



23<sup>rd</sup> October 2019

Mrs Clare Higgins  
Headteacher  
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Gautby Road  
Bidston  
Merseyside  
CH41 7DU

**Flagship Review Date: 16<sup>th</sup> October 2019**

## **Summary**

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School is a smaller than average Primary School with 151 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. The school aims 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. It is a superbly inclusive, enjoyable and 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 valued for who they are and who they will become, this is fact I can attest to from the evidence of the review and from discussions with stakeholders. Everyone involved with Holy Cross is 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.

This is a school that firmly believes that 'Every Child Matters.' Where the Headteacher states very clearly, 'it is our aim to raise standards by promoting a school ethos which is underpinned by core values. These values support the development of the whole child as a reflective learner within a calm, caring, happy and purposeful atmosphere. It is our mission to create opportunities which enable each person to recognise a sense of their own worth and that of others. An inclusive statement that I fully concur with from the evidence of this review and previous reviews. Supported by their mission 'Loving and learning together in faith' underpins everything that happens in the school and is enacted through their catholic ethos. Where all staff directed by and supported by the Senior Leadership Team that encompasses the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and Inclusion Manager who are affecting rapid change and continuing to drive everyone involved towards excellence and all the while ensuring that the school is a superbly inclusive, enjoyable and friendly place for all to come to work and learn. This is a fact recognised by Ofsted in the schools most recent report in November 2018 where they stated, 'the appointment of the present Headteacher at the start of the academic year

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has brought about much-needed stability and staff morale is high. She is supported well by the newly appointed senior leadership team. Governors and staff share her drive to improve standards in the school quickly and raise expectations of what pupils can achieve. This superbly caring, inclusive environment ensures each pupil receives the best education possible, delivered by highly dedicated staff. 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, supporting 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 seem to naturally occur but is the result of the continued and ongoing high levels of hard work and dedication of the staff and governors.

Visitors to Holy Cross experience the same calm, yet stimulating, vibrant learning environment that the staff and pupils experience on a daily basis. It is contained but not bounded by its superb learning environment that focuses on helping children to develop the skills, they need to be active participants in their community and in society. The school environment is superb and is full of vibrant carefully thought out and prepared displays that celebrates what the school does best, valuing everyone and including all children in the life of the school. The school's learning environment while small is simply outstanding. Every aspect of the interior, every nook and cranny, is seen as a valuable space to aid the learning process, with a considered purpose. Pupils observed during the review in classes, at play and during lunch were extremely well behaved and there were superb positive and supportive interactions seen between pupils and between pupils and staff. Pupils through a wide variety of different opportunities that include School Council, Inclusion Council, Play Leaders and Subject Leaders have a strong voice. Parents 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 very real and key strength of the school, with everyone actively involved in shaping and developing the vision of the school and communicating extremely effectively through its website, letters, texts and social media.

As with the previous IQM reviews it is clear to see that the school's actions to care for and nurture pupils in my judgement is superb. The staff at the school are clearly dedicated and aspirational for all who are lucky enough to be educated at the school. The staff 'know their pupils' exceedingly well. Every member of staff from the Headteacher down has a fantastic depth of understanding and knowledge of the pupils in their care and the pride they show in their pupils and their achievements shone out in every conversation and in the way they spoke about them during the review. It was very humbling and inspirational to hear them talking about their school and their pupils and this often extends to pupils who have left the school and moved on who may still need their support, this is a fact I experienced during a discussion with the Headteacher and the Inclusion lead during the review. Everyone involved at Holy Cross should be extremely proud of what they achieve on a daily basis and the emphasis placed on ensuring everyone is nurtured and included.

There is an exceptional work ethic and ethos at Holy Cross that drives everything the school and staff are doing for their pupils and families, coupled with a ferocious drive to improve what is offered and extremely high aspiration for their pupils to succeed. Pupils observed during the review in classes, at play and during lunch were very well

behaved and there were superb, positive and supportive interactions seen between pupils, staff and between pupils and staff. The behaviour and safety of pupils seen during this review was exemplary. Everyone involved with the school should be immensely proud of the way they conduct themselves around the school.

During the review process I talked to a variety of staff and pupils frankly about their school and what was offered to support pupils and their families. Everyone without exception was extremely positive about the school and they highlighted the fact that in their opinion the school was naturally a very inclusive setting. It was clear from the conversations that everyone involved in the school was highly empathetic and understood the needs of the pupil's and the needs of their colleagues and supported them extremely well. It was very clear from what was said and what was seen during the review that there are no barriers and no outsiders at Holy Cross, everyone is included and looked after to the best of their ability demonstrating the school's superb level of inclusivity.

