

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Address: Millfield Avenue, East Cowes, East Cowes, Isle of Wight, PO32 6AS

Unique reference number (URN): 118198

Inspection report: 20 January 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Early years

Strong standard ●

All children in Reception benefit from a well-designed early years curriculum. The learning environment is highly purposeful, nurturing and language rich. Children engage confidently in a wide range of well-planned activities, both indoors and outdoors. In-the-moment adult interactions are very well matched to children's needs and move learning forward. Leaders ensure that clear processes are in place to pinpoint gaps in children's learning across the curriculum. This attention to detail, along with support from external agencies and parents and carers, ensures that children, including those who are disadvantaged or have additional needs, make secure progress from their starting points.

Children get a highly effective start in early reading, writing and mathematics. Delivery of the phonics scheme is precise. Children take part in activities such as a 'tricky words' treasure hunt, which captures their interest while skilfully developing reading and writing skills. Children's work demonstrates that they are developing early writing skills very well. In mathematics, staff knowledge of children enables them to carefully target those who need extra practice the most. This precise focus across all areas ensures that children are well prepared for the next stage in their learning when they move into Year 1.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

The personal development programme is a significant strength of the school and reflects leaders' clear vision for developing confident, well-rounded and responsible pupils. All pupils have access to and benefit considerably from this highly effective personal development programme. Leaders have carefully crafted a personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum that engages pupils very well. Pupils are able to articulate with confidence how they have learned about healthy relationships, money matters and their wider PSHE education. This helps them to make informed choices and prepare for life beyond school.

Pupils gain a well-developed understanding of healthy lifestyles and different faiths, contributing to respect and tolerance of others. Pupils express that everyone is completely welcome regardless of background or beliefs, reflecting a culture of genuine inclusion. Pupils also demonstrate a secure understanding of online safety, bullying, healthy habits and emotional regulation. Pupils receive high-quality emotional support and reflection time, which benefits all pupils, but particularly those with additional needs who can articulate clearly how it supports them. Pupils of all ages develop their leadership skills through, for example, the school council, sports leaders and 'playground pals'. This supports pupils to build confidence, responsibility and teamwork skills.

All pupils can access the school's wider curriculum offer. Disadvantaged and more vulnerable pupils particularly benefit from leaders' focus on increasing their cultural capital. Clubs such as drama, LEGO, magic, arts and crafts, choir and sports provide opportunities for all pupils to pursue interests and develop new talents. Community engagement is a hallmark of the school. For example, pupils sing publicly, visit care homes, participate in outreach events, and engage in fundraising for environmental projects such as creating a

wildlife pond. These experiences cultivate pupils' moral compass, social responsibility, empathy and pride in contributing to the wider community.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders have prioritised attendance and punctuality. Pupils' attendance is improving and has been above national averages over the last two terms. Attendance for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is close to the national average. This reflects leaders' careful understanding of the causes of absence and the support they put in place to improve attendance. They work closely with parents and carers to encourage regular attendance and address any barriers.

Pupils behave well at school. Leaders and staff have established a calm, orderly and supportive environment where pupils can learn and play together successfully. A clear culture of respect is evident, with staff knowing pupils well and providing high-quality pastoral care, including for vulnerable pupils. Across the school, attitudes to learning are positive, although engagement dips slightly for a few pupils in some year groups. Even so, most pupils follow established routines that enable them to focus on learning. When a pupil struggles to meet expectations, staff help them to calm, reflect and build their skills so they can manage similar situations in the future. Any unkind words or actions are dealt with appropriately to prevent repetition.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have embedded an effective inclusion strategy which benefits the pupils who require extra help with their learning. Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is cohesive and underpinned by high expectations and well-directed training. Assessment is used effectively to identify gaps and tailor targeted support. This is leading to focused support approaches which are delivered with increasing accuracy. These approaches are reviewed to ensure that support matches pupils' needs. Partnerships with external agencies ensure that expert advice can be implemented to support these pupils further. Parents and carers of pupils with SEND are highly positive about the school's responsiveness and involvement in their child's support.

The school has put in place a clear pupil premium strategy that is well thought through. It is based on evidence of what works well to support the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. It accounts for any challenges pupils face that may negatively affect their education and their readiness to engage with school. Leaders review the success of the strategy and make appropriate and timely adjustments.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Over time, pupils' attainment in reading and writing by the end of key stage 2 has been below national outcomes. Mathematics outcomes at the end of Year 6, including for disadvantaged pupils, also remain below national expectations. Leaders have responded by introducing a new, well-sequenced mathematics curriculum. However, it is too soon to see the full impact of this in published outcomes.

Younger pupils learn phonics well, with results consistently above the national average in the phonics screening check. In the past three years, no pupil has left key stage 1 without passing this check. Leaders have also strengthened the wider curriculum so that pupils build knowledge more securely across subjects. Pupils are beginning to achieve more successfully in these subjects. For example, pupils' thoughtful and careful artwork reflects the higher expectations of the recently revised art curriculum.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

There have been inconsistencies in how the curriculum has been taught across the school over time. This has meant that some pupils did not learn as securely as they should and did not make the progress they were capable of. This is particularly evident in some older pupils, who still have gaps in their learning. Leaders have since taken action to improve teaching and provide additional support for older pupils. However, these improvements are recent, and their full impact is not seen in outcomes for all pupils. As a result, gaps in knowledge remain, particularly for some older pupils.

