



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the
Archbishop of Southwark and Inspection of
Denominational Education under Section 48
of the Education Act 2005
URN 138459

The Holy Cross School
Sandal Road
New Malden
Surrey KT3 5AR

Inspection date: 23 - 24 May 2013

Chair of Governors:	Mr Bernard Marley
Headteacher:	Mr Tom Gibson
Inspectors:	Mr Michael Sheridan Mrs Grainne Grabowski

EDUCATION COMMISSION

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SECTION 48

Introduction

Description of the school

The school gained academy converter status in August 2012. It is situated in the Kingston deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark and within Kingston Local Authority boundaries. The principal parishes which the school serves are Our Lady Immaculate, Tolworth; St Cecilia's, Cheam; St Agatha's, Kingston and St Joseph's, New Malden. The proportion of students who are baptised Catholics has increased from 65% since the last inspection to 84% during the current inspection. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 8.0% in Key Stage 3, 10% in Key Stage 4, 20% for A level studies and 3.3%, equivalent to 30 guided learning hours, for General Religious Education in the Sixth Form.

The school takes students from 11 to 18 years. The number of students currently on roll is 937 including 209 in the Sixth Form. The attainment of students on entering the school is slightly above average. The proportion of students eligible for Pupil Premium (around 12.5%) is well below average (approximately 26.5%). Around 8% of the students receive extra support in class, which is well below the national average (approximately 20%). The majority of pupils are White British (around 54%) with a significant proportion of pupils from an Asian heritage. The proportion of students from homes where English is an additional language is above average (approximately 20%).

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness as a Catholic school

GRADE

1

The Holy Cross is a welcoming school in which every member of the community works as one to promote its strong Catholic ethos. Many outstanding systems, including those for pastoral care and for spiritual, moral, cultural and social development, ensure that all pupils feel valued and supported. Excellent partnerships with parents, parishes and the wider community serve to enhance and sustain the school's provision. The outstanding Headteacher, together with the governors and the senior leadership team, has worked diligently to provide a robust strategic direction for the school which has led to a distinctively Catholic ethos with outstanding provision and very high standards in Religious Education. The governing body is a strength of the school and effectively supports senior leaders as a 'critical friend'. The assessment process and procedures for monitoring Religious Education teaching and learning are rigorous. This has resulted in pupils' achievements and standards being consistently excellent, hence it is a high achieving school. Thorough and discerning self-evaluation ensures that governors, the Headteacher and staff have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. This is reflected in the school's planning. All the key issues identified in the last inspection have been successfully addressed. The school improvement plan is well-focused, informed by canvassing views from all stakeholders and by departmental reviews. With the Catholic life of the school featuring prominently in its evaluation and planning processes, along with its accurate and comprehensive self-evaluation, the inspectors believe that the school has an excellent capacity to further improve.

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

Governors, headteacher and staff should:

- Undertake a mapping exercise to facilitate the identification of spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision across the wider curriculum
- Continue to develop the school's 'deep marking' strategy to ensure that pupils' responses to targets set by their Religious Education teachers have an impact on their learning
- Extend the range of visits to places of worship, particularly those which relate to the world religions covered in the Religious Education curriculum and to invite guest speakers from local faith communities