I undertook a tour of the school the Head Boy and Head Girl who were superb ambassadors for the school, observing lessons and talking to teachers, support staff and pupils. I was able to watch a Ukulele lesson and also watch Foundation 2 using signing to greet each other and perform two songs, it was a pleasure to see them actively engaged in signing. I was privileged to observe a 'Personal Best' session delivered by Essential staff that the school have bought in. It is a programme that utilises the power of being physically active and achieving their own Personal Best to make positive changes to the emotional, social and mental health of young people, where groups take part in a carefully designed activity that focusses on social, emotional and mental health. The key message is always about each young person challenging themselves to be the best they can be. The groups may include those who struggle to engage, have increased anxiety, a lack of confidence or self-belief and a lack of enthusiasm towards being active. At the start of each programme, young people set themselves personal goals that they self-assess at the end of each week. A fantastic programme that is having a great impact on the pupils involved. I was also able to watch a 1:1 intervention session with a support worker and a non-verbal pupil who is making great progress and is supported by signing as part of the schools ongoing research project.

It was evident from conversations with the pupils during the tour and with representatives of the School Council that they have a real sense of belonging and pride in the school and their achievements and that they have wide ranging opportunities to be leaders in the school. Evidence of this was apparent in the new signs around the school and the displays in the learner friendly classrooms and displays about growth mindset that pupils designed. It was very clear from the conversations that they are regularly consulted and have a very strong voice. The school registered with the Junior Award Scheme for Schools (JASS) in 2018, a progressive learning programme for young people that recognises wider achievement that will support and enhance what the school offers, similar to the D of E award. It is evolving and could well be used to document and accredit pupil's leadership skills. During lunchtime I was able to visit 'The Sanctuary' a lunchtime club for identified vulnerable pupils where they can sit quietly, read or be involved in playing games. Pupils are actively encouraged to participate in games with staff and learn to take turns and socialise. However, it is also a safe space for pupils who do not or cannot access the noisier areas of school such as the playground at lunchtime.

It was a real pleasure to revisit Holy Cross Catholic Primary School and see the progress that they had made since their last review and follow their ongoing inclusion journey. This is a superb setting committed to providing the very highest standard of teaching and learning experiences for all involved. Fantastic care, nurture and support that are the foundations of inclusive practice and are a natural part of the schools fabric and that are enshrined in all elements of the IQM award are at the heart of everything that happens at the school and this is what makes Holy Cross such a special place and everyone involved should be commended for their superb efforts in this respect.

Having completed a rigorous and thorough review of their Flagship research Plan for 2018 - 19 and having discussed and agreed the continuation of their Flagship research plan for 2019-20 and having also discussed their second Flagship research Plan that will run alongside the current plan. There is a clear understanding that they will continue to be involved in and have the capacity to support and attend Cluster Group meetings as part of the TEAM NW Cluster. They attended the last meeting and will attend the next meeting in November. They clearly understand that their involvement will continue to form a significant part of their annual reviews. Therefore, I am of the opinion that Holy Cross Catholic Primary School remains a school with the Inclusion agenda at the very forefront of everything it provides for its pupils. The environment is superb providing a superb 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 and is reviewed again in one year's time.

**Assessor: Steve Gill**

**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 review, key information and documentary evidence relating to the school and its inclusive practice was looked at. I was able to scrutinise 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 Headteacher, Senior staff, a range of Staff, including teachers, support staff and pupils in meetings and around the school during lessons and at social times. As part of the review process a discussion and evaluation of the progress and impact of the Flagship research Plan for 2018-19 was undertaken, along with documentary scrutiny and opportunities to discuss the ongoing targeted Research Plans for 2019 -2020 with a variety of stakeholders. This included scrutiny of documentation presented by the staff in meetings related to their roles and expertise giving a comprehensive picture of the school's superb inclusive practice.

## Targeted Flagship Research Plan 2018 - 20:-

### Research Project

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

### Rationale

- The School Inclusion Manager participated in a ten-week course called 'Sing and Sign', 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, where pupil's join the school's foundation stage with an extremely low baseline in social, language and communication skills. To counter this deficit the school employs their own Speech and Language Therapists to meet the communication needs of the pupil's. This is an excellent intervention and the dedicated programme of support with language development is invaluable and the school see a different type of 'signing' programme slotting into place and Singing Hands would seem to fit the bill in this respect.
- Using signs to support the spoken language will provide pupils 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 can draw upon.

## 2018 – 19 Review

- The school have diligently begun to implement their two-year Flagship Research Plan, 'Singing Hands' – Using Makaton to support communication across the school



identified at their last review. They have provided a comprehensive summary of actions taken to meet the plan and the outcome of these actions despite a setback at the beginning in finding an appropriate training provider. They will continue to work towards completion of the research plan over the next twelve months.

### Flagship Status

- After lengthy discussions, scrutiny of evidence and forward planning during the review and understanding that Holy Cross continue to diligently address all 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 confirm that the school meets all of the criteria to continue to hold Flagship status and we have agreed the actions below. The following actions have been partially achieved and will be ongoing during the next review period forming the schools.

### **Research Plan for 2019-20:-**

- **To find a provider to offer Makaton (or similar language programme) training for staff initially in Foundation Stage and Year 1.**

An initial meeting was arranged with Talk About Town – an independent Speech and Language Therapy Service based in the Wirral that provides assessment and treatment for children with a variety of communication needs about offering staff training on Makaton or other similar signing scheme to be taught to staff back in September, however they were unable to facilitate such training. However, the DHT contacted Sign Along – the communication charity who provide trainers and resources to assist those with communication difficulties and EAL. Sign Along is a key word sign supported communication system based on BSL and is used in spoken word order, using speech, sign, body language, facial expression and voice tone to reference the link between sign and word. They have offered a package of Signing Training to be used within school that will begin in January 2020. It will be interesting to see how this has developed at the next review.

