



Holy Cross Catholic High School

URN: 119803

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Liverpool

03 February 2026 – 04 February 2026

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 RE

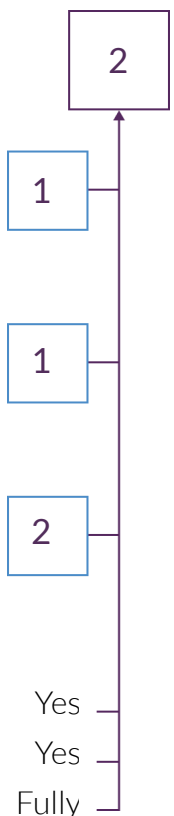
Collective worship (p.7)

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



What the school does well

- The Catholic mission is tangibly lived out and creates a strong sense of belonging. Holy Cross is a Christ-centred community that extends its welcome and outreach beyond the school into parish and local life.
- The headteacher is an inspirational and committed faith leader with a clear Catholic vision. His leadership sets a strong, authentic Catholic culture.
- Staff at all levels are deeply committed to the mission of the school and act as consistent role models of Gospel values, ensuring Catholic life is experienced daily by students.
- Students benefit from a wide range of enrichment and Catholic social teaching opportunities that enable them to live out the mission meaningfully through service and charity.
- Leadership of religious education is highly effective, resulting in outstanding engagement, progress and outcomes.

What the school needs to improve

- Establish a comprehensive annual plan of provision for prayer and liturgy.
- Provide more consistent monitoring and evaluation, including student voice and leadership at all levels to strengthen strategic planning.
- Maximize staff expertise in supporting students to have opportunities to plan and lead well-constructed prayer and liturgy consistently across the school.

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



Students at Holy Cross benefit exceptionally well from the Catholic life of the school and contribute positively and willingly to its mission. The school's mission, "I have come that they might have life and have it to the full", is deeply embedded and understood by students, who recognise that Holy Cross enables them to flourish academically, socially, morally and spiritually. Students speak with confidence and pride about their school, demonstrating a strong sense of belonging and feeling genuinely loved and valued. The headteacher's vision of "bringing Jesus to the children" is consistently lived by staff at all levels, ensuring that Catholic life is enriched daily rather than confined to specific moments. Students demonstrate a strong moral compass and a clear commitment to the common good. Charitable action is extensive and purposeful, strengthened further by the introduction of year-group adopted charities, which enables students to see the collective impact of their actions. Students are able to articulate securely the theological foundations that underpin this work, and in some cases this has inspired students to initiate and lead their own charitable activities independently. Students respond generously to the opportunities provided and are keen to participate fully in the life of the school. Leaders are appropriately extending chaplaincy facilitation opportunities so that an even wider range of students can exercise ownership, including the early embedding of the Faith in Action Award in Year 7.

Holy Cross is a joyful, Christ-centred community. Staff demonstrate a deep commitment to the school's mission, creating a culture in which students feel safe, known and supported to

thrive. Catholic life is woven seamlessly into the daily experience of the school and is evident in relationships, routines and expectations. Pastoral care is a significant strength. Staff are highly committed to providing care, particularly for vulnerable students, and systems are well established, proactive and effective. This reflects the school's unwavering commitment to human dignity and ensures that students experience Catholic care in action. Relationships and Sex Education is carefully sequenced, faithfully delivered and firmly rooted in Catholic teaching. Staff are strong role models who embody the mission of the school with integrity and commitment. This is reflected in the rich enrichment programme that complements a vibrant curriculum and provides students with meaningful opportunities to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. Chaplaincy provision is visible and contributes positively to the spiritual life of the school. Leaders recognise that access is not yet consistent for all students and are appropriately extending provision to widen participation.