The Catholic life of the school

GRADE 1

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding. The Headteacher is an outstanding role model who is highly regarded by pupils and by staff. During the inspection, pupils spoke highly of his leadership and, in a Religious Education lesson, one pupil regarded the Headteacher as a model of modern-day discipleship. As a spiritual and pastoral leader his vision for the school is well articulated so that the Catholic mission of the school is at the heart of all aspects of school life. The Governing Body is outstanding, offering sound and strategic direction to the school in partnership with the Headteacher and a highly effective Senior Leadership team. Planning at all levels is outstanding and the Governors and Headteacher ensure that the Catholic mission of the school has a prominent place in the five-year strategic development plan. Governors are regular visitors to the school. They also ensure that there is a governor present at all parent consultation evenings. The Mission Statement is lived out in its aim to '... create a happy family environment in which all may grow in faith, hope and love for God, in love and respect for one another and the world around us...'. This is seen in the outstanding pastoral care for pupils and staff, which is evidenced in a year system which enables pupils to flourish, often in the face of personal challenges and adversity. There are high quality religious artefacts, such as the impressive statue of the Risen Christ, the Year of Faith banners, which include Papal quotes and pictures of Blessed Mother Theresa and Pope Francis. These, together with the crucifixes displayed in each classroom, mark the school as distinctively Catholic. An impressive stained glass window in the Sports Hall commemorates the significant contribution the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Cross has made to the school. The Assistant Headteacher responsible for social inclusion is a strength of the school. Together with an outstanding team of professionals, she provides pastoral and learning support which pupils emphasise as key to the security and well-being they feel, as a result of the work of the St Theresa's Support Centre in the school. Pupils with additional learning, emotional and physical needs are empowered through the expert direction of the Social Inclusion Team in the Centre, which is identified as a beacon of excellence by pupils and by governors. The Centre is well-maintained and resourced. They support the Catholic life of the school through attending school Masses, liturgies and staff prayer meetings. Pupils experience the democratic process through active Eco and Student Councils, with two pupils from each year group, in the latter case, representing their peers. For example, as a result of the two groups' suggestions, the school provides healthier eating options and a refurbished library. In a recent parents' survey the overwhelming majority were supportive of the school and the way in which it enriched their daughters' faith journeys and the contribution Religious Education makes to their spiritual and moral development. There was a very small minority (4.14%) of the respondents who felt that parents were not kept informed about Religious Education and worship, but this should decrease in the future as parents gain further access to the school's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

Quality of provision for personal and collective worship

GRADE 1

The provision for prayer and collective worship is outstanding. There is a comprehensive collective worship policy in place, while the Catholic mission section in the school improvement plan provides strategic direction for the Spiritual Life Team, comprised of nine members of staff. This team is led by the Spiritual Director, who is also the Head of Religious Education, and includes pastoral leaders or tutors from across all year groups. The group meets half-termly to discuss items such as tutor group prayers, retreats, the format of reconciliation services and the liturgical life of the school. The team produces a comprehensive and well-planned programme of Masses ranging from whole-school to individual classes, liturgies and assemblies, which are linked to the liturgical calendar and the 'The Way, the Truth and the Life' Religious Education programme. Pupils are actively

involved as servers, Eucharistic Ministers, musicians, readers and members of the choir in Masses and liturgical celebrations. For example, one outstanding Year 7 assembly, focusing on the theme 'Priorities and Overcoming Barriers', and prepared by one of the tutor groups, the Head of Junior School and the tutor, led pupils to worship and pray reverently. Through uplifting 'a capela' singing by six Year 7 pupils, skilful questioning by two assembly leaders, a role play and scripture reading on David and Goliath by pupils, spiritual and moral development was enhanced through the inspirational use of resources and clear ethical messages. Prayer or reflection therefore form part of every Religious Education lesson. In all acts of worship observed pupils were reverent, focused on the theme and remained on task. Many excellent examples of personal prayers were seen on display in the attractive Chapel. The Chapel is open to all members of the school community and is used for prayer at lunchtime twice a week, for guided reflections and for General Religious Education in the Sixth Form. High quality displays in the classrooms and around the school reinforce the themes from the liturgical season and 'The Way, the Truth and the Life' Religious Education programme, making the school distinctively Catholic. There is a strong link between the school and the parish. The parish priest is a regular and welcome visitor to the school and is also the Vice-Chair of Governors. He makes a positive impact on the spiritual and pastoral life of staff, pupils and their families. As a result, the prayer life of the school acts as a catalyst to the pupils' spiritual and moral development which is outstanding. The Eucharist is celebrated by the whole school to mark Holy Days of Obligation, Holy Cross Day and selected feast days in the liturgical calendar. The parish priests celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation in the school during Advent and Lent, whilst the school supports the parishes by affirming their pupils with a post-Sacrament of Confirmation Mass which is held in the school. The Spiritual Director has produced an excellent book of prayers to support pupils and staff during tutor group sessions. A strength of the school is the weekly Staff Prayer meeting, where up to thirty members of staff assemble in the Chapel to pray. The Spiritual Life Team organises day retreats which have increased in number since the last inspection. During the Easter holidays 35 students in Years 10-13 went on a pilgrimage to Lourdes. The school is planning to provide staff with the opportunity to attend their own retreat at the Kairos Centre later in the year. Three pupils, one in Year 13 and two in Year 10, have been appointed as Liturgy Prefects. They supervise the Chapel during break and lunch, assist the Religious Education department with the weekly 'Time Out' prayer group and support the work of the Spiritual Life Team. As a consequence of all the above, the provision for personal and collective worship makes an excellent contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils in the school.

