



**‘Holy
Cross is an
outstanding
Catholic School’**



*‘The school provides
a very friendly,
caring environment,
underpinned by*



*strong Catholic values where students are
highly successful in developing their
personal qualities and achieve well.’*

*‘Parents, carers and learners show
outstanding support for the school.’*

Inspection 5 and Inspection 48

March 2008



2nd in Lancashire in Value Added (July 2006)

26% of all grades are excellence grades of A*/A (July 2007)

Headteacher, Mrs Wendy White receives awards on behalf of Holy Cross for 'Most Improved Schools' (February 2008) and 'Significant Value Added' (April 2008) at ceremonies held at BAFTA in London by the Specialist Schools' Trust.

'By the end of Key Stage 3 standards are significantly above average in English and Mathematics and exceptionally high in Science.'

'At the end of Key Stage 4 standards are significantly above average.'

2006 78% A* - C

2007 81% A* - C

'Excellent use is made of partnerships.'

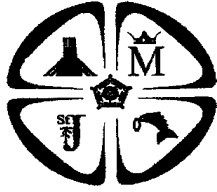
'There is outstanding promotion of community cohesion.'

'Specialism is a great strength of the school and is fully embedded in school life.'

(Verbal feedback from HMI)



Mr Colin Walsh and Miss Kathy McNicholas meet the Queen on a visit to our partnership schools in Uganda.



ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

INSPECTION REPORT

HOLY CROSS CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Chorley

Wednesday 26 March 2008

Inspector Mr. Paul A. Mannings Mrs. Elizabeth Dolan

URN 119803

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Catholic voluntary-aided, mixed Comprehensive
Age range of pupils	11-16
Number on roll	825
Chair of Governors	Mr. Malcolm Holt
School address	Burgh Lane, Chorley, Lancashire, PR7 3NT.
Telephone number	01257 262093
E-mail address	head@holycross.lancs.sch.uk
Date of last inspection	10-11 January 2005
Headteacher	Mrs. Wendy Anne White

Introduction

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

The report of the inspection is produced for the Archbishop of Liverpool (Code of Canon Law 804 and 806) and for the governors of the school.

The inspectors are members of the Christian Education Department and their associates approved by the Archbishop of Liverpool for this purpose.

Description of the school

Holy Cross is a Catholic, voluntary-aided, mixed, comprehensive school in the Lancashire Authority. The school has dual Specialist College Status for Sports and Science. Approximately 71% of learners are drawn from the seven associated Catholic primary schools. A significant number come from other Catholic and denominational schools in the wider area. The overall socio-economic indicator for learners at the school is broadly average. However, 20.55% come from homes in the lowest 25% nationally for deprivation indicators. Since 2007 there has been a significant rise in the number of Polish children joining the school. Most of these are at present non-English speakers. The school has strategies in place to meet their needs. This has included the part-time employment of a Polish speaker. In addition, another member of staff has been trained in the teaching of Polish children. This post includes the provision of full staff in-service. There are 825 learners on roll of whom 91.27% are baptised Catholics, with 8.73% from other Christian denominations and 0% from other World Faith traditions. Fourteen learners have statements of Special Educational Needs, with a further 50 supported by School Action and 6 by School Action Plus. There are 48 teachers of whom 71% are Catholic. The Religious Education department has four core members.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

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Overall effectiveness of the school

Hoy Cross is an outstanding Catholic high school. This is reflected in its improvement since the last inspection and capacity for continued development. The Religious Education department shares a culture of success. Achievement and standards are outstanding. Teaching and learning is good with outstanding features. The curriculum is outstanding. Leadership and management of Religious Education are outstanding. Leadership of the Catholic life of the school, expressed through the Mission Statement, is outstanding. Collective Worship is outstanding. There is outstanding promotion of community cohesions. Parents, carers and learners show outstanding support for the school.

Grade: 1

Improvement since the last inspection

Improvement since the last inspection has been outstanding. Collective Worship has undergone rigorous development through the production of a policy, in-service training and the development of resources. All of the development issues indicated in the last self-review document have been addressed. The department has maintained and strengthened the good practice that was already evident.