The headteacher provides inspirational faith leadership, ensuring Catholic life remains central. Governors share an ambitious vision and are passionately committed to the school's mission, with further scope to strengthen their impact through more systematic evaluation of Catholic Life. The school benefits from strong partnerships with local parishes and the Catholic primary schools, enriching the sacramental and communal life of the school. The lay chaplain is instrumental in sustaining these parish partnerships, leading the parish youth Mass and serving as a vital bridge between school and parish life. Local clergy recognise the leadership's outward-facing mission, noting "Holy Cross is a community Catholic high school that serves everyone within the parish." These partnerships strengthen students' connections with the wider Church, and many engage with youth Masses celebrated within the parish. Staff wellbeing is a clear leadership priority, contributing to high morale and a strong sense of vocation and pride in working at Holy Cross. Professional development is well planned and explicitly formative, enabling staff to grow in confidence and understanding of their role in Catholic life. Induction for new staff is effective. Self-evaluation of Catholic life and mission is honest, accurate and reflective. Leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development.

Religious education

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 key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

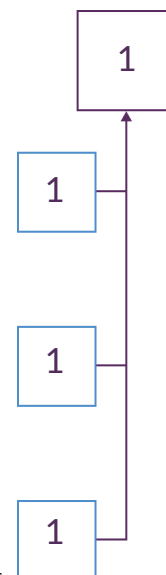
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Students at Holy Cross achieve exceptionally well in religious education and demonstrate high levels of enjoyment and engagement in their learning. They form strong, respectful relationships with their teachers, which results in outstanding behaviour, concentration and readiness to learn. Students attend lessons equipped and motivated, respond positively to challenge and demonstrate consistently strong attitudes to learning. Students are confident and increasingly independent learners who speak highly of their religious education lessons and the support they receive from staff. They take pride in their work, which is of a consistently high quality and all groups of students achieve well. Secure recall supports strong religious literacy, enabling students to use theological language accurately and confidently when discussing their learning, both in lessons and in wider conversations. Religious education is firmly established as the heart of the school's curriculum and plays a central role in students' intellectual, moral and spiritual formation. Students are able to articulate what they have learned and explain how their understanding has developed over time. Assessment processes are well structured and support students in understanding how to improve, contributing to strong progress and consistently high outcomes.

Teaching in religious education is of high quality and underpinned by strong subject and pedagogical knowledge. Teachers make meaningful links to prior learning, students' experiences and wider theological concepts. This enables students to develop secure understanding and think deeply about faith and belief. Expectations of both the subject and

students are consistently high. Planning is effective, with carefully sequenced content supporting consolidation and progress. Shared departmental resources ensure consistency and equity of experience. Teachers encourage independent thinking and provide opportunities for purposeful reflection that supports students' spiritual and moral development. Feedback is high quality, relevant and specific, enabling students to understand how to improve and make strong progress. In the strongest lessons observed, questioning was used effectively to promote engagement and discussion. Greater consistency in deep questioning and systematic checks for understanding would strengthen assessment for learning and ensure students' understanding is fully secured.

Leadership of religious education is outstanding. Senior leaders and governors ensure the subject has full parity with other core subjects and is highly valued within the curriculum. The Religious Education Directory has been fully implemented at Key Stage 3. This is reflected in students' strong knowledge, understanding, skills and progress. Subject leadership is a significant strength. The head of department provides inspiring and highly effective leadership, with her expertise and impact recognised beyond the school, at diocesan level. She leads a cohesive and committed team who work collaboratively to deliver consistently high-quality provision. Several members of the department work directly with the examination board, strengthening assessment expertise, curriculum accuracy and confidence in standardisation. This expertise enhances the support offered to students and contributes to the department's strong outcomes. Leaders have also demonstrated a clear commitment to meeting the needs of students through the strategic decision to change the examination board, ensuring that assessment and curriculum choices best serve students. The curriculum is sequential, systematically planned and faithfully aligned to the Religious Education Directory. It is carefully reviewed and adapted to meet the needs of all students. Religious education is forensically monitored in line with whole-school systems, enabling leaders to identify strengths and priorities accurately, and take timely, strategic action. Professional development is prioritised and supports staff formation and subject expertise. Religious education is well resourced, and enrichment opportunities, including strong parish and community links, further enhance students' experiences.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

