

16<sup>th</sup> October 2018



Ms Clare Higgins  
Headteacher  
Holy Cross Catholic Primary School  
Gautby Road  
Birkenhead  
CH41 7DU

## Flagship Review Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2018

### Summary

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School is a smaller than average Primary School with 149 pupils on roll, situated in Bidston, north of Birkenhead on the Wirral Peninsula. The school is situated in an area of high social disadvantage with many of the pupils and their families facing a range of issues and needing a great deal of support. Holy Cross is a small, friendly primary school, where they believe in, ***“creating opportunities which enable each person to recognise a sense of their own worth and that of others”***. A superbly inclusive statement that underpins everything that happens in the school and is enacted through their catholic ethos and exemplified in their mission statement, ***‘To Love God and Love One Another.’*** They aim to give their pupils the best education possible and a superb level of pastoral care so that they learn well and are happy in school, through its outstanding commitment to providing a highly inclusive teaching and learning environment for all pupils and staff. Where all staff directed and supported by the newly appointed Senior Leadership Team that encompasses the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and Inclusion Manager are affecting rapid change and continuing to ensure that the school is a superbly inclusive enjoyable, friendly place for all to come to work and learn. Everyone involved with the school believes in and works hard on a daily basis with the pupils to ensure it happens. This is truly a school where every pupil really does matter and is made to feel special. A fact I can attest to from the evidence of the review and from discussions with stakeholders. The school and staff are committed to providing the very highest standard of teaching and learning experiences which not only develop the pupil's knowledge and skills, but an enjoyment of learning as well.

In terms of inclusion Holy Cross is an impressive, outstanding school in every sense. A school that is very keen to continue to be at the heart of its community and meet the needs of its changing population of pupils, parents and families as a truly inclusive community school and as such there is a continuously evolving drive to develop even closer links with the local children's centre and community centre, ensuring that they support not only ***their*** pupils, but ***their*** parents and ***their*** families. Inclusion is a natural part of the very fabric of the school and a place where superb levels of care, nurture and support naturally occur. Holy Cross is a calm, yet stimulating, vibrant learning environment that focuses on helping pupils to develop the skills, they need to be active participants in their community and in society. Everyone I met was helpful and spoke very positively about their experience at the school.

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A school with a focus on improving the attainment and wider outcomes for all pupils regardless of their starting point. As with the previous review it is clear to see that the school's actions to care for pupils in my judgement is superb.

The school's commitment to their pupils was clearly seen during the review on numerous occasions, such as, at the start of the day where they offer a Breakfast Club for pupils at minimal or no cost and there are opportunities to involve themselves in games and is very well attended by pupils, who then get their day off to a calm start. Parents I spoke to at breakfast Club who were able to stay with them if they wished were very positive about the school and the way they support pupils and provide for them; such as during the morning assembly where the pupils were actively involved and where they were quite vociferous in stating that Holy Cross is **'one big family and that everyone cares for each other'**. This was obvious during the review in the way pupils and adults interacted with each other; the pupils also spoke about the presentation they had from and the work they did with the NSPCC on the day prior to the review as part of the **'Speak out, Stay safe'** campaign; through the school's efforts to increase physical fitness and enjoyment of physical activity and the benefits that accrue from involvement, not only the physical benefits, but also in terms of social and emotional wellbeing and mental health where the PE Lead has increased the scope and range of activities and festival style opportunities working closely with other schools and Edsential – opportunities such as Athletics, Foot Golf, Tri Golf, Tag rugby, Capoeira a Brazilian martial art, Boxercise and Mad fitness day to name a few that has been highly successful. The school have also just registered with the Junior Award Scheme for Schools (JASS) a progressive learning programme for young people that recognises wider achievement that will support and enhance what the school offers and through other opportunities such as their work with the Charles Thompson Mission in Birkenhead, a charity that is dedicated to help men and women who are homeless, poor, needy get out of poverty. Providing hot food, clothing and other basic essentials seven days a week. It will be interesting to see how the school's involvement with such a worthwhile cause has evolved at the next review point.

