

DIOCESE OF PORTSMOUTH VALIDATION REPORT



Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Millfield Avenue, East Cowes, Isle of Wight, PO32 6AS

URN 118198
Date of previous validation March 2010
Date of this validation date 5 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous validation:	Good
	This validation:	Good

The school community:	Good	Attainment and progress in RE:	Good
The wider community:	Outstanding	Quality of teaching in RE:	Good
Spiritual development:	Good	Leadership and management of RE:	Good
Moral development:	Good	Leadership and management:	Good

This is a good school

- Holy Cross Catholic Primary School is a good example of a school that works hard to live out its vision and mission. Recent initiatives have had a positive impact on the Christian life of the school and on teaching and learning in RE. The school now needs to focus on embedding and building upon these key aspects.
- The recently revised mission statement, which all in the school community, including the children, helped to develop, is well known to all and has even been set to music.
- The personal witness to the faith, provided by the headteacher and RE leader, provides a strong vision and direction for the work of the school. The school leadership, including governors, are fully committed in their drive to further develop the Catholic life of the school. All recognise that they are at the start of a journey of improvement towards higher standards.
- Religious education (RE) has a core place in the life of the school. The subject leader, who displays very good knowledge and skill in supporting staff, is well placed to further develop their expertise and build their confidence. The subject is valued by staff, governors, parents and children.
- Teaching and learning in RE are good. Evidence from books and the lessons observed show that children are making secure progress and reaching good standards. Pupils enjoy the subject and appreciate how it can help them in their daily lives.
- Staff and children act as witnesses to their faith, through their support of one another and their support for local, national and international charities.
- In the school a varied range of worship is offered, which provides children with good quality opportunities to develop their relationship with God. Spiritual development is good, with many opportunities to promote awe and wonder.
- The children in the school exhibit good behaviour and Christian attitudes.
- The links with the local parish are good and mutually beneficial.
- Parents' views of the school are generally supportive. A large majority of those responding to the pre-validation survey were positive about all aspects of school life.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

In order to continue to move forward, the school should consider the following:

- Ensure there is clarity and consistency in expectations of teaching and learning in RE.
- Explore how the school's Catholic ethos can be made more explicit in all aspects of school life.
- Increase the children's involvement in the planning and delivery of a greater range of worship.

Full Report

The school as a Catholic community

The school community: Good

The wider community: Outstanding

- The school community has recently reviewed and updated the school mission and vision statements. These now feature more strongly in the school; the mission statement is well known by the children and is already impacting positively on the day-to-day life of the school.
- There is a strong sense of welcome from the moment you step over the threshold and very good relationships exist between all members of the community.
- There is currently a low number of Catholic pupils in the school; whilst acknowledging that this is not ideal, the leadership in the school, including governors, also see this as an opportunity to share their Catholic mission with families from other backgrounds. To succeed in this the school needs to ensure that it offers an explicit experience of being part of a Catholic community of faith. At the same time, the school needs to regularly explore and consider new initiatives on how the percentage of Catholic families joining the school may be increased.
- The links between the local parish and the school are good and mutually supportive. The school acknowledges this good practice needs to be extended to the other parish served by the school. Very good support is provided by the parish priest.
- The school communicates effectively with parents, ensuring that they are kept up to date and are given opportunities to visit and participate in the life of the school.
- The school is to be congratulated on the obvious care given to ensuring that its environment is maintained to a high standard and how it is used to enhance the liturgical life of the school, for example, the outdoor reflection area.
- The school is an active member of the diocesan family of schools. The school benefits from strong links with the local cluster of schools and enters fully into the local and island wide communities.
- Members of the school community demonstrate their commitment to the principles of stewardship, through their support of many local, national and international initiatives, including CAFOD, Walk the Wight and the British Heart Foundation.
- New families are warmly welcomed into the school.

Curriculum religious education

Attainment and progress: Good

Quality of teaching: Good

Leadership and management of RE: Good

- The evidence in the pupils' books, the good quality teaching seen on the day and discussions with pupils all combine to show that attainment and progress in RE are good and improving.
- Pupils in the school value RE and recognise it can help them in their daily lives. In the lessons observed pupils demonstrated a positive attitude to learning and behaviour was good. Learning is supported by well-presented and organised environments, well-chosen resources and targeted support from learning support assistants.
- Planning of activities need to regularly include opportunities for children to demonstrate their higher level understanding and reflection.
- The school is developing its assessment in RE by focussing on the national levels of attainment; this will help to improve standards further. Teachers work hard to ensure there are examples of children's work for every RE topic. However, they need to ensure that the work evidences the learning intentions and that marking both affirms and moves learning forward.

