



# St Cross Catholic Primary School

URN: 148496

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster

13–14 March 2025

## Summary of key findings

### Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

#### 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

#### Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

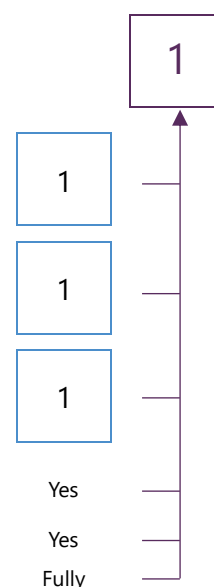
#### Collective worship (p.7)

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

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection



## Compliance statement

- The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- The school is fully compliant with the additional requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- All areas for improvement outlined in the previous diocesan inspection report have been addressed in full.

## What the school does well

- St Cross is a welcoming, nurturing, inclusive school underpinned by a mission which is known and lived by all.
- Behaviour of pupils is exemplary - they are polite, enthusiastic and keen to learn, contributing positively to the school community and wider world.
- The whole school environment, both inside and out proclaims a flourishing Catholic identity, with clear links to, and respect for, the origins of the school.
- Pupils have an excellent knowledge of religious education and are religiously literate, enabling them to recall and retrieve information from their lessons effectively.
- The prayer and liturgy policy is well planned, defining clear expectations relating to the progression of skill and knowledge.

## What the school needs to improve

- Improve the process of self evaluation through deeper analysis.
- Extend pupil evaluation opportunities especially in prayer and liturgy across the school.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to ask incisive questions of adults and peers to proactively deepen their learning.

## 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

#### Pupil outcomes

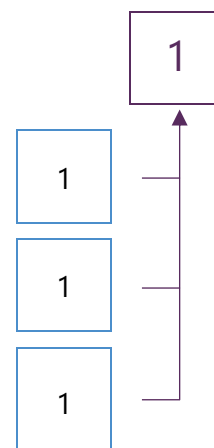
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### Provision

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

#### Leadership

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



The school's mission, 'Together we grow in God's love', is very much at the heart of St Cross Catholic Primary School. Pupils clearly understand their mission, which underpins all areas of school life and can explain confidently why responding to Catholic social teaching is important. They support various charities, such as Cafod, Great Ormond Street Hospital and the local foodbank. The highly valued pupil chaplaincy team and St Cross disciples show great pride in teaching others about Christ. They see their role as disciples, being sent out to share the Good News so others can pass it on. Pupils' behaviour and conduct inside and outside lessons is incredibly kind and respectful. They understand the importance of valuing and respecting every individual. This leads to exemplary behaviour and a sense of calm and order across the school. Pupils receive a warm and friendly welcome as they enter the school site, with senior leaders and key staff greeting them and their families. Subsequently, pupils feel safe, cared for and valued, and enjoy attending school. Pupils are proud to be part of the St Cross family and participate fully in opportunities to celebrate their faith. Parents commented that, 'Christ is at the heart of this school, that is why we chose it', and 'St Cross instils a great sense of care and compassion in their pupils, and that really shines through'.

Christ is truly at the heart of this school which can be seen in the way staff work with each other, their pupils and their families. There is a strong sense of inclusivity, in which pastoral care for pupils and families is strong. Staff are highly committed to supporting the school's Catholic life and serve as exemplary role models for the pupils, who emulate them in their support of each other. The chaplaincy team is well led by the religious education subject leader who ensures that their work has a positive impact. The physical environment is a testimony to the school's Catholic identity. For example, the hall bears witness to the school's faith through carefully crafted displays of art and pupils' responses. The outside areas also provide prayerful reflective spaces that the children appreciate and make good use

of. Pupils highly value the chaplaincy provision at the school and the many varied prayer opportunities and experiences they encounter.

