



## **INSPECTION REPORT**

Holy Rood Catholic Infant School  
Groundwell Road,  
Swindon, SN1 2LU

Telephone: 01793 523802  
E-mail address: head@holyrood-infant.swindon.sch.uk

D/ES Number: 126426

Headteacher: Mrs D. Slaght  
Chair of Governors: Mrs Anne Jones

---

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Clifton  
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

---

Date of inspection: October 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> 2011  
Date of previous inspection: 26<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> March 2008

Reporting Inspector: Mrs P. J. Antolik

## **Description of School**

Holy Rood was founded in 1859 and is a popular over subscribed average sized Catholic Infant School which serves the parish of Holy Rood. The school has recently obtained Academy status. 100% of the children attending the school are baptised Catholics. Nearly half the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. A high proportion of pupils are at the early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of pupils in the mainstream school who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, but there is a higher than usual proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs and/or disability. The main area of need is that of speech and communication. There are a high number of teaching assistants to support the whole of Key Stage 1, with emphasis on developing English language skills. The school has gained a number of awards such as Healthy School and Activemark.

## **Key for inspection grades**

Grade 1: Outstanding; Grade 2: Good; Grade 3: Satisfactory; Grade 4: Unsatisfactory

## **Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school**

### **Grade 1**

Holy Rood Infant School is an outstanding Catholic school which enables all its pupils to thrive and grow in its caring environment. The school has high expectations and provides challenge within a curriculum which is creative. The strength of the school lies in the outstanding leadership of the head teacher who commands respect from her staff, and inspires confidence in her governors and parents. Parents are very supportive of the school. The head teacher's calm, yet infectious enthusiasm and commitment act as an inspiration to all. All leaders and managers are excellent role models who strive to ensure that the Catholic nature of the school is clear, consistent and embedded in the mission statement. The teaching staff are talented practitioners who are ably supported by excellent teaching assistants. This is a school which knows itself very well, identifies, prioritises, secures improvement and thrives on challenge in all aspects of its work and mission. Liturgical and spiritual participation in the parish are vital in the Catholic life of the school. The Priests celebrate Mass each week for the children, and this takes place in the parish church adjacent to the school and is well supported by the parish members and local community, who are known and respected by the pupils.

## **The capacity of the school community to improve and develop**

### **Grade 1**

The school's capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding due to strong, open and compassionate leadership. Leaders and governors work in conjunction to ensure that the school's shared mission, vision and aims are driven forward with a commitment to

excellence in all areas. There is a sense of everyone working together to promote, with commitment and pride the Catholic life of the school. This results in sustained and continuing improvement to outcomes for pupils in all aspects.

All areas identified for improvement during their last inspection have been achieved with further steps for improvement acknowledged in the school development plan and RE action plans.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure the continued development of vibrant and creative forms of Prayer and Worship to support the full engagement of EAL children in their celebrations.
- Continue to embed systematic assessment and evaluation of RE data to ensure outcomes for pupils are consistently good or excellent.

### **How good are outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups?**

#### **Grade 1**

The social, moral and spiritual development is a strength of the school and this is as a result of the dedication of all members of staff to the Mission of the school. The Chair of Governors commented that “the mission statement is visible in all areas of the school, and is lived out by all”. The majority of the teaching is outstanding which is evidenced in the pupils’ learning. Where the teaching is outstanding there is a stimulating approach, excellent use of ICT, differentiated and challenging questions and various approaches being used by pupils to record their work. Monitoring by the subject leader ensures that a consistently high standard is achieved throughout the school. Children’s starting points are generally a little below those expected for their age. Attainment is high by the time pupils leave. Their behaviour is exceptionally good in lessons because the tasks are stimulating, creative and motivate them extremely well. Activities are very well matched to individual needs so that all pupils are supported and challenged. When pupils were discussing their work they demonstrated a pride in and respect for the Catholic life of the school. Their work is well presented both in their books and in attractive displays around the school which enhance learning. RE permeates the curriculum and is key to the success achieved in other subjects. Pupils recall with enthusiasm previous topics they have covered in RE and demonstrate a good understanding of prior learning.

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The Catholic life of the school is tangible and enhanced through the many activities the school provides and through involvement with the parish and wider community. Children attend Mass weekly; they help prepare the bidding prayers, partake in prayer whilst gathered around the altar, act as ministers of the word and “sign” the responses of the Mass as well as the hymns. This supports the less able and EAL children to develop their understanding of the Mass.

The Priests celebrate the Mass with the needs of young children in mind and the parishioners greatly support them. Pupils visit the church to reinforce their RE work where appropriate. There are well planned opportunities for all pupils to participate in assemblies, Masses and reflections which actively involve them in all aspects of their preparation. This is carefully distributed so that every child actively participates in some aspect of the mass, assembly or reflection. These reflections are effective in providing pupils with the opportunity to explore connections between faith and life in greater depth, particularly in issues appropriate to them.