Grade: 1

Capacity to improve

The capacity for continued improvement is outstanding. The Religious Education self-evaluation document is comprehensive and realistic in terms of current progress and future development. It informs both the departmental and school annual development plan. Together they are linked to the school vision document for 2007-10. This is a thorough whole school consultation process including staff, learners, parents, carers and governors. It has become a three-year development plan.

Grade: 1

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more focussed and negotiated individual learning targets;
- Carry on addressing the areas for development already included in the Religious Education self-evaluation document.

Achievement and Standards

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are outstanding. Learners are set challenging targets in both key stages. Individual standards in class are monitored against national criteria for attainment. Progress is monitored through a weekly tracking process that takes account of any significant variations between learners. This ensures that learners achieve a high level of knowledge, skills and understanding. GCSE results have continued to rise significantly. In 2007 candidates achieved 77% A* -C, which is well above the national average. One third of these achieved an excellence grade, the highest percentage in the school. Learners thoroughly enjoy their work. Behaviour in class and around the school is outstanding. Religious Education encourages and enables learners to make an outstanding contribution to the school community.

Grade: 1

Quality of Provision for Religious Education

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning is good with outstanding features. The subject knowledge of the staff lends confidence to their individual styles. Their competence with information communication technology is commendable. Full and effective use is made of starters and plenary activities. Independent learning is encouraged. Group work is effective and well monitored. Learners are taught in ability sets. Effective differentiation enables a high level of pace, progress and challenge appropriate to learners' age and stage. Content of lessons enables learners to reflect on their work. The department should continue to develop main content activities that include changes of stimulus and occasions when learners can contribute examples of good practice to the rest of the class. Formative assessment is very good. Learners' work is marked to a very high standard. The content matches the Religious Education programmes. There is understanding of key vocabulary and concepts. Learners are encouraged to record their work in a variety of ways. Attention is given to presentation. Marking and annotation is monitored and the department is refining this process further. This will ensure that the few examples of any incomplete work will be tracked to completion. There is a good level of end of task and unit assessment. Targets are set for individual learners. This good practice should now be complimented by more focussed and negotiated targets. These can be used in conjunction with the progress in levels of attainment already embodied in teaching and learning. There is outstanding parent and carer involvement in their children's learning and development. This is evident from questionnaires, the process for 'Parental Voice' and by the excellent rate of attendance at meetings.

Grade: 2

Curriculum

The curriculum is outstanding. In Key Stages 3 and 4 learners receive the full 10% requirement of the Bishops of England and Wales. This includes learners in Key Stage 4 following the work-related curriculum. In Key Stage 3 *ICONS* has been thoroughly reviewed. New content in Years 7-9 has enriched the process of Research, Revelation and Response. In Key Stage 4 all but four of the learners follow the relatively new and successful two-year GCSE specification. These remaining four are undertaking the work-related curriculum and the department is currently preparing an accredited course best suited to their needs. Consequently the curriculum is meeting national and diocesan requirements. Learners are highly supportive of the curriculum. It is making an outstanding contribution to their spiritual and moral development.

Grade: 1

Leadership and Management

Religious Education

Leadership and management of Religious Education are outstanding. The headteacher and senior leadership group are committed to the success of Religious Education and its place at the core of the curriculum. The subject leader and second in department have both been in post since the last academic year. Their skills of leadership, management and collaboration are outstanding. Departmental staff has a clear vision and direction. The department has a culture of success that is testimony to their years of working as a dedicated team. There are four full-time members who are all well qualified. Each takes a full part in continued professional development. The subject leader in particular has been part of recent Archdiocesan work with the 14-19 curriculum and levels of attainment. There is an effective system for performance management. This process is now to include more provision for peer observation. Equality of opportunity is well promoted through the curriculum content, effective differentiation and access to accredited courses. Learning resources and their deployment are outstanding. The department is funded according to the same capitation formula as other subjects. Governors are providing an outstanding discharge of their responsibilities towards Religious Education.