The Staff are exceptionally positive about the school and naturally go the extra mile and beyond without thought to ensure that the individual and groups of pupil's needs are met. There is a superb quality of support, care and nurture within the school that continues to enhance the provision and is constantly changing to meet need. Staff I spoke to are justifiably proud of what they achieve both professionally and in terms of support for the pupils and themselves. They work exceptionally hard to ensure that the needs of pupils and families are met as a matter of course and it is very clear to see that there is mutual respect and care that is evident across the staff body; and a fantastic rapport between the staff, the pupils in the school and between the staff at all levels. A mutual regard and respect that shines through and that everyone should be proud of.

Staff led by the new Headteacher and her senior team who are clearly aspirational and inspirational and have a very clear vision for the school moving forwards that all staff clearly buy into and are working to achieve on a daily basis. A vision that encompasses the very best teaching and learning and aspirations for **their** pupils and families, a relentless determination and drive for all to succeed, this came across very clearly from staff, pupils and parents I met and talked to during the review and is a very real strength of this outstanding, superbly inclusive school. The behaviour and safety of pupils seen during this review was excellent. Everyone involved with the school should be immensely proud of the way they conduct themselves around the school.

Pupils through a variety of different opportunities have a strong pupil voice, such as The Inclusion Council with whom I had an interesting discussion about their role.

Parents are very well supported and are well informed of their children's progress and what they can do to support the school and their child's development. This partnership is a strength of the school and one that the headteacher and her staff are keen to develop even further, with an ongoing action point carried over from last year, that will with plans in place for the year ahead see parental engagement evolve further. A vision where parents and governors continue to be actively involved in shaping and developing the future vision of the school.

Having completed a rigorous and thorough review and having discussed and agreed the targets cited in the report and their involvement in and capacity to support and attend Cluster Group meetings from this point forward and understanding that their involvement will form a significant part of their next annual review I am of the opinion that Holy Cross Catholic Primary School remains a school with the Inclusion agenda at the forefront of everything it provides for its pupils. The environment is superb providing an excellent teaching and learning environment for teachers, support staff, pupils and the local community. They have proved their expertise over the years of IQM accreditation and I believe they have the drive and capacity to continue to be a Flagship School. I recommend, without reservation, that the school maintains Flagship status.

**Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:**



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Joe McCann MBA NPQH  
Director of Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd



## Sources of data:-

- Prior to the day, key information and documentary evidence related to inclusion was reviewed. I was able to scrutinize both hard and electronic information presented to me and I can confirm that the school's evaluation of progress continues to be extremely accurate. During the review, meetings were held with the new Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Inclusion Manager, Staff, parents, and pupils in meetings and during a tour of the school with the Head Boy and Head Girl. As part of the review process a discussion and evaluation of the progress and impact of the Action Plan for 2017-18, documentary scrutiny and opportunities to discuss the school's Action Plan and research project for 2018 -2019 with a variety of stakeholders took place, including scrutiny of documentation presented by staff in meetings related to their roles and expertise giving a comprehensive picture of the school's superb inclusive and everchanging practice.

## Commentary on the FS Action Plan 2017 - 18:-

The school reviewed the action plan below that was identified at their last Flagship review. This report includes a summary of actions taken by the school to meet targets set and the impact of these actions. Although some of actions were postponed due to staffing issues both within the school and the LA.