Leaders and governors demonstrate faith driven leadership and recognise their duty to guard and develop the school's Catholic life and mission. They embrace their relationship with the parish resulting in a flourishing partnership, with the parish priest being an active member of the school community. The head teacher exudes a passion for the Catholic life and mission of the school, which is fully embraced by staff. She leads from the front and epitomises living out the mission of the school serving as an exemplary role model. Parents and carers are welcomed into the school to participate in its Catholic life and are overwhelmingly positive about the school with one parent commenting, 'My child has thrived in such a caring and nurturing environment, which has enabled her to flourish and shine. Another said that 'The school's Catholic life is at the heart of St Cross' teaching and ethos, all staff actively encourage all pupils to respect and love one another'. High regard is paid to staff well-being and staff value the approachability of school leaders who offer good pastoral care. Governors are highly ambitious for the school and offer support and challenge where appropriate, which leaders appreciate. However, analysis is not always thorough. Effective induction of new staff is in place so they feel confident to support the school's Catholic life. Leaders ensure staff have access to quality training and subsequent advice provides a rich Catholic curriculum that responds to the community's needs.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

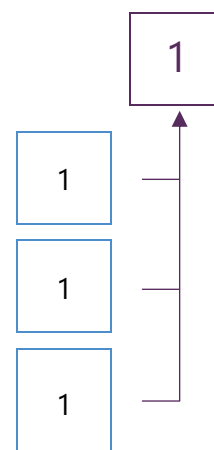
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### Provision

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

#### Leadership

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



Pupils have an excellent knowledge of religious education appropriate to their age. Consequently, they make strong progress and are religiously literate. This is reflected in attainment data for religious education, which is at least in line with other core subjects and often higher. Pupils enjoy their religious education lessons and respond well to the variety of creative tasks on offer within lessons and are keen to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. Pupils work independently and collaboratively and enjoy the challenge of analysing and discussing bible passages. Pupil engagement across all ages is strong, and they are keen to achieve their best, reflected in their work's quality and presentation. Pupils' productivity is high, and they demonstrate excellent subject knowledge. They build upon their prior learning at the start of each lesson, enabling them to recall and retrieve more information. Pupils use subject-specific vocabulary appropriate to their age, allowing them to talk about their learning confidently. Catholic social teaching also enhances their ability to reflect ethically, which supports their understanding of how the Gospel teachings can be applied to their everyday lives. However, pupils do not yet sufficiently ask incisive questions about their learning to acquire a deeper and more curious understanding. Classrooms are quiet and focused learning spaces, enabling pupils to make strong progress due to their excellent learning behaviours and because teachers and teaching assistants ensure lessons are engaging, creative, and enjoyable.

Staff are confident in their subject knowledge due to training from the subject leader and the diocese and are committed to ensuring pupils enjoy their lessons. Teachers and teaching assistants provide praise, encouragement, and effective questioning that extends learning and helps deepen pupils' thinking. Teaching assistants play a crucial role in supporting pupils' learning and work seamlessly with the teachers. References to prior learning throughout lessons enable pupils to embed their knowledge and make links. Teachers make enthusiastic reference to their own faith, engaging classes and adding to the relevance of the material. Staff have high expectations of all pupils. Adapted learning and

sensitive support ensure pupils with specific needs can access learning and thus pupils with SEND make good progress given their starting points. Children get off to a strong start in early years. In a lesson observed the children were retelling the story of the Good Samaritan through role play and were able to recall key facts well. Routine verbal praise highly motivates pupils to achieve well. Adults also provide live feedback to all pupils during lessons, giving them clear direction on what they need to do to improve their work.

The religious education subject leader, who is relatively new to the role, is passionate and active in her leadership across the school. She has a clear vision for religious education and seeks training opportunities to support the staff in deepening their knowledge and understanding of the subject. Leaders have a good relationship with the diocese, working closely with the diocesan advisor identifying areas for improvement and actioning these accordingly. Subsequently, leaders are constantly striving to improve the teaching and learning of religious education at St Cross. There is a clear openness to sharing and collaboration, which staff are appreciative of. A staff member commented, 'I am always supported at school by the head teacher and governors. continuing professional development is always offered to improve my practice'. Leaders and governors ensure that the curriculum for religious education meets the requirements of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. Resources are used well to ensure that all pupils can access and benefit from lessons, which are enriched by creativity in learning tasks and the rich Catholic environment of the school.

