



## Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for **Holy Rood Catholic Primary School**

URN: 146903

Carried out on behalf of the Most Rev. Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster on:

Date: 15-16 March 2023

Overall effectiveness The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....	<b>1</b>
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	✓
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	✓
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

### Summary of key findings

#### What the school does well

- Catholic life and mission is fully embraced and highly celebrated by all pupils; they are supported in a very special way to understand how to put their faith into action as they flourish in this outstanding Catholic school.
- Pupils have the utmost respect for their own personal dignity and that of others which is clearly evident in their exemplary behaviour in lessons and throughout the school environment.
- Pupils achieve very high standards in religious education, are challenged and engaged in their learning and, as a result, are exceptionally religiously literate.
- Holy Rood provides pupils with a rich and varied experience of prayer and liturgy.

- Leaders have an unambiguous and ambitious vision for Catholic education in this distinctive Catholic school and, through rigorous evaluation, thoroughly understand the school's strengths and areas for development.

What the school needs to improve:

- In light of the new *Religious Education Directory*, the school should plan to embed Catholic Social Teaching more deliberately within the RE curriculum.
- Provide increasing opportunities for pupils to reflect on their learning in religious education and provide time for them to ask incisive questions in order to deepen their learning.
- Provide all pupils with the freedom to take ownership of planning, leading and evaluating increasingly creative pupil led prayer and worship.

## 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:.....

1

### Pupil outcomes

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

1

### Provision

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

1

### Leadership

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

1

The mission of Holy Rood, 'Live, learn, grow and celebrate through the love of Christ,' is truly understood and embraced in its distinctive Catholic identity and charism of this outstanding Catholic school. Pupils feel truly valued and cared for, and as a result, are happy and confident. They have a clear understanding that the school community is committed to following the teaching and example of Jesus and they gladly embrace their personal responsibility to serve those in need. In a pupil discussion, one pupil said, 'The best thing is helping people to feel better. Jesus wants us to be kind and caring just like he was and he is the centre of our school.' They put their words into actions by planning and delivering a variety of charitable fundraisers and are acutely aware of the difference they can make as they live out the Church's mission. An outstanding example is the school's partnership with 'The Missionaries of the Poor Supporters Association' (MoPSA) in Nairobi where the school play a dynamic role in supporting the development of a school and a clinic. The pupils spoke enthusiastically about the clinic needing a doctor to attend weekly and that they were going to make this happen. The school supports many other charities locally and nationally, including Watford Food Bank and CAFOD. Pupils' voice is a real strength of the school and they embrace the responsibilities given to them whole heartedly. Pupils show a deep respect for their own personal dignity and that of other faiths and religions. The school's commitment to ensuring that every pupil can see themselves in the curriculum is being initiated through their development of policy and practice around racial justice, equality and diversity.

All aspects of the school environment are carefully considered and displays are of an exceptionally high quality with pupils' contributions prioritised. During pupil voice discussions,

every group of pupils were keen to tell inspectors about the school chapel 'at the heart of the school.' This is a central and celebrated aspect of the school's life and mission, providing high-quality opportunities for the spiritual and moral development of pupils and staff. The school chaplaincy team ensure that the Chapel is used in a prayerful and respectful manner by all. They willingly take on leadership roles and are extremely proud of this opportunity. At Holy Rood there is a lived sense of community. The school chaplain told the inspection team that, 'Holy Rood combines celebration, joy and discipline.' Staff are exemplary role models for the pupils. Through their relationships with each other, they consistently bear witness to the school's Catholic life and mission. In a discussion with staff they said, 'We work hard because we care.' An area in the school named the 'Pod' is the school's response to supporting pupils with additional needs and an example of the school's inspirational and highly effective mission in action. The provision for R(S)HE is carefully planned to ensure that it fully meets diocesan requirements.

The Catholic life and mission of the school is embraced by leaders and governors as a core leadership responsibility. They work hard to ensure a flourishing partnership between the school and its local parishes, developing a personal relationship with them in their journey of faith. The school has experienced some recent challenges around deaths in the community and, in discussion with Governors, they said, 'our faith carries us through difficult times'. Governors are highly ambitious, actively involved and passionate for the Catholic life and mission of the school. A comment from the overwhelmingly positive parent survey stated, 'The staff seem to go above and beyond to help this school be an outstanding place for our little future saints, they always encourage them to be the best that they can be and have such high expectations of them in their education but also as people, as part of our local community and in the world.' The school's self-evaluation is a coherent reflection of rigorous monitoring, searching analysis and honest self-challenge which further enhances the life and mission of the school.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

1

### Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

1

### Provision

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

1

### Leadership

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

1



Religious education at Holy Rood is outstanding. From their first introduction to school life in Nursery and Reception to the end of Key Stage 2, pupils make outstanding progress and become increasingly religiously literate. This comes as a result of rigorous and consistent staff training to support teachers' knowledge as well as a shared vision of excellence for every pupil. The RE curriculum is carefully planned and embedded to ensure pupils understand and engage with the liturgical year. Pupils value their excellent achievements and can speak with confidence about their learning, using excellent subject specific vocabulary. Pupils throughout the school produce work of a consistently high standard and are very proud to share their learning. They have a thorough understanding of their progress in RE and value the challenges of the 'Reflect and Respond' questions. Questions such as, 'As you try to continue Jesus' mission, what difficulties may you face? How can you overcome these?' provide a platform for pupils to engage in living out their faith in their everyday lives and putting their knowledge into action. As a result of their excellent religious literacy, they should now be given adequate time in lessons to independently ask probing and incisive questions to further deepen their understanding. Pupils are confident and supportive of one another in discussions and their behaviour for learning is exemplary. There is a highly positive culture of encouragement and celebration within lessons.