- Holy Cross worked hard to embed Reciprocal Reading into the school curriculum. Staff worked with colleagues in other schools in order to develop their RR skills to be used across the school. RR is seen as a very important part of reading throughout the school allowing pupils to develop their reading skills, by exploring various texts in a much deeper way. Two teachers went on the initial training and then trained all teachers from Y2 to Y6. Lesson plans for RR clearly show it is happening across the school and 'Pupil Voice' shows that they are enjoying RR and it's allowing them to make good progress. Next steps may well include Teaching Assistants benefitting from being trained in RR to help further CPD and support pupils.
- Holy Cross applied for and achieved the Wirral School of Sanctuary Award. The SofS was awarded to Holy Cross at Birkenhead Town Hall last academic year. The award recognising the fact that Holy Cross is a place of safety and welcoming place for all pupils and their families; offering sanctuary, understanding and support for all children who attend, and demonstrates the same core values that underpin the IQM Award.
- Holy Cross continued to be involved with E Twinning Opportunities with pupils across the school last year having achieved the International Schools Award at foundation Level in January 2016. The E Twinning projects proved to be a big success with staff and pupils. One of the projects included creating an E-Book in French based on the Hungry Caterpillar. The school will continue to develop E twinning opportunities in the future and may well explore expanding what they offer and look to achieve the Intermediate award. Holy Cross have been given the contact details for an IQM FS School that has superb Internationalism at the core of its offer if they wish to move on in their journey.



- The school purchased a set of iPads last year to use in school as a valuable resource to aid learning. Staff Training was undertaken using fit4schools in order to up-skill teachers in computing skills such as Coding, Blogging, etc. A set was then purchased for all teaching staff. This allows teachers to incorporate it into their lessons, (photographs, visualisers, activities during lessons). New computing programmes are now being used by teaching staff with IT4Schools being a driving force for up-skilling staff and pupils in areas where they have required specific support. It has been suggested that the school's IT lead contact a leading Apple school in Bolton to support their increasing use of iPads and to see outstanding practice and access further support for staff and Holy Cross Digital Leaders.
- Holy Cross will continue to work hard to improve and develop parental involvement in school during the year ahead and it remains as a priority and a focus for the school. More Parent and Pupil sessions will be set up to bring more parents into school to grow and build even better relationships with them. SLT is working hard to broaden and build in opportunities for parents, including family workshops to bring more parents and families into school and get them involved in the running of the school and this year they have introduced a Parental drop-in coffee morning on the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of every month. This initiative is based on the highly successful model at Leasowe Primary School, nearby and hopefully it will evolve and develop to provide parent/carers opportunities both in and out of school during the day, support work with families that involve outside agencies and provide support and critical advice for parents and families when needed and in a multitude of other supportive ways that enable pupils and families to attend school and be successful. An excellent opportunity and one that I hope to see flourish over the next twelve months and involve increasing numbers of parents and families.

### The school may wish to consider:-

- The opportunity provided by the use of a Therapy Dog in the school, research and investigate how such a dog would be used. The school could consider the use of a retired Guide Dog, or through Therapy Dogs Nationwide (TDN) a charity providing various programmes involving dogs.
- Using the 3m cloud Library App for electronic devices or similar App linked to the schools local Library to enhance reading opportunities for students. I would thoroughly recommend the use of the App.
- Piloting a '**Family Time**' approach to encourage more parental engagement in their children's education. Family time usually takes place prior to school starting for a selected group or class but could usefully start in reception initially to encourage parental involvement in their children's education and supporting reading. Encouraging parents to come into the classroom at the start of the day for 15 minutes and read with their children and speak to the teacher, developing closer links with school and allowing them to support their children. Once set up, this could become a regular and more wide spread across the school.
- The possibility of participating in and achieving UNICEF Rights Respecting School Award, that would fit in with the ethos of the school and support pupil voice. The



award puts children's rights at the heart of the school and embeds these values in daily school life, giving children the best chance to lead happy healthy lives and to become responsible, active citizens.

### Flagship Status:-

After lengthy discussions during the review and understanding that Holy Cross Catholic Primary School will continue to address all 8 elements of the IQM award and having due understanding of the principle for Flagship status: "***An individual school can further its work in Inclusion through internal research activities.***" I can confirm that the school meets all of the criteria to continue to hold Flagship status and we have agreed the actions below.