## Collective worship

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

### Collective worship key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

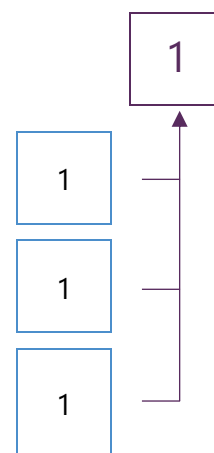
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

#### Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

#### Leadership

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



Pupils readily embrace varied opportunities to participate in prayer and liturgy at St Cross. They are attentive and greet the word of God with respect and reverence. The experience of being in a faith filled community positively impacts the spiritual and moral impact of all pupils irrespective of ability or faith background. Pupils plan and lead prayer and liturgy working collaboratively with the staff. The pupil chaplaincy team lead with confidence and a great sense of maturity, guiding and supporting younger pupils in prayer. Pupils pray through meditation, listening to music, traditional prayer, and groups such as the Rosary Club. They understand the Church's liturgical year and know that this influences the rhythm of school life. Pupils have a detailed understanding of how prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school community – they give numerous examples of when they have prayed for others and how the liturgical year influences their prayer life. They make connections between the cycle of seasons and various school events. There is a progressive approach to different prayer styles, which results in pupils having a good knowledge of the traditions and cycles of the Catholic Church.

The rhythm of prayer is carefully planned to punctuate each day in accordance with the liturgical pattern of the church. This is enhanced by a close partnership with the parish priest, who visits the school regularly to support their spiritual formation. Scripture is central to prayer and is used effectively to share the Gospels' message and provide opportunities for reflection. Staff are committed to the school's prayer life and are skilled in leading prayer and supporting pupils to lead their peers. The building is marked by the presence of God - on entering you immediately know this is a Catholic school. The school makes imaginative and creative use of spaces for prayer and reflection, which are plentiful; staff and pupils maintain these. Outside the school entrance, a well-cared for garden has been adapted to display a Lenten path to three crosses. The children talk of how this changes throughout the year. Pupils in all year groups take prayer bags home to help them to pray together

with their families. Parents, carers, wider family members and parishioners are all welcomed into school for regular prayer and liturgy including Mass.

The prayer and liturgy policy and progression in prayer documents are clear and accessible resulting in a continuity of experience and a clear progression of expectations, appropriate to the age and stage of each pupil. Leaders support the pupil chaplaincy team to lead and model prayer across the school and pupils deliver this with reverence and a keen responsibility. The school has a structured calendar of planned events based on the themes of the Church's liturgical year. Through strong parish links, the Eucharist is celebrated with the community and further enhanced by a structured sacramental preparation programme in close partnership with the parish priest. Holy days of obligation and feast days are always observed and given high priority. Leaders work together to ensure that staff formation is given the highest priority. Governors know the school well; they monitor the provision of prayer and liturgy through regular visits and reports from leaders. This now needs to be enhanced further by extending pupil opportunities to reflect on what is going well. Relationships between the governors and the school are a strength; consequently, they provide highly effective support mechanisms to pupils, staff, and the community. Leaders place high importance on clearly relating prayer and liturgy to the lived experience of the school community.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Cross Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	148496
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9193408
Full postal address of the school	St Cross Catholic Primary School, Upper Marsh Lane, Hoddesdon, EN11 8BN
School phone number	001992467309
Headteacher	Joanne Walsh
Chair of governors	Wendy Bolivar
School Website	<a href="https://www.stcross.herts.sch.uk/">https://www.stcross.herts.sch.uk/</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Francis Of Assisi Catholic Academy Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	5-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	April 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

## The inspection team

Kirstie Yuen

Linda McDonald

Lead

Team

## 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