- The leadership and support provided by the headteacher, RE subject leader and RE governor ensure that the place of RE in the school is given a high status. The RE subject leader monitors standards in RE, through observing teaching, pupil conferencing, work sampling and moderating levels of attainment. The school would benefit from providing professional development opportunities for staff to regularly moderate and level work across and beyond the school.

Spiritual and moral development

Spiritual development: Good

Moral development: Good

- The school provides a wide range of good quality worship, which allows individual and collective members of the school community to express their relationship with one another and with God in a reflective and prayerful manner. The school embraces opportunities to nurture spirituality and give Christian witness; these include:
 - Special services to mark the liturgical year, for example, Lent and Holy Week liturgies and a Crowning of Our Lady Service in May.
 - The use of local places of worship, for example, Quarr Abbey and the neighbouring convent, to enable pupils to participate in liturgies outside of the school.
 - The opportunities for awe and wonder through the creative use of the school grounds.
- The worship observed during the visit was of a good quality. A calm and respectful atmosphere was created and music and a focal point were used well to enhance the liturgy. Pupils were encouraged to reflect on Scripture and how it can impact on their daily lives.
- The children do not currently plan, lead or take a very active role within their class worships. This is something that the older children in particular would benefit from. Thought should be given to training them in this important ministry. They should then be encouraged to model this in other classes and train younger pupils in planning and leading on an increasing number of elements within an act of worship.
- The children in the school demonstrate good behaviour and Christian attitudes in their relationships, with a clear sense of right and wrong. Key factors promoting this include:
 - The use of ‘What would Jesus do?’ to encourage children to reflect on their actions.
 - The very good Christian role models provided by the staff and older children in the school.
 - The consistent reinforcement of Gospel values.
- The celebration of achievement positively promotes pupil self-esteem and confidence. The children are rewarded for good behaviour and successes are celebrated in a variety of ways. Thought should be given to linking some of the awards or rewards more explicitly to the school’s mission statement and Catholic ethos.
- Groups of pupils take on key responsibilities throughout the school, including sitting on the school council and acting as play buddies.

Leadership and management: Good

- School leaders provide a good model of Christian leadership, where all members of the school are valued. They inspire the community to share in a strong sense of vision and mission.
- The governing body is a strong supporter of the school and also holds the senior leadership team to account.
- The school has a systematic approach to the diocesan self-review process, however, it would be beneficial for key governors to be more closely involved with the school’s monitoring of RE and the Catholic life and to report this back regularly to the rest of the governing body for discussion and reflection.
- Good progress has been made on the issues identified for improvement in the last validation, particularly in developing the staff’s knowledge and understanding of assessment of RE.

School details

Name of school	Holy Cross Catholic Primary School
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll:	192
Chair of Governors:	Nigel Blair
Headteacher:	Tim Eccles

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School is a one form entry primary school situated in East Cowes. It is sited adjacent to the grounds of the Convent of the Holy Cross and principally serves the Catholic parishes of St David's in East Cowes and St Thomas of Canterbury in West Cowes.

Currently only 11% of the pupils are Catholic, a further 49% are from other Christian denominations. The vast majority of pupils are white British, with few pupils from ethnic minority groups. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is below the national average.

Information about this validation

This report to the Bishop of the Diocese under Canon 806 of the Code of Canon Law is also the report to the governors of the school on religious education. For Catholic maintained schools, the report also fulfils the requirements of Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

Validation Team

Robert Dare	Lead Validator
Cath Howells	Assistant Validator

Activities Carried Out as Part of the Validation

- Ethos walk.
- Discussion on the school's self-evaluation sheets.
- Discussions with various members of the school community.
- Observations of collective worship.
- Observations of teaching and learning in RE, including joint observations with members of the school leadership team.
- Pupil work scrutiny.
- Feedback of key findings.

Conclusion

The validators would like to thank the headteacher, deputy headteacher, RE leader, staff, governors, the parish priest, parents and pupils of Holy Cross Catholic Primary School for their preparatory work for the validation, which forms part of the school's regular self-review cycle. They would also like to express their appreciation for the warmth of welcome they received and the support given during the validation process.