



## **DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD**



### **Inspection Report**

**Name of School: Holy Cross Catholic Primary School**

**LEA: Essex**

**Inspection Dates: 27<sup>th</sup> February 2009**

**Reporting Inspectors: Sr Jude Groden RSM and Ms Colette Dawson**

**This Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.**

**Type of School: Primary  
School Category: Voluntary Aided  
Age range of pupils: 4 - 11  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 213  
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body  
Date of previous Inspection: May 2005**

**School Address:  
Tracyes Road  
Southern Way Harlow Essex, CM18 6JJ  
Tel. No. 01279 424452  
Fax No. 01279 421168  
Chair of Governors: Mrs Cath Scanlon  
Headteacher: Miss Sue McGuiggan**

## **Introduction:**

The Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education (Schools) Act 2005 by inspectors appointed by the Diocesan Bishop at the request of the Governing Body of the School.

The Inspectors acknowledge and are appreciative of the full support, co-operation and courtesy they enjoyed from Governors, Headteacher, Staff and Pupils of the School both before and during the Inspection. The Inspectors wish to express their gratitude to all concerned.

## **The focus of the Section 48 Inspection was:**

- Classroom Religious Education
- The Catholic nature of the School through;
  1. Worship
  2. Links with the Catholic and wider community
- Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development

## **The Section 48 Report**

**Holy Cross Catholic Primary School,  
Tracyes Road  
Southern Way  
Harlow  
Essex,  
CM18 6JJ**

**Head Teacher: Miss Sue McGuiggan**

**Date of Inspection: 27<sup>th</sup> February 2009**

## **Description of the School:**

Holy Cross Primary School is a voluntary aided Catholic school situated within Essex County Council West Area and in the Diocese of Brentwood. It is a small one-form entry school. The school serves the parishes of St Luke and Holy Cross and the Church of the Assumption, Mulberry Green. Most of the children come from White British backgrounds. Holy Cross is an oversubscribed and extremely popular school. The school has achieved 'Healthy Schools' status. Recently Holy Cross has been designated 'Flagship Status' for school meals from the School Meals Trust. In addition the school has an Active Mark.

There is an onsite Pre – School managed by a private enterprise.

## **Record of Evidence Base:**

Two Inspectors were in the School for the equivalent of two inspection days.

- The study of pre-inspection documentation including the Self-Evaluation Form/ Denominational Provision (SEF/DP).
- The observation of lessons.
- Scrutiny of pupils' written work.
- Participation in an Achievement Assembly.
- Meetings with the Head teacher who is also the Religious Education (R.E.) Co-ordinator, the Parish Priest, the R.E. Link Governor and the School Council.
- Observations of R.E. Displays in the Classrooms and around the school.

## **What the School does well:**

Holy Cross is an outstanding Catholic School. There are some areas for development which have been identified in the School Self Evaluation Form. It is firmly committed to developing its Catholic identity under the inspirational and outstanding leadership of its Head teacher who is very well supported by her Leadership team, committed Governors, highly motivated Staff, Pupils and their Parents/Carers and the Parish Priest. All the stakeholders demonstrate an excellent sense of teamwork. "There are outstanding elements in the care and support, which contribute well to the 'friendly and caring community environment' so many parents comment on" (Ofsted 2008)

Religious Education (R.E.) is an area of high focus in the school. The '**Here I Am**' programme, recommended by the Bishop of the Diocese, is fully implemented. The 'Before You Begin' element of the process is securely embedded at the beginning of each topic. However some inconsistencies were observed in some teachers' knowledge and understanding of the theology of the Eucharist. The staff clearly understand the '**Here I Am**' process and use it effectively to provide a high quality and stimulating curriculum. Information Communication Technology (ICT) is used to enhance the quality of lessons.

The overall quality of teaching and learning in R.E ranges from good to outstanding. Lessons are well planned and learning objectives are stated, explained and revisited. In all of the lessons observed, pupils were on task, engaged, highly motivated, challenged and enjoying their R.E. There was evidence of Scripture familiarity in some of the lessons observed. Behaviour is excellent. Pupils were enthusiastic and purposeful and worked well together. The school uses its child friendly Mission Statement as a model for everything the school does. This, relationships and class management are recognised strengths of Holy Cross school.

'Assessment arrangements (in R.E.) are progressive and promote learning' (SEF form 2009). There is a clear assessment focus for each of the '**Here I Am**' topics which gives evidence of '**Relate**' knowledge and understanding. Positive feedback is given

to the pupils in Key Stage Two and this enables them to make progress. But this is inconsistent in Key Stage One.

The leadership and management of R.E. by the R.E. Co-ordinator are outstanding. Her leadership drives the assessment procedures used by all the teachers, she monitors R.E. lessons, scrutinizes pupils' work and is very supportive of all staff, teachers and teacher assistants. The documentation for R.E. is excellent.

The School meets both the national and diocesan requirements for the allocation of curriculum time for taught R.E.

Collective Worship, liturgical celebrations, the celebration of major Saints' feast days, the Patronal Feast day and the school's links with the local parishes are very good. The school has developed an area for quiet reflection, a 'Spiritual Garden', which is used by children and adults and is located at the heart of the school.. Reflection was observed at various times during the day and sometimes during lessons.

Holy Cross School promotes an outstanding and tangible Catholic ethos. This is subscribed to by all the stakeholders – Governors, the Head Teacher and her leadership team, staff, pupils and their parents. The School provides very good opportunities for the pupils to develop a strong sense of community through activities which engender feelings of loyalty and belonging. The School continues to develop strong links with other primary schools in the Deanery and beyond. In addition there are strong links with St Mark's Comprehensive School. The emphasis on community cohesion is a strength of the school.

R.E. displays and artefacts, in the classrooms and around the School, are excellent in their range and quality.

Holy Cross Primary School values links with parents/carers with every effort being made to improve and maintain communication with parents as their children progress through the school. There is a weekly newsletter and an overview of the '**Here I Am**' topics is sent to parents every term. 'Wednesday Word' is also distributed to families each week. The governors of the school are very dedicated, hardworking and supportive of everything the school does. The governors operate a 'Buddy' scheme. They are linked to a particular class as they progress through the school.

Pupils are given every opportunity to become responsible citizens. This is evident in their concern for each other and for those who are in need. This is particularly evidenced by the work and role of the School Council and the generous fundraising for the charities that the School supports. The School Council is confident, articulate and it takes its responsibilities seriously. Holy Cross participates in the annual Diocesan Citizenship Awards celebration in the summer term.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is another strength of the school. They celebrate different cultures and enjoy themed weeks and special days. Resources for the study of other faiths and visits to places of worship are continually developed. Social development is encouraged by the 'Family Service' scheme which is innovative and working well and is appreciated by the children.

**What needs to be improved:**

There are no specific areas requiring improvement other than ensuring that the areas highlighted by the Section 48 Self Evaluation Form and this report continue to be addressed. .

Overall, Holy Cross Primary School is an outstanding Catholic School. There are some areas for development which have been identified in the School Self Evaluation Form e.g. staff feedback to pupils regarding their written work. It prepares its pupils so that they transfer to their Secondary Schools as happy, well-adjusted young people who are a credit to themselves, their parents/carers and their school. The School owes much of its success to the strong and committed leadership of the Head teacher and her Leadership Team and to the valued support and expertise of her staff and governors.