Community cohesion

GRADE 1

Community cohesion is an outstanding feature of this inclusive school. The Holy Cross is a welcoming and inclusive school. Pupils made reference to this inclusive feature by giving glowing references to the St Theresa's Support Centre. They also told the inspectors that pupils from other faiths or Christian traditions felt included because teachers invited them to give input into their faith traditions as part of their Religious Education courses. This was valued by both their peers and their teachers. During the inspection, pupils stated that incidents of bullying are extremely rare at the school and the buddy system is effective in supporting the anti-bullying policy and providing younger pupils with a peer mentor for guidance and encouragement. The Religious Education curriculum contributes to community cohesion through the study of World Religions. Pupils take a full and active part in the local community. For example, a group of gifted and talented pupils organised and oversaw a quiz at a nearby primary school whilst Sixth Form Performing Arts students recently performed at another primary school. Senior Citizens from the parish and neighbouring residential homes are invited to an annual party organised by Year 12 students. The school is generous in raising monies for charity and supporting good causes

both locally and further afield. These include the local hospice, the Manna Society Day Centre for the Homeless and Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital in the UK. International charitable links include the Holy Cross Sisters' School in India, Street Child Africa and Rainbows4Children, a charity which provides education for children in Ethiopia, primarily the children of adults with disabilities. Staff from the school travelled to Ethiopia to deliver professional development at one of the Rainbows4Children centres. This all leads to pupils understanding their calling as responsible citizens and the part they play in the Church's call to work together for the common good. As a result of a previous survey, parents requested help with raising and educating their daughters. The school responded by providing sessions such as 'Your Daughter's Use of Social Media', 'Living with Teenagers' and 'The Development of a Young Woman', which have all been well attended. The school has strong links with the Diocese, with leadership at all levels regularly attending meetings and training offered by the Education Commission. The Headteacher liaises with the Diocese as the 'Link Head' representative for the Kingston deanery. The Parents' and Friends' association is very active in the school, raising funds for specific projects through cake sales and other activities. For example, they organised a Christmas market involving businesses from the local community and the proceeds were spent on purchasing new tables as part of the refurbishment of the Art rooms. The overwhelming majority of parents have a very positive view of the school. In a recent survey one parent wrote, "I cannot praise Holy Cross enough. It is an excellent school with first class leadership and teachers... The school offers an excellent sense of community to its pupils, demonstrating compassion, respect and positive, supportive attitudes between the children."