Grade: 1

Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding. The Mission Statement has undergone a review. All stakeholders felt complete ownership of the existing content, which is an outstanding expression of the philosophy of this Catholic school. It is supported by tangible aims and objectives, expressed within the content of

the school prayer, created by the learners, who fully support and understand the living of the Mission Statement. The school chaplain, a priest from an associated parish, takes a regular part in the life of the school. The lay chaplain makes a significant impact on the Catholic life. This is achieved through availability for the whole school as well as links with the parents, carers and parishes of the pastoral area. Effective monitoring of Catholic life is ensured throughout the staff interview process. The headteacher reports to governors each term. The governing body are closely involved in the spiritual life of the school. The maintenance of Catholic ethos is also monitored within the three-year school vision document.

Grade: 1

Collective Worship

The quality of Collective Worship is outstanding. The existing policy document has been reviewed since the last inspection. It is now in the second stage of review that will draw upon good practice from other schools. Learners and staff gather for worship daily in form groups and once each week in year groups. There are regular and voluntary celebrations of Eucharist and other services. The school provides a wide range of retreat and pilgrimage experiences. Much planning has gone into the production of the Prayer Journal, which provides prayer and meditation for the Liturgical Year. Collective Worship is co-ordinated by the Religious Education subject leader in conjunction with the lay-chaplain and heads of year. Regular in-service has made staff more confident in its delivery. There is regular and structured monitoring of the quality of Collective Worship. Learners appreciate the range of opportunities for their involvement both in form and year groups. They value its content. It is making an outstanding contribution to their spiritual and moral development.

Grade: 1

Community Cohesion

There is outstanding promotion of community cohesion. Leadership at all levels demonstrate a shared vision and commitment to serve the common good. Parents and carers are involved in the decision-making and life of the school. The inclusive nature of Collective Worship celebrates, reflects and respects diversity of belief. The content of the Religious Education programmes encourage reflection upon living Gospel values within the community. They also promote knowledge and understanding of other World Faith traditions. Community cohesion is further promoted by the school chaplaincy and its links between home, school and parish. Staff and learners show concern for those less fortunate than themselves by their support of a wide range of social and fundraising activities.

Grade 1

Holy Cross Catholic High School, A Science and Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119803
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313428
Inspection date	26 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Katrina Gueli HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	828
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Malcolm Holt
Headteacher	Mrs Wendy Anne White
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2005
School address	Burgh Lane Chorley Lancashire PR7 3NT
Telephone number	01257 262093
Fax number	01257 232878

Age group	11–16
Inspection date	26 March 2008
Inspection number	313428

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

The inspector investigated the following issues: the achievement of students and the progress they make; the strength of the evidence base and the accuracy of evaluation by middle and senior leaders; the students' personal development and well being, and their care guidance and support. Evidence was gathered from national published assessment data and the school's own assessment information, the school's own self-evaluation, lesson visits, discussions with leaders, teachers and students, and the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Holy Cross Catholic High School is a slightly smaller than average secondary school. Since September 2004 it has been a designated science and sports college with its sports facilities used by the community out of school hours. The school is popular and is frequently over subscribed. The majority of students live in areas with no more or less advantage than average, as reflected in the below average proportion of students eligible for a free school meal. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is below average. However, there has recently been a significant increase in the number of Polish students joining the school, most of who are at an early stage of English language acquisition. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average. The school has received the Eco silver and Healthy School awards, and Investors in People status.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Holy Cross Catholic High School is a good school with many outstanding features. The school provides a very friendly, caring environment, underpinned by strong Catholic values where students are highly successful in developing their personal qualities and achieve well. The vast majority of parents rightly have a very positive view of the school and appreciate the quality of education provided.

Students' attainment on entry is above average overall. By the end of Key Stage 3 standards are significantly above average in English and mathematics and exceptionally high in science. Despite improvements in mathematics in recent years, progress in this subject is slower than in English and science. However, achievement by the end of Key Stage 3 is good overall.

