

Holy Cross



Girls' Primary School Belfast



School Prospectus

Principal's Message...

Dear Parent

Welcome to Holy Cross Girls' Primary School. Choosing the right school for your child is an important responsibility for you as a parent and we are very aware of the trust you place in us. We hope this prospectus gives you a sense of the unique and exceptional educational opportunities provided for the children in Holy Cross Girls' and helps you make the best choice for your child.

Holy Cross Girls' is a thriving school full of learning, laughter and friendship. Children are at the heart of our school. Our committed teachers and learning support assistants provide the highest possible standard of education in a safe, friendly environment in which our children are able to grow in confidence and to learn and to develop their talents and abilities in preparation for tomorrow's world and their future in it. Our children are happy, feel

safe and valued and are encouraged to do their best, whatever their individual needs.

Central to our ethos is our Catholic identity. We have strong links to our parish and have dedicated priests to help prepare the children for the sacraments. We are an all inclusive school and welcome children from other faiths and cultures. Our Values Education Programme, Global Links Programme and charity work encourage the children to demonstrate equality for all and help them to become responsible young adults.

In Holy Cross Girls' we take our task very seriously and assure you that we encourage the same high standard from your child as you do yourself. We encourage the whole hearted support and involvement of parents in the education of their children and welcome parents into the school as part of the school family.

I would, therefore, invite you to come to visit our school so that you may experience for yourself the unique, caring atmosphere which is evident as soon as you enter our school and see the variety of opportunities on offer for our children. I look forward to meeting you.

Mrs Maura McNally (Principal)

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Mission Statement...



Holy Cross Girls' is a Catholic primary school whose mission is to provide a secure and challenging learning environment where each child can grow into a self-confident, highly educated, resourceful and faith inspired young person.

A place where parents feel welcome and become empowered to help in their child's education.

An environment where staff feel encouraged in an atmosphere of mutual support and everyone is challenged to be the best that they can be.

Teaching Staff



Mrs M McNally
Principal



Mrs K Owens
Vice-principal



Mrs G McElroy



Mrs C O'Neill



Mrs B Boyle



Ms M Lagan



Miss C Magill



Miss L McCann



Mrs C Savage



Ms A Shannon
Learning Support Officer



Mrs A Lavery
Music Teacher

Board of Governors

Rev. Fr. E McCarthy
Mrs A Tanney
Ms C McKeown
Mrs C Brennan
Mrs C McCloskey
Mrs E Gormley
Mrs K Owens
Mrs J Taggart

Classroom Assistants

Mrs E McGinn
Mrs R Felloni
Mrs J Larkin
Miss C McNally
Miss M Mervyn
Mrs M Cheung

Support Staff

Secretary: Mrs M Byrne
Caretaker: Mr S Wylie

Facilities

Holy Cross Girls' is the parish girls' school. It is situated on an elevated site with fantastic views over Belfast and Belfast Lough.

The school is well equipped to meet the challenges of modern education. All classrooms are well resourced with the latest technology including Interactive whiteboards, iPads, laptops, and digital cameras which are used to bring education and learning alive. We have a fully equipped ICT suite accommodating 12 computers, 4 laptops and Apple TV.

Our children are
our most valuable
resource...



The school has a well stocked library and music room, dedicated learning support rooms and activity based play areas.

Our PE facilities include a fully equipped PE hall, indoor and outdoor netball court, and an extensive soft surface pitch. Our junior playground has a purpose built climbing frame, outdoor play equipment and area designated for our new garden.

We have a separate canteen and lunch room as well as a comfortable Parent Hub and parent study room.



The school has undergone significant and recent refurbishment to the school building and playgrounds which enhances greatly the learning environment.

{ETI: 2015}

School Day

Our Breakfast Club opens at 8.15am to provide a hot breakfast. Girls not going to Breakfast Club are supervised in the assembly hall.

8.15am Breakfast club
9.00am Children enter their classroom

9.15am Lessons begin

10.30-10.45 Breaktime

12.15pm-1.00pm Lunchtime
2.15pm School finishes for P1 – P3

3.00pm School finishes for P4 – P7



A shuttle Bus service is available every morning from 8.30am and at hometime at 2.15pm and 3.00pm at no cost.

Bus stops are: Etna Drive, Berwick Road and Ardoyne Shops.

After-school clubs

2.15pm-3.00pm P1 – P3
After school activity clubs

(School bus is available at 3pm)

3.00pm – 4.00pm P4 – P7
After school clubs



School Uniform

Wearing the school uniform gives our children a sense of pride and belonging.

Children are required to wear:

- Navy pleated skirt/pinafore
- (Red/white gingham dress for summer)
- White blouse
- Red jumper/cardigan
- Red tie
- Red, navy or white socks/tights
- Black flat shoes



P.E. Uniform (P3-P7)

- White PE shirt
- Plain navy shorts/track bottoms
- Trainers/plimsolls

For Primary 5-Primary 7 weekly swimming lessons a one piece swim suit must be worn.

