, planned or incidental visits with music, published and school-written prayers and song.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the Church's liturgical year, its feasts and seasons and speak confidently of how these are celebrated in school. They acknowledge the many opportunities they are given to lead and participate in worship noting, Year 6 pupil Faith Leaders who regularly write prayers for different purposes. Lower junior pupils at 'Mustard Seeds', explore God's love in creative ways, often including prayer. For example, they have made prayer strings from beads, rosary rings and let their prayers rise to heaven on helium balloons. During the Year 6 retreat day, pupils offered up their private prayers with one another watching as they are given up to our Lord. At sports tournaments, girls sing 'Come and Join the Circle' to prepare themselves for celebrating their gifts and talents with others in competition.
- Worship in school has clear themes linked to Gospel values and the liturgical calendar, as well as celebrating school events. In addition, it reflects events in the world, as appropriate.
- The contributions made by the parish priest to the religious life of the school has a significant impact and is greatly valued by all. His child-centred approach and drive for inclusivity serves both the pupils and school exceptionally well.
- The school community highly values the input of one of the Holy Cross Sisters who is well-known and loved by the pupils. She evangelises and provides pastoral care to the whole school community (pupils, staff and parents). She is currently a volunteer and former teacher of the school and is often found in the prayer room or her welcome room, where pupils seek her out to solve problems and pray about their friendship difficulties, sick parents and the death of loved ones, including pets.
- Parents are included in the school's provision of Collective Worship and prayer and speak appreciatively of this. They are invited to a range of events and celebrations. Good attendance and appreciative letters and emails indicate this is much valued. A parent wrote, *'The celebration of the Eucharist is beautiful. It is a wonderful experience at Holy Cross for people of any faith or none'*.

**How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.**

- At the start of every academic year, the Advisory Body is provided with a summary of the Collective Worship for the previous academic year, in order to provide evidence



to enable strategic prioritising linked to the school's three yearly strategic development plan.

- Leaders sustain and nurture the prayer life of the school community well; and ensure provision and opportunities for prayer and collective worship are in place.
- The school leaders have expert knowledge of how to plan and deliver quality liturgy and worship. They understand the Church's liturgical year and traditions and are outstanding role models to both staff and pupils.
- The headteacher along with the deputy headteacher and subject lead show a real depth of passion and commitment and have a clear vision and sense of direction and understanding of what is required to bring about improvement, which is shared with staff. They lead the school community to understand and appreciate these by making all forms of worship relevant to the pupils appropriate to their age, needs, experience and background.
- The headteacher ensures that all staff throughout the school receive the quality formation that they require in the development of spiritual and liturgical understanding.
- The views of pupils, staff and parents are sought through informal meetings, questionnaires etc. and are highly valued by the Advisory Body and senior leadership team. Their responses often lead to further developments.
- The dedication and commitment of the senior leaders, Trustees and the Advisory Body to the school are instrumental in the drive to provide high quality Collective Worship throughout the school. These prayerful, reflective opportunities contribute well to the spiritual formation of pupils and staff.
- Interviews with Advisory Body members, parish priest and headteacher, along with the scrutiny of both pupil and staff opinions, reflect the importance of true partnership, evaluation and a mission to ensure the very best for all pupils at Holy Cross Preparatory School.

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