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Religious Education

GRADE 1

Achievement and standards in Religious Education

Gospel values are clearly lived out in the relationships amongst pupils and between staff and pupils. Behaviour in the school is outstanding and the school enterprise puts Christ at the centre of teaching and learning. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is a strength of the school, owing to the school's deep-rooted traditions which are founded on the charisms of the Holy Cross Sisters. This is further enhanced by the contribution of other subjects, although the identification of spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision would benefit from a more coherent, coordinated approach across the wider curriculum in order to raise standards even further. Attainment on entry to the school is slightly above the national average. Pupil progress ranks this high performing school in the top 20% of schools in the country. Pupils progress to levels in Religious Education which add significant value to their prior attainment at Key Stage 3. This continues through to Key Stage 4, where attainment in the GCSE examination significantly exceeds the national average. Progress in A level Religious Education is well above average and is reflected in the quality of students' written work. The quality of work in pupils' books and folders is of a high standard and displays some outstanding examples of religious literacy at all levels. During the inspection, pupils questioned unanimously declared their enjoyment in studying the subject. In the current year, numbers recruited to AS level Religious Education have increased significantly. In particular, attainment at this level is well above the national average. In addition, owing to either timetable restrictions or students choosing between different optional papers within the subject, girls may study AS level Religious Education at the local Catholic boys' school as part of the Sixth Form partnership between the two schools.

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

GRADE 1

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations and ensure that pupils are challenged and stretched in their learning, including those with additional educational needs and the most able. The inspectors agree with the school's assessment that the quality of teaching is consistently good with much that is outstanding and this was borne out in lesson observations during the inspection. In lessons judged by the inspectors to be outstanding, the pace was brisk with an effective balance between teacher and pupil input. To promote deep learning, teachers gave pupils many opportunities to engage in higher order thinking skills and encouraged open-ended pupil questioning during paired and group work. Teachers acted as facilitators for learning by using skilful questioning techniques and productively employed differentiated learning activities or sought appropriate outcomes which matched pupils' abilities. For example in an outstanding Year 8 lesson, the teacher used challenging questions to skilfully evoke pupil responses. All activities, challenged pupils' thinking, matched pupils' abilities and secured good to outstanding progress. The pupils declared that they enjoyed all aspects of the lesson. Mini plenaries were used throughout to check pupils' understanding. Pupils worked productively in pairs and in groups, whilst opinions expressed by pupils about faith demonstrated higher order thinking. Although interactive whiteboards were very well employed in all lessons observed, the application of these resources as multi-media aids to teaching and learning would benefit even further from appraising ways in which their use can be further enhanced during lessons, particularly in relation to their interactive functionality.

Assessment of pupils' work is regular and consistent and makes a significant contribution to their progress. During the inspection, diagnostic and purposeful marking was evident in all books sampled. There was evidence that notes were given on how to improve pupils' learning and these were enhanced through a stamp to indicate areas to develop when 'deep marking' takes place. Peer and self-assessment is now established at all key stages.

Pupils stated that they are more confident in applying the marking criteria, which is helpfully displayed in the Religious Education rooms and in students' exercise books, to their work. However, the department is aware of the need to further develop the school's 'deep marking' strategy to ensure that pupils' responses to targets set by their Religious Education teachers have an impact on their learning. Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress in Religious Education through parents' consultation evenings and in pupil diaries. The department could further enhance this provision for parents by, for example, including information of work to be covered in Religious Education via the school's developing, virtual learning environment. A recent survey indicates that parents are very supportive of the work that the department undertakes. Moreover, parents feel that Religious Education has a positive impact on their children. One parent of a Year 11 pupil wrote, 'Due to the thorough, dedicated staff in the RE department, my daughter plans to continue her education at Holy Cross and further her education with RE at A level.'