- **Staff Training to be arranged on Makaton/Sign training to staff members.**

Makaton is a language programme designed to provide a means of communication to individuals who cannot communicate efficiently by speaking. Signs are used with speech in spoken word order to help children communicate. Staff in Early Years and Year 1 engaged in the sign training in preparation to begin to use with pupils within their specific year groups. The In-house expertise of the DHT was used instead having experience of both signing and Makaton. Training was undertaken and this training has been with other members within the Foundation Stage. Further training will be developed by Sign Along this academic year with a minimum of six and a maximum of fourteen people to be trained.



- **Staff and pupils begin using Makaton/Signing as another type of communication within their setting.**

A Non-verbal child currently attends the Foundation Stage provision and is accessing every aspect of school life through signing and Makaton. Staff within his classroom are using signing to help communicate with him. Older children who are spending time with him are also actively learning basic signs to help support him in and around our school. This will continue to grow and evolve to help support the pupil and his peers access support and education whilst at Holy Cross.

- **Performances/assemblies so that children and staff can share their new skills.**

Year 1 and Foundation Stage will showcase their new skills during a performance for the school and parents 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, demonstrating 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. This may well lead to Makaton Ambassadors teaching other pupils Makaton/Signing; Ambassadors generating '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 and Ambassadors given time to generate resources and spend time with peers to demonstrate their acquired skills.

### **Review and Evaluation of Project to Date:-**

- Pupils and staff have been able to communicate more easily in the foundation stage and are able to access everything that is happening within school. The non-verbal pupils parents attend SALT within the school weekly and can see their child is happy and learning, communicating more successfully and building stronger relationships with his peers and staff as well as parents.

### **Expected outcomes 2019-2020**

- That through involvement in the Project outlined above, 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. As the project progresses over the next twelve months the school will conduct a review to see how effective the project has been. 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 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.

### **Second Targeted Flagship Research Plan 2019 – 20:-**

#### **Research Project**

- Using Augmented Reality to engage pupils in Literacy, particularly pupils with ADHD.

#### **Rationale**

- The schools Inclusion Lead attended a recent cluster meeting where Edge Hill University were presenting. During discussions about the presentation a discussion took place about further research being undertaken by the University. From this conversation and a discussion about Holy Cross, the school were asked to participate in a research project to look at how innovative technology can enable children with ADHD to make greater outcomes. Holy Cross have a number of pupils with ADHD and could see the benefit of being involved and therefore agreed to participate. The project will be Literacy based but using Augmented Reality to make the resources come to life. Questionnaires will be completed by staff and pupils before and after the workshops, to measure the impact of the innovative technology.

#### **Actions**

- Find out more about Edge Hills' current research about using on the innovative technology in learning for pupils with ADHD and their peers. This included meetings with the Principal Researcher from the Faculty of Education at Edge Hill University to discuss the outline of the project and also previewing documents and resources to be used in the project. This was undertaken in July 2019.
- Consent to be provided by parents/carers for research to be conducted. Edge Hill University provided the school lead with information sheets and consent forms, detailing the intent of the programme and the research and they have been disseminated to parents for completion prior to the AR Workshop. This was completed in September 2019.
- A workshop to be scheduled to work with Year 6 Pupils. The researcher will deliver the AR workshop to the Year 6 class, as 5 out of 26 pupils have ADHD diagnosis, with others currently being assessed. Pupil questionnaires will be completed before and after the half day workshop using AR with Artemis Fowl as a stimulus for the sessions. This will take place in late October 2019.
- Staff CPD in AR and other Innovative Technologies. The Researcher from Edge Hill University will deliver staff CPD on how to incorporate innovative technology into classes and lessons to engage pupils, particularly in pupils with ADHD. CPD will take place during staff meeting time or other Twilight sessions. It will be completed by the end of the spring term 2020.





- Feedback on finding of research from the researcher and Edge Hill University. Feedback on the results and findings from the project should be available 3 months after the workshop takes place. The school will then digest the resulting published research paper and see how the use of AR technology can be used in the curriculum to help break down barriers for children who find learning challenging. Spring, Summer term 2020.

### **Expected outcomes 2019-2020**

- For innovative technology to be used within all classrooms on a half-termly basis to compliment Literacy and other foundation subjects across the school. Review the benefit for ADHD pupils and their peers.

### **The school may wish to consider:-**

- During the review and in particular a discussion about the use of technology in schools pertaining to the above AR project it was suggested that Holy Cross might benefit from visiting a school who uses such technology superbly as part of their everyday offer. Therefore, it was suggested that they may wish to Contact Pikes Lane Primary School, Bolton in respect of the identified action - Contact details have been supplied.

**Assessor: Steve Gill**

**Date of Review: 16<sup>th</sup> October 2019**