Children in P1 and P2 only require black plimsolls for PE which will be kept in school.



A School coat with school logo is compulsory and can be bought in the school office.



Pastoral Care

In Holy Cross Girls', children feel safe and secure and know what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being. Their safety and happiness is paramount. There is a trusting relationship between children, teachers and Principal and the children know that they can discuss any problems or difficulties they have. We have a specialist counsellor who works within the school every Tuesday and Thursday if children or parents require additional help.

We have a comprehensive Child Protection Policy (including children with medical needs). Our designated teacher, Mrs McElroy and deputy designated teacher, Mrs McNally have undergone child protection training and ensure that procedures are updated regularly. All staff working in the school attend child protection training every 2 years.

“The quality of the provision for Pastoral care is outstanding. The children benefit from the positive working relationships at all levels, the strong family ethos and the holistic support for each child.”
(ETI March 2015)



Pupils supporting each other...

Pupils learn to help each other within the school through our P2 Playground Buddy Scheme, our P4 Playground Pals and our P7 Prefects. This encourages the children to be kind and helpful to each other and creates a caring, family atmosphere in the school.

School of Sanctuary

We are delighted that we have been awarded the prestigious School of Sanctuary Award. This is given to a school that is committed to being a safe and welcoming place for all.



A place where children feel cared for and valued and empowered to be the best that they can be regardless of culture, creed or ability. The award recognises all the work that the school does within the community. Work carried out with Bradley Manor Care Home, FISCA, Concorde, Flax Centre, Men's Shed, WISP and many more. Everyone in the community has been recognised for their involvement in making Holy Cross Girls' a School of Sanctuary.



Positive Discipline

In Holy Cross Girls' we provide a safe and secure environment where the children are happy as they learn and are praised and recognised for their achievements.

The school has a comprehensive Positive Behaviour Policy incorporating areas such as Anti-Bullying and Discipline.

Pupils are encouraged to...
Show self-discipline, care, consideration and courtesy for others.

Each class teacher encourages self-esteem and self-discipline and operates a reward system for individual effort and achievement in her classroom.

Every week a Girl of the Week for each class is recognised at assembly as are the weekly birthday girls. Their photographs are displayed in the school entrance hall.

Children who have received awards or certificates outside school bring them along to the assembly for recognition.

The behaviour of the children is exemplary: they are polite and helpful to each other and to visitors. The children demonstrate excellent personal and social skills, supporting each other in class and at play.
(ETI March 2015)



Attendance certificates are presented at the end of each term as well as prizes for best class attendance.

The school takes a proactive approach by having in place a Values Education Programme. Every year our P7s take part in the Junior Entrepreneur Programme.



Special Education Needs

As an all-inclusive school, we understand that while most children may confidently access the curriculum some others may find difficulty and need extra support to reach their potential.



In Holy Cross Girls' children who require additional support with their learning are identified at an early stage through extensive assessment and teacher observation.

The teachers write clear targets for individual education plans that are implemented well in the classroom and in a range of additional support lessons from the very highly skilled support team. (ETI March 2015)

Our Learning Support Co-ordinator works closely with parents, pupils, staff and outside agencies to plan and track the effectiveness of the support which may be within a group or individual support with a specialist teacher.

The school has a fully qualified Reading Recovery teacher, 2 fully qualified Maths Recovery teachers and offers many programmes such as Accelerated Reading Programme, Paired Reading, Izak 9 Maths, ALTA Maths, Reading Partnership etc which develop children's self-esteem and encourage their enjoyment in learning.

"All children need a little help, a little hope and someone who believes in them."

The Curriculum...



Language and Literacy

Talking & Listening/Reading/Writing



World Around Us

Science & Technology/History/Geography



The Arts

Art & Design/Music/Drama



Physical Activity



Mathematics and Numeracy

Learning & Applying Concepts.



Personal Development & Mutual Understanding

Emotional & Social Development

Our staff aim to maximise the potential of each child.

They encourage a positive attitude to learning to develop self-confidence and promote a spirit of tolerance and respect for others.



“In the effective practice, the teachers’ planning is comprehensive. Lessons are well planned and differentiated appropriately, with good pace and progression.”

ETI March 2015- Learning and applying concepts

Skills Development

Teachers concentrate on the development of the skills which empower the children to be responsible for their own learning.

Cross Curricular Skills

- Using Communication
- Using Mathematics
- Using ICT

Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities

- Thinking, Problem Solving and Decision Making
- Self-Management
- Working with Others
- Managing Information
- Being Creative

I.C.T.