The religious education curriculum is thoroughly planned and sequenced so that pupils can make links to prior learning and build on existing knowledge. This was evidenced during the inspection where the children focused on the story of Palm Sunday. From active role-play and visual resources in the early years, to the comparison and contrast of the forthcoming coronation of King Charles to Jesus' entry into Jerusalem in Year 6, pupils used prior knowledge

to use sources to support the belief that Jesus was a humble king. Teachers refer to prior learning frequently to check understanding before moving on to new concepts and this supports pupils to embed their knowledge. Teachers are confident and have a secure subject knowledge as a result of rigorous and continuous professional development. Feedback to pupils is encouraging and this is valued by the pupils. Teachers in all year groups use challenging subject specific vocabulary and encourage pupils to know and remember more by the effective use of glossaries for each topic. Teaching assistants are proactive in their support of pupils in all classes and are used effectively to support pupil progress. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is adapted with care and attention. In a pupil voice interview, a Year 5 pupil told inspectors how proud she felt of the progress she had made, despite finding learning challenging. In the parent survey, one parent said, 'Holy Rood school provides an excellent Catholic education, regularly encouraging family involvement throughout the liturgical year.'

Leaders and teachers are relentless in their expectations for all year groups and this results in the development of pupils who are articulate and motivated to learn. Staff new to the school, new to teaching as well as established teaching and support staff highly value the continuous support of the head teacher and RE lead. One member of staff described how this unwavering support and outstanding role modelling by the head teacher helped her to encourage the children in faith. She said it helped her, in her role, to 'plant and feed the seed in the early stages, so that pupils then keep it in their heart.' Careful consideration has been given to succession planning at Holy Rood and this underpins the ongoing strengths in the RE curriculum. Leaders are unwavering in their support not only for the community at Holy Rood but to other schools within the All Saints Trust and the wider diocese. High expectations of religious education are a result of a sincere and authentic commitment to Catholic education at Holy Rood. Robust strategic leadership, supported very ably by Governors, ensures the highest standards and expectations from all stakeholders.

## Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

1

### Pupil outcomes

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

1

### Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school .....

1

### Leadership

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

1

Holy Rood provides pupils with a rich and varied experience of collective worship. Pupils engage fully, are respectful and attentive. The Year 5 pupil chaplaincy team help to lead prayer and liturgy and a Year 6 team of chaplaincy mentors oversee the training of the new teams. The letters written by pupils when applying for this highly sought after role clearly demonstrate their passion and commitment. Pupils from across the school are invited to participate in lunchtime reflections prepared by the pupil chaplaincy team, and this is very well attended. In an observed Lenten liturgy, children were engaged and reverent and joined in the rousing singing with great joy and enthusiasm. Pupils have an excellent knowledge of the different ways of praying that are part of the Catholic tradition, using scripture, symbol, silence and reflection to outstanding effect. In an observed Year 3 pupil led liturgy in the chapel, pupils were confident in leading the prayer and singing, producing a reverent and reflective mood for their peers. Pupils are encouraged to prepare acts of worship regularly and pupil led assemblies take place throughout the liturgical year. They are eager to reflect what they have learnt in lessons into meaningful prayer opportunities. An example of this is a 'wall of prayers' for peace in Ukraine which was recently created by pupils at the front of the school. Pupils are able to reflect on their prayer life and readily make connections between liturgy and their actions for those in need. In a collective worship in Key Stage 1, pupils acted out how they could be 'mustard seeds', growing into trees and helping to support others 'in their branches.'

Prayer and worship is at the heart of the daily rhythm of life at Holy Rood. All gatherings of pupils and staff begin with a prayer where both joy and sorrow are recognised. Pupil worship encompasses both traditional Catholic prayers and more spontaneous and varied types of prayer, many which are written by pupils. Scripture, linked to the appropriate liturgical season,

is an integral part of all prayer in the school. The school environment provides many opportunities for members of the community to pray. The school chapel, with its distinctive school-made stations of the cross, the patchwork mosaic of Our Lady, and numerous wall displays and prayer places around the buildings enable all to understand that this is a place of prayer. This is an outstanding feature of Holy Rood and worthy of being shared. Parents are very much involved in the prayer life of the school. 'The Family Prayer at Home' initiative provides a weekly prayer resource to all families, which sometimes includes short video liturgies as well as written services.

Staff are committed to ensuring that prayer lies at the heart of Holy Rood school. Staff, including leaders model good practice and relevant training in leading worship is provided for all teachers. Staff are confident in helping pupils to plan and deliver effective prayer and worship. The school's links with the local parishes are very strong. The school chaplain from Holy Rood is a regular visitor and contacts the school and supports them fully. There are regular visits to the local parish churches and pupils are able to participate in the sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation. Leaders ensure inspirational collective worship is included in induction for new staff and, as a result, pupils are increasingly confident in leading different forms of prayer and liturgy. The school's website advocates the centrality of prayer and worship in the school and, from the inspection process, this is certainly validated.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	Holy Rood Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	146903
Full postal address of the school	Greenbank Road, Watford, WD17 4FS
School phone number	01923223785
Name of head teacher or principal	Emma Braund
Chair of governing board	Judith Shanahan
School Website	<a href="https://www.holyroodcatholicprimaryschool.co.uk">https://www.holyroodcatholicprimaryschool.co.uk</a>
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	All Saints Catholic Academy Trust (ASCAT)
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Trustees	ASCAT
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	10 November 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

## The inspection team

Monica McCarthy	Lead inspector
Mary Ainger	Team inspector
Paul Higginson	Team inspector

## 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