### Targeted Flagship Research Plan for 2018-19:-

Research Project:- Singing Hands' – Using Makaton to support communication across the school.

### Rationale:-

- During maternity leave, The School Inclusion Manager participated in a ten-week course called 'Sing and Sign.' The sessions were designed to teach mother and baby the basic Makaton signs. Within a short space of time, it was evident to see communication between both had improved dramatically. From this personal experience there was a powerful realisation that this programme could be another highly powerful and extremely useful communication strategy for the children who attend Holy Cross.

Being situated in an area which is linked with massive poverty and deprivation issues, it is no surprise that children join the school's foundation stage with an extremely low baseline in social, language and communication skills. Because of this, the school employ their own Speech and Language Therapists in order to meet the communication needs of the children. Although this is an excellent intervention there is a very strong belief that being able to access, this dedicated programme of support with language development would be invaluable, and this is where the school see a different type of 'signing' programme slotting into place – Singing Hands would seem to fit the bill in this respect.

Using signs to support the spoken language will provide children with other ways to communicate and express their feelings; particularly if they are unable to do so verbally. The use of sign can be used to strengthen each child's verbal development and offer other strategies that they and the school and parents (possibly) can draw upon. It should be stated however, that at no point will there ever be an intention to not use or to replace the spoken word.

### Personnel involved initially:-

DHT - P Bras; Inclusion Manager – J Steers; E Ibie, K Franks, L Squires and A Mayes.



## Time Frame:-

2018 to 2019.

## Actions:-

- Find a provider to offer Makaton or a similar language programme training for staff. Initially in Foundation Stage and Year 1. Initial meeting to be arranged with Talk About Town about offering staff training on Makaton or other similar signing scheme to be taught to staff.
- Staff Training to be arranged on Makaton/Sign training to staff members. Possibly, using Sign Along. Staff in Early Years and Year 1 to engage in the sign training in preparation to begin to use with pupils within their specific year groups.
- Staff and pupils begin using Makaton/Signing as another type of communication within their setting. Trained staff will begin to use signing during every day activities, so that children become familiar with basic signs and can start using them to support their communication skills. Incorporating it into every day lessons/sessions where possible. (Snack times, songs, story, lunch, getting changed for PE). Children will expand their sign knowledge in an organic way, when used daily within the environment. Signing will never be used instead of spoken language but will sit alongside verbal communication within the educational setting.
- Performances/assemblies so that children and staff can share their new skills. Year 1 and Foundation Stage can show case their new skills during a performance for the school and parents. SLT to provide opportunities at the end of the Spring Term for parents and the rest of the school to come together to observe signing in the shape of nursery rhymes, simple stories etc. Demonstration of simple signs so that parent and pupils may also participate.
- Makaton Ambassadors to be trained. Pupils in other year groups to be offered the opportunity to learn how to use sign across the school. Training to be offered to pupils and opportunities for them to practise their new skills. Possibly, leading to accreditation.
- Makaton Ambassadors to teach other pupils Makaton/Signing. Ambassadors to generate 'sign' videos using QR codes across the school for staff/pupils to access and learn new skills for themselves. Ambassadors to consolidate their signing by teaching their peers how to sign through well-known songs and stories. Ambassadors to be given time to generate resources and spend time with peers to demonstrate their acquired skills.

## Expected outcomes:-

- The school will conduct a review of how effective the project has been throughout the first year. Pupils, ambassadors, staff and parents will be given questionnaires to measure how useful and successful signing has been in its use at school and if they



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have found it useful in their home situations. It will also be reviewed with SALT to see if they feel it has supported the pupils in Foundation Stage and Y1 with their language development. The school firmly believe that with a signing programme in place, their younger pupil's language skills will be accelerated, despite coming into school with such a low baseline. This particular resource will allow all pupils to have access to the language used within the classroom, as well as developing the strategies the pupils will have in order to express themselves within the learning environment and possibly in the wider environment/community.

**Assessor: Steve Gill**

**Date of Review 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2018**