At the end Key Stage 4 standards are significantly above average. The number of students being awarded the highest grades at GCSE in 2006 and 2007 has risen to twice the number who attained these grades in 2005. In the last two years there has also been significant improvement in the number of students gaining five or more A* - C grades at GCSE. However, the number of students gaining five or more A* - G grades at GCSE has remained broadly average over the same time. The school is aware of the need to provide additional accredited option choices for students following alternative curriculum routes to raise attainment further. Achievement at Key Stage 4 has been variable, but is now good. Students following the alternative curriculum achieve well and all students in the 2007 group progressed into work or continued their education. Achievement of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good because of the high quality support and intervention they receive.

The development of the specialist subjects of the school has made a difference to achievement and standards with the targets for the physical education being surpassed and the highly ambitious target in science almost reached in 2007.

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They really enjoy school life and are very appreciative of the extra time that staff give to help them make good progress. Attendance is consistently above average. Behaviour is excellent and attitudes to learning are mostly very positive creating a very good climate for learning. Students feel very safe in school and say instances of bullying are rare. They know that any incidents are dealt with effectively and are confident that someone will always listen, and respond to their concerns. Students' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development is outstanding and this is reflected in the excellent personal qualities that they display and their wide ranging contributions to the school and wider community. 'Student voice' is increasingly shaping the actions of the school including improvements to the boys' toilets and changes to styles of teaching. The curriculum experiences and the guidance that students receive ensure they are very well prepared for their future beyond school. The wide variety of extra-curricular provision makes an excellent contribution to students' personal development including their health, well-being and enjoyment. Students value the high quality sports facilities available and note the strong team spirit that has been developed through the work of the staff in the physical education department.

Teaching and learning are good with some that is better. A 'can-do' culture for students has been successfully established and teacher expectations are high. Best practice incorporates well paced, engaging and enthusiastic teaching using a wide variety of activities and high levels of student involvement. Modern technologies are frequently used effectively to enhance learning. Often students are involved in assessing their work themselves and this helps them

to understand how to improve. Students are aware of their targets, but in some instances they are not always clear what they need to do to move onto the next level. This is due in part to the variable quality of the written and verbal feedback that they receive. The school has identified where practice needs to be of a higher quality and is already working with departments and individuals to increase consistency. Teaching and learning have been improved through coaching, regular training and frequent sharing of best practice within and between departments. Key drivers in these developments have been the Advanced Skills Teachers and other staff from the specialist subjects. This improvement in quality has contributed to better progress, increased levels of enjoyment and students becoming more effective, independent learners.

The curriculum is good with outstanding features having evolved significantly since the time of the last inspection. A very wide range of academic and vocational courses are now available, both on site and through partnerships with other providers. As a result the needs and interests of students are well met. The specialist subjects have made a considerable contribution to curriculum breadth at Key Stage 4 with an increasing number of science courses on offer and accredited physical education courses for all. Adjustments to the curriculum at Key Stage 3 and different pathways at Key Stage 4 have supported improving outcomes for students. They are very well informed and supported for transfer both between key stages and for progression to post-16 education or training. Innovations such as the complimentary studies programme and activities weeks have ensured that students' learning and personal development is greatly enhanced. The curriculum is enriched significantly by the many and varied extra-curricular activities.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Systems and communication between teams are coherent and all leaders and staff are focused on maximising student achievement and promoting their personal development and well-being. Assessment of progress is frequent and tracking is rigorous so any underperformance is identified rapidly. Students are helped to get back on track quickly through the use of a broad range of interventions. Guidance for students and communication with parents regarding courses, programmes and progress is of a very high quality. For example, in addition to the traditional parents evening, each year features a guidance evening. This is very effective in ensuring that parents have a good understanding of on-going assessment, are clearly briefed about possible challenges to come in the year ahead, and well informed about how best to provide support for their child's learning. Students with additional needs including those who enter the school at an early stage of English language acquisition receive excellent care and support from school based colleagues in conjunction with external care services. All procedures to ensure the health and safety of students are in place.

