

Inspection of Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Gautby Road, Bidston, Birkenhead, Merseyside CH41 7DU

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 October 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to be part of this calm, caring, happy and purposeful school. Staff and pupils give those new to the school, including pupils who have recently arrived from other countries, a warm 'Holy Cross welcome'. Pupils rise to staff's very high expectations of behaviour. They go out of their way to treat adults and classmates with respect.

Pupils feel safe in school. They trust the adults to keep them from harm. Leaders do not tolerate bullying. If pupils feel that they, or any of their classmates, are beginning to be bullied, they tell staff, who quickly make sure that it does not continue.

Every day, leaders and staff insist that pupils do their best in lessons. This contributes to most pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieving well. However, some pupils do not attend school regularly enough and so do not reach their full potential.

Pupils enjoy learning about people who are different from themselves. They take advantage of the opportunities that staff give them to participate in artistic and sporting activities outside lessons. Pupils learn a great deal from the many community-based projects in which the school participates. For example, they learn about the consequences of making positive or negative choices in relation to crime and anti-social behaviour.

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

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is broad, well-designed and ambitious for all pupils. Teachers know exactly what pupils need to learn in each subject and the order in which they should teach it. They make sure that pupils build successfully on what they have learned before. This includes children moving to Year 1 from the Reception Year. Teachers revisit pupils' previous learning frequently. They ensure that pupils do not forget the knowledge they have gained and that they can link it to new learning. Teachers' regular checks on what pupils know help them to plan well for future learning. Most pupils, including those with SEND and those who speak English as an additional language (EAL), achieve well across the curriculum. However, in a number of subjects, teachers do not systematically teach the key vocabulary needed for each topic. Consequently, at times, some pupils struggle to explain what they have learned.

In the Nursery and Reception Years, children make a good start in learning to read. Teachers and teaching assistants deliver daily phonics sessions skilfully. There has been considerable staff training in this area. This, alongside a clear and well-ordered reading curriculum, results in a consistent and effective approach to the teaching of reading throughout the school. Staff quickly spot if pupils are falling behind and make sure that they have the help that they need to catch up. As pupils move up the school, they learn to read with increasing fluency and understanding. They enjoy listening to, and reading, a wide range of books for pleasure.

Teachers quickly identify the needs of pupils with SEND or EAL. They put in place appropriate help, sometimes from external specialists, so that all pupils can successfully follow the same ambitious curriculum.

From the beginning of the Nursery Year, children learn to follow instructions. They listen to adults and each other, take turns, and collect and put away resources. Pupils across the school are encouraged to manage their own behaviour. Teachers only rarely have to interrupt lessons to remind pupils to behave well. As a result, the school is a very calm and orderly place.

Leaders and staff have put in place a wide range of strategies to improve pupils' attendance. For example, they have employed an education welfare officer and conduct a 'walking bus' to pick up some pupils from their homes. As a result, the attendance of some pupils has improved. Nevertheless, some pupils still stay away from school when there is no good reason. These pupils do not benefit from the same educational and social opportunities as their classmates.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are central to the work of leaders and teachers. Pupils have many opportunities to develop socially and culturally. Leaders and teachers give pupils the knowledge and opportunities to embrace, with enthusiasm, the increasing diversity in the school and local community. As pupils move up the school, teachers show them how to be more and more resilient and independent in learning.

Leaders have maintained a strong focus on the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report. As a result, they have transformed the school. Governors know the school very well. They use their wide range of experience to carry out all their responsibilities with skill and have played an important role in the school's improvement. Staff feel that they are very much appreciated by leaders. They value leaders' efforts to make sure that they are not overworked. Staff said that leaders always consider their well-being when making changes.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is central to the life of the school. Leaders and staff undertake regular training so that they are well placed to spot if a pupil is at risk of physical or emotional harm. They report any concerns promptly. Leaders work well with external agencies to make sure that pupils and their families quickly receive the help that they need.

Leaders teach pupils how to make well-informed choices. They make sure that pupils learn about potential risks to their safety including when online and in the local community.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils do not attend school regularly and so do not achieve as well as they could. Some of these pupils stay away from school for occasions such as birthdays and family holidays. Leaders should work with families and external agencies to improve attendance so that all pupils benefit fully from the good quality of education and care that the school provides.
- In some subjects, the curriculum does not systematically develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of subject-specific vocabulary. As a result, at times, some pupils have difficulty expressing what they have learned orally and in writing. Leaders should review how the development of vocabulary is integrated into each subject so that this aspect of literacy does not limit how well pupils achieve.

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	105087
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10241179
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	147
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Allan Rogan
Headteacher	Clare Higgins
Website	www.holycross.wirral.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 and 7 November 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Diocese of Shrewsbury. Its most recent section 48 inspection took place in January 2018.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher and other staff, including teaching assistants and support staff.

- The lead inspector had a discussion with governors, including the chair of the governing body. She spoke to representatives of the local authority and the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into reading, mathematics and history. These included discussions with subject leaders, visits to lessons, looking at examples of pupils' work, discussions with teachers and discussions with pupils about their learning.
- Inspectors listened to pupils from Years 1, 2 and 3 read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at social times.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation relating to safeguarding. They reviewed other documentation provided by leaders. This documentation included attendance information, the single central record, records of meetings of the governing body and senior leaders' self-evaluation document and school-improvement plan.
- Inspectors could not consider responses to Ofsted Parent View, the online questionnaire, as there were too few. They had discussions with a wide range of parents in the playground and reviewed the school's own surveys of parents' views.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils.

Inspection team

Liz Kelly, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Julie Peach

Ofsted Inspector

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