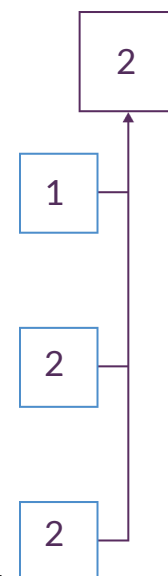
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

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



Students' behaviour and engagement in prayer and liturgy are outstanding. They demonstrate consistently high levels of attentiveness and reverence during worship, engaging respectfully in both large-scale liturgies and routine acts of prayer within tutor groups. Singing is joyful and contributes positively to a strong sense of community. Students demonstrate a secure and developing understanding of different forms of prayer. Some students speak reflectively about prayer experiences linked to key liturgical times and can explain how these have supported their spiritual growth. When given opportunities, students engage willingly and enthusiastically in planning and leading prayer, showing creativity, confidence and a growing sense of ownership. The curriculum makes a significant contribution to students' understanding of the role of prayer in daily life. Students recognise prayer as something that extends beyond the school context into lived experience. This is exemplified through opportunities such as school visits to the Battlefields, where students are supported to pray reflectively alongside the parish priest, deepening the authenticity and impact of these experiences. Many students speak with confidence and sincerity about how prayer and liturgy has shaped their personal faith journeys. Leaders are appropriately developing systems to support students in evaluating the impact of prayer they plan and lead, further strengthening this provision.

Collective worship is given appropriate priority and provides students with regular opportunities to experience prayer that is reverent. The recently introduced thematic

approach to prayer and liturgy is beginning to strengthen provision, supporting greater coherence across worship and assists students in deepening their understanding of scripture and its relevance to their lives. While this work is still embedding, early impact is evident in students' growing confidence when discussing scripture and liturgical themes. Strong partnerships with local parishes enrich the prayer life of the school and strengthen students' experience of the wider Church. Families speak positively about worship provision and have welcomed opportunities to engage more intentionally with the prayer life of the school. The chapel is a respected and valued sacred space; however, access is not yet systematic for all students. A more structured approach would ensure consistent benefit from this provision. Students' gifts and talents are celebrated through a wide range of enrichment activities, with plans to integrate these further into prayer and liturgy. Students would benefit from more frequent and consistent opportunities to work with key staff to plan and lead prayer within the school, ensuring that leadership of worship is accessible to a wider range of students.

Leaders and governors demonstrate a strong commitment to the centrality of prayer and liturgy within the life of the school. Governors regularly attend and participate in worship, providing visible leadership and modelling its importance to students and staff. Liturgical formation for staff is a notable strength. The lay chaplain provides high-quality support, enabling staff to lead prayer with confidence and reverence, and leaders ensure that all staff fulfil their responsibility to provide opportunities for daily prayer. Leaders recognise that systems for monitoring and evaluating prayer and liturgy are not yet fully systematic. In particular, student voice is not integrated routinely to inform future planning. Developing more consistent evaluation processes would strengthen strategic planning and deepen students' ownership of worship. Students would benefit from a clearer skills strategy, embedded within the Annual Plan of Provision, to underpin and support progression in planning and leading prayer. Further development of planned opportunities, alongside staff expertise to work with students in constructing and leading prayer, would ensure leadership of worship is regular, inclusive and accessible to a wider range of students. The school provides well-planned opportunities for sacramental celebration, including strong support for students preparing for Confirmation.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Holy Cross Catholic High School
School unique reference number (URN)	119803
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8884742
Full postal address of the school	Myles Standish Way, Chorley, PR7 3LS
School phone number	01257 262093
Headteacher or Head of School	Mr Greg Lindley
Chair of Governors	Mr Stephen Sands
School Website	www.holycross.lancs.sch.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	
Age-range of pupils	11 - 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	28 March 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The Inspection Team

Hannah Coe Lead

Paul Bennett

Edward Mcglinchey

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