Leadership and management are good with outstanding features. The headteacher provides strong leadership and there is a clear, shared drive to enhance learning and ensure the best possible outcomes for all learners. This strategic direction is reflected in all aspects of the school's culture and is central to selecting improvement actions. Rigorous self-evaluation involving senior and middle leaders ensures that the school, including governors, are aware of current strengths and areas for development. Subsequent actions are carefully chosen and their impact evaluated accurately. Whole school priorities, performance management and staff development are very well aligned and effectively support improvement. Governor expertise is wide ranging and well utilised. In addition to regular meetings between the headteacher and the chair of the governing body, other governors are linked with individual departments and attend staff training events. This structure, combined with the work of committees and the full governing body, ensures that governors have a good working knowledge and are well placed to hold the school to account. A very good balance has been struck between accountability for

middle leaders to secure increases in standards and a culture of nurturing and support for all staff. This has been central to the rapid improvements seen over the last few years and supports the outstanding capacity of the school to improve further. Whole school targets are set to reflect the school's high expectations but many individual student targets are insufficiently challenging and are often quickly exceeded. Excellent use is made of partnerships and this contributes well to ensuring students' outstanding levels of personal development and well-being.

What the school should do to improve further

- No significant areas for improvement have been identified of which the school was not already aware and taking appropriate action. However, the degree of challenge in the targets set for individual students could be increased so that they align more closely with those set for the whole school.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

28 March 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Holy Cross Catholic High School, A Science and Sports College, Chorley, Lancashire, PR7 3NT

Thank you for sharing your views with me when I visited your school. I found that Holy Cross is a good school with some outstanding features.

The school is a very friendly, caring community where you are highly successful in developing your personal qualities and you achieve well. You are very appreciative about what the school provides, especially the excellent sporting facilities and the very wide range of extra-curricular activities in which you are involved. Your behaviour is excellent and you show very positive attitudes to your learning allowing you to make good progress. Your attendance is good. The skills that you develop and the experiences and guidance that you receive ensure you are very well prepared for life beyond school.

The curriculum is good and is well matched to your needs and aspirations. Enrichment opportunities, for example those provided during activities weeks are excellent and make a very good contribution to your personal development. Lessons have a 'can-do' culture and teachers have high expectations for your achievement. This degree of challenge is however not always reflected in the individual targets that you are set as these are often quickly exceeded. Activities in lessons are varied, increasing your engagement and enjoyment, and your learning is enhanced by the effective use of ICT. You are often involved in assessing your work yourselves and commented that this help you understand how to improve. The care, guidance and support that you receive are outstanding. This supports your personal development very effectively and promotes your academic achievement. Your progress is monitored efficiently and you are helped to get back on track quickly if you are having difficulties.

All leaders and staff are highly committed to improving the school further and are well placed to do so. You are certainly playing your part in this, well done!

Yours sincerely

Katrina Gueli

Her Majesty's Inspector



'Students' personal development and well being are **outstanding**.'

'The wide variety of extra curricular provision makes an excellent contribution to students' personal development including health, well being and enjoyment.'

'Behaviour is **excellent**.'

'Innovations such as the Complementary Studies programme and activities weeks have ensured that students' learning and personal development is **greatly enhanced**.'



'Collective worship is **outstanding**....making an outstanding contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development'

'The Re curriculum is **outstanding**.'

'All stakeholders felt complete ownership of the Mission Statement, which is an **outstanding** expression of the philosophy of this Catholic school.'



'Leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are **outstanding**.'

'The headteacher provides strong leadership and there is a clear, shared drive to enhance learning and ensure the **best possible outcomes** for all learners.'

'Governor expertise is wide ranging and well utilised.'

A 'can-do' culture for students has been successfully established and teacher expectations are high.'



'Care, guidance and support are outstanding.'

'Guidance for students and communication with parents...is of a very high quality.'

Achievement of students with learning difficulties is good because of the high quality support and intervention they receive.'

'A **very wide range** of academic and vocational courses are now available.'

We are delighted to learn that Holy Cross has been **one of five centres in the country** chosen to lead the new 'Land based Environment Vocational Diploma'.



'**Capacity to improve further is outstanding.**'

Well done to all at Holy Cross!

Contact: Holy Cross Catholic High School, Burgh Lane, Chorley, Lancashire PR7 3NT

Tel: 01257 262093

Email: admin@holycross.lancs.sch.uk

Website: www.holycross.lancs.sch.uk