## **How effective the provision is for Catholic Education**

### **Grade 1**

The school provides all pupils with rich opportunities for developing their prayer life. Prayer is integral to the school and a key strength in developing spirituality, providing all pupils with the opportunities and skills to take part in the prayer life of the school. The leadership team model good practice through their example in the way they plan whole school prayer opportunities, which follow the liturgical year and use the themes from 'Here I Am', as well as responding to the needs of the children. Staff are supported in strengthening their own understanding and knowledge of prayer and liturgy through staff prayers, inset, staff meetings and courses held at school and provided by the Diocese. All classrooms have Prayer Corners, which are not only reflective areas but also have an interactive task for the children related to the theme of the display, e.g. using Godly Play figures to retell a story. Teachers have prayer boxes for the children to set up when gathering for prayer. Pupils are eager to contribute to the preparation and enjoy being part of the planning for the reflection. There are a range of formal and informal opportunities for daily prayer. The teachers, T.A.'s and children celebrate being together. Children from different cultural backgrounds are fully integrated into different aspects of the school's prayer life.

All meetings, including governors meetings, start with a prayer and are led by different staff on a rotational basis. Governors are generous with their time in support of the prayer life of the school. Families are encouraged to pray with their children. Psalms that were written in school by the children were sent home for them to read with their parents. Links with the parish are outstanding and well supported by the Curate who is also the RE link Governor.

The school provides an outstanding, imaginative religious education curriculum which fully meets the requirements of the Bishops Conference and makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Pupils' needs are effectively met in RE by taking into account their knowledge and understanding on entry to the school at Early Years Foundation Stage and their progress is regularly assessed as they move across the key stages. Transition information for key 2 is given to the Junior school, which is on another site. The use of art, music and dance are also effectively used in the teaching of RE, providing different mediums for those pupils who are less proficient in writing, and speaking English on entry to the school. The school provides a good personal relationship curriculum which is in line with Catholic teaching.

## **How effective are leaders and managers in developing the Catholic Life of the school?**

### **Grade 1**

Leaders and managers are outstanding at promoting the Catholic life of the school. The Catholic mission of the school is given the highest priority and underpins all aspects of school life. Pupils' spiritual and moral development is central to the school's vision. The dedication, drive and energy of the headteacher, deputy headteacher (who is the RE Co-ordinator) and senior leaders are an inspiration to the whole school community. Accurate and regular self-evaluation at all levels within the school is a reflection of comprehensive, rigorous monitoring, analysis and self-challenge that the school engages in. This results in targeted and coherent planning and actions to ensure continuous improvement in all aspects of the Catholic life of the school. High quality staff training and induction together with the support of the Curate ensure an awareness, understanding and commitment to the Catholic ethos. As a result pupils have a secure understanding of the school's mission and actively live and support it.

The monitoring and evaluation of the provision for Religious Education are outstanding. The efficient, effective and knowledgeable co-ordinator has ensured that accurate and consistent monitoring, assessment and early tracking systems are in place and these are having a significant impact on pupils' learning, progress and standards. She keeps staff well informed, has high expectations and models outstanding practice and senior leaders are unreserved in their support. This result in continuously improving outcomes for pupils.

Governors provide effective challenge and support for the Catholic life of the school. They are extremely committed, have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and put the well-being and development of the whole child at the centre of their work. Governors are actively involved in the school community and have very positive relationships with the staff and pupils. They are confident and questioning in their approach. They are well informed on matters relating to Religious Education, as well as being aware how the Bishop's pastoral plan for the Diocese "People of Hope" applies to schools. They have successfully achieved Academy Status by working in conjunction with both the Diocese and Local Authority. They continue to develop and improve outcomes for pupils.

Leaders and managers effectively develop partnerships with other providers and organisations. The school is involved in a wide range of partnerships which impact significantly on pupils' achievement and well-being and the Catholic life of the school. Well established links with other Catholic primary schools, the diocese, the parish and other local organisations provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to enjoy, achieve and further develop as well as promoting the personal and professional development of staff.

Leaders and managers' promotion of community cohesion is outstanding. The school is a highly inclusive community with a clear shared vision which engenders a strong sense

of belonging. Leaders respect difference, value diversity and ensure equal opportunities for all. Many opportunities are presented to EAL children to “sign” songs and prayers. Pupils care for each other in the playground ensuring no child is left on their own. They are encouraged to play together using playground activities to support their learning and understanding of language. Pupils are offered a wide range of opportunities to collaborate and engage with those from different backgrounds. As a result pupils recognise, respect and celebrate differences and have a strong sense of the common good. Collective worship is inclusive and the spiritual and religious identity of each individual is respected. The Religious Education curriculum promotes attitudes of respect and tolerance for all faiths and cultures.