GRADE 1

The Religious Education curriculum

The quality of the Religious Education curriculum is outstanding. The curriculum follows Diocesan guidelines, meets the needs of the pupils and satisfies the requirements of the Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools. At Key Stage 3 the department bases the curriculum on 'The Way the Truth and the Life' Religious Education programme and incorporates individually created units together with material from the National Project, ICONS. At Key Stage 4 the programme followed is the Assessments and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) GCSE course, where pupils study Roman Catholicism: Ethics and St Luke's Gospel. In the Sixth Form, students follow the Diocesan approved National Open College Network (NOCN) General Religious Education course at levels 1 and 2. Students experience a wide range of topics across Years 12 and 13 and external speakers contribute to this process from organisations such as Cafod and Kingston Action on Homelessness. Stage 4 Religious Education is allotted 10% of curriculum time in line with the Bishops' Conference and Diocesan requirements. The school allocates the 30 guided learning hours recommended by the NOCN awarding body, together with enrichment qualifications which contribute to the qualification at level 1 and level 2. The A level offer of 20% of curriculum time is allocated to the Edexcel Ethics and New Testament syllabuses. The school, however, does not quite meet the Bishops' Conference and Diocesan requirements of 10% at Key Stage 3, currently providing 8% of curriculum time for the subject. Other subject areas such as Art, Music, History, Geography and Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education (PSHCE) have cross-curricular links with Religious Education and this is likely to provide a more accurate assessment of the proportion of time devoted to the subject. Hence, the school might benefit from mapping the Religious Education content from other subjects for this purpose. Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) is taught throughout the school and is set in the context of the Church's teaching and values. The SRE policy has been ratified by governors and endorsed by the parents. Pupils would greatly benefit from visits to other places of worship and from visiting speakers from other world religions. The Religious Education curriculum is carefully coordinated with PSHCE and linked together with SRE and schemes of work for the subject clearly reflect these links. As a result of this provision, Religious Education makes an outstanding contribution to the spiritual and moral development of pupils in the school and reflects the school's distinctive nature as a Catholic learning community.

Leadership and management of Religious Education

GRADE 1

Leadership and management of Religious Education are outstanding. The Deputy Headteacher responsible for Teaching and Learning is a well-qualified Religious Education specialist. She line manages the Head of Religious Education, who is an Assistant Headteacher. Together, with their senior leadership colleagues, they ensure that Religious

Education maintains a high profile in the school. The Head of Department is an excellent practitioner and outstanding role model for all members of the Religious Education department. They are well-qualified and work together very effectively to provide outstanding learning opportunities for the pupils in their care. Teachers in the Department make a positive contribution to sharing good practice, to planning and to developing resources. Through robust planning, monitoring and an accurate self-evaluation, the Department is well aware of its strengths and areas for further development. As a result, plans are being implemented to further develop monitoring of provision at Key Stage 3. The monitoring of teaching and learning and attainment is very effective and is having a dramatic impact on raising standards in the subject. Schemes of work are comprehensive and have recently been rewritten. The department is currently refining the schemes of work at Key Stage 3 in order to ensure a consistent format across all key stages and to provide clear steps for progression. The Religious Education team has annotated schemes of work in line with the revised Curriculum Directory. Governors are well informed about Religious Education and are aware of its strengths and areas for development. Assessment and tracking are robust and used effectively to heighten pupils learning experiences. The Department is exploring ways to further facilitate the monitoring of the tracking system. For example, they are considering looking at introducing a 'traffic light' arrangement to enable teachers to identify pupils at risk of underachievement more readily. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used to good effect where You Tube clips and PowerPoint presentations enhance the learning of pupils. Other resources such as the Q-Matrix, which acts as a scaffold for pupil enquiry, adds to the pupils' learning experience as does the 'red-amber-green' cards in pupils' diaries. Very good contact with local Catholic primary schools in the Deanery allows the Head of Department and co-ordinators to work together and share good practice. Accommodation and resources are good. There are three dedicated Religious Education classrooms, all of which are equipped with interactive white board and storage for textbooks. They also have notice boards with vibrant displays of current pupil work, which are updated regularly. Every pupil has access to a text book and a Bible. Religious Education is viewed by the school's leadership as a core subject and the department is well resourced as a consequence. Parents are kept informed about their child's progress. At Key Stage 3 pupils know the level at which they are working and those preparing for public examinations know their target grade. In last year's Religious Education survey for pupils, Key Stage 3 responses showed that most pupils were positive about the subject. One Year 9 pupil commented, "I like the thinking aspect of RE, the philosophy side of RE and the open-ended questions because they make you think and your mind can roam free." The responses from Key Stage 4 pupils were much the same. During this survey, pupil voice was heard by inviting them to provide suggestions for change, such as more active learning and independent work. As a result, plans have been implemented to ensure that opportunities are provided to meet many of these requests, which are evident in Religious Education schemes of work and in lessons observed during the inspection.