Through recent staff training, teachers are improving how accurately they check what pupils know and can do. They use this information to identify what pupils need to learn next. Early reading, writing and mathematics are particularly well taught in the younger year groups. This gives pupils a secure start in these subjects on which to build as they move through the school. As a result, pupils are becoming more confident and articulate learners as they progress through the school. Other subjects, such as art and history, are taught well across the school.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

Over the past few years, decisions made by leaders and governors to improve the curriculum and teaching did not lead to rapid enough improvement in pupils' outcomes. As a result, some pupils have not left the school with the quality of education they should have received. There have been recent leadership, staffing and governance changes, and the structure is now more stable. Leaders are continuing to monitor and evaluate areas that require rapid improvement, particularly the consistency of teaching, so that this work leads to better published outcomes. However, the impact of these changes is still emerging.

Despite these past weaknesses, decisions are currently made with care, putting pupils' best interests at the heart of the school's work. Governors meet their statutory duties and maintain secure oversight of safeguarding. They scrutinise attendance, provision for

vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils, and the use of funding carefully. This work has contributed to improving attendance and strengthening support for vulnerable pupils. Leadership capacity is growing. Leaders prioritise staff development through a clear, strategic approach that targets the right support to the right staff. Leaders and governors remain mindful of workload and wellbeing. As a result, staff are positive about working at the school. Parents and carers are also positive and frequently comment on the caring ethos and dedicated staff who make their child's experience a happy one.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils enjoy coming to school. Leaders ensure that pupils are safe and receive the care and support they need to feel settled and ready to learn. They create an environment where pupils feel valued and confident to ask for help when they need it. Pupils with disadvantages or vulnerabilities are well looked after through the school's pastoral support.

Over time, the curriculum and teaching have been less than secure. This has meant that some pupils have not learned as well as they should and have not achieved the outcomes they were capable of. Leaders know this and have taken action to improve the curriculum. There are still some inconsistencies in teaching. Some older pupils have gaps in their learning because these improvements are recent. In early years, the curriculum is a strength and children get off to a positive start. Children build important early knowledge and skills.

Leaders place pupils' personal development at the heart of the school's work. The school's approach aligns with its values of kindness, confidence and excellence, which pupils demonstrate in their daily interactions. Pupils learn valuable information and can clearly explain how to keep themselves safe and physically and mentally healthy. They demonstrate how to be responsible citizens in their community. Disadvantaged and more vulnerable pupils benefit considerably from this offer. Pupils show polite manners and speak positively about their school, their peers and their teachers. Pupils' behaviour in class and around the school is calm and orderly. In class, most pupils are engaged well in their learning. Bullying is very rare, but when disagreements occur, pupils know that staff will support them. In terms of their personal development, pupils leave primary school well prepared for secondary school.

Next steps

- Leaders and governors need to monitor, challenge and support the curriculum and pupils' achievement with greater rigour and consistency so that improvements lead to rapid progress across the school.
 - Leaders must ensure that high-quality teaching is delivered consistently across the school so that pupils, particularly older pupils, close gaps in their knowledge quickly.
 - Leaders should ensure that attendance remains consistently above national expectations for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and that pupils' behaviour is consistent across all areas of the school.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Wayne Baker.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors met with the headteacher and other leaders within the school. The lead inspector also met with governors, including the chair of the governing board, a representative from the diocese and an educational representative from the local authority.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character. The last Section 48 inspection was carried out by the Catholic Schools Inspectorate in March 2025.

Over the past few years, there have been changes to key leadership positions. The current headteacher started her role in January 2024, while the chair of governors was elected in September 2025.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher: Lucie Banks

Lead inspector:

Chris Parker, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Rachel Goplen, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 20 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

148

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

210

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

16.22%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

1.35%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

10.14%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	36%	61%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	35%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	50%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	29%	60%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	62%	74%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	65%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	71%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	54%	73%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	57%	72%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	61%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	79%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	38%	71%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	58%	73%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	58%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	50%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	63%	73%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	15%	46%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	11%	47%	Below
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23 (final)	17%	44%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	50%	62%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	44%	63%	Below
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23 (final)	33%	60%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	55%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	67%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (final)	33%	58%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	35%	60%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	33%	61%	Below
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	50%	59%	Close to average

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	15%	68%	-53 pp
2024/25 (revised)	11%	69%	-58 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	17%	66%	-50 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	50%	80%	-30 pp
2024/25 (revised)	44%	81%	-36 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23 (final)	33%	78%	-45 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	55%	78%	-23 pp
2024/25 (revised)	67%	78%	-12 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	33%	77%	-44 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	35%	80%	-45 pp
2024/25 (revised)	33%	81%	-47 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23 (final)	50%	79%	-29 pp

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	4.0%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	5.0%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.8%	5.9%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	7.7%	13.3%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	10.1%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	12.9%	16.2%	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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