Considerable investment has been placed in ICT with computers, interactive whiteboards, iPads and many other devices which enhance learning. We believe that ICT competence is necessary for pupils who will be living and working in an information based society. Therefore ICT is an integral part of the curriculum. We provide a range of opportunities so that pupils can develop their competence in the use of technology – coding, Minecraft, animation, Hive Hackers.

Pupils are encouraged to apply for the position of “Digital Leaders” so that they can use their experience to support others in the school.



“The children demonstrate high levels of competence in ICT and there are many displays of their skilful work throughout the school.” ETI 2015

We were delighted to receive the Digital Schools NI Award which celebrates the hard work undertaken in the area of ICT.



Assessment

Our staff employ a range of assessment measures, to inform their planning and to provide parents with a picture of their child's progress.

Staff continually carry out observations as children work individually or during group work to assess progress.

Classroom tasks, Standardised Literacy/ Numeracy tests, Computer Based Testing, End of Key Stage Assessment and COMET tests are used throughout the year to identify progress.

All the results are analysed by the Senior Management Team and teaching adapted to make sure all children make suitable progress.



“The whole staff have embedded a highly effective cycle of self-evaluation designed to improve the standards across the school and ensure that each child reaches her full potential.”

(ETI March 2015)

“The improvement process makes outstanding use of the extensive internal school data relating to learning and teaching.”

(ETI March 2015)



Religious Education

The Catholic ethos of the school comes from the Christian principle of love. Our children are our most wonderful gift.

Holy Cross Girls' is the parish school for girls and has close connections with the community. Children participate in all parish celebrations and attend Holy Cross Church for the reception of the sacraments. Primary 4 children and their parents attend mass on a monthly basis as part of the Do This In Memory of Me Programme in preparation for First Holy Communion. We carry out activities during Catholic Schools Week - the most popular being our special Grandparents' Day which is enjoyed by all.

In school, prayer is seen as an essential part of school life, to praise God and to put before Him our needs and the needs of our community.

The Grow in Love religious programme is followed throughout the school and our school chaplain visits each week to support the children in their religious development.

Our Values Education Programme introduces basic Christian values and helps children to value and respect others:

Respect

Truthfulness

Justice

Duty

Responsibility

Compassion

Forgiveness



Outdoor Learning

We have recently developed our Key Stage One Outdoor Learning Space. P1-3 pupils have the opportunity to observe, experiment and play in our outdoor classroom, complete with mud kitchen, playhouse and water activity centre.

A Shared Education Programme with P1 and P2 in Holy Cross Girls' and Wheatfield Primary School has begun to develop outdoor learning in both schools.



Our School Garden

Our school garden, with poly tunnel, has been developed with support from WISP "Let it Grow" and Men's Shed. It provides opportunities for all pupils to plant and grow all year round and use the produce during cooking sessions in class with pupils and parents. We are delighted to hold the RHS School Gardening Award Level 5.



Extra Curricular Activities

Holy Cross Girls' offers an extensive range of extra curricular activities including weekly School of Music tuition in clarinet, flute and violin as well as Spanish and Irish lessons and a variety of sporting activities provided by experienced coaches.



After School Clubs

In addition after school activities run after school hours. There is something for everyone and we are always open to suggestions for new activities.

Clubs are organised by staff and outside agencies. They run from 3pm – 4pm for Primary 4 – Primary 7 and are free of charge for pupils.

Children from P5 onward have the opportunity to join the school choir and compete in competitions such as FISCA cross community competition as well as sing in the local care homes for the elderly and local shopping centres to raise funds for charity.

All the talents of the children are valued and nurtured...

The children are encouraged to take part in the activities which help them to learn new skills, make new friends and develop their talents.

Primary 1, 2 & 3 stay after school too!

Primary 1 – Primary 3 Activity Club operates each day from 2.15pm – 3pm. Children attending this club may go home on the school bus at 3pm.



There is something for everyone to enjoy!

Dance

Coding

Film Club

Art and Craft

Orchestra

Choir

Gardening

Netball

Badminton

ICT



Parental Involvement

Communications

Parents are kept up-to-date on school matters and informed about changes to school routines or policies through:

- Text Service
- Facebook page
- School Website
- Schools NI App



www.holycrossgirls.com

All parents receive summary policies at the beginning of the school year. Policies can be requested from the school office and will be available on the school website.

Complaints...

The website has our Complaints Procedure, for any parent who wishes to express an opinion concerning the welfare of their child.

www.holycrossgirls.com

Reporting to Parents

Parents are invited to attend a Curriculum Meeting in September and an Individual Parent Meeting in November and receive a Pupil Profile which details their child's progress at the end of each school year.



Through the eyes of our parents

I believe that the encouraging guidance that my child has received during her time at Holy Cross has helped her to become such a confident and out going child.

I cannot speak highly enough of the school. It's second to none.

I have NEVER come across a better school than Holy Cross Girls'!

Teachers believe in every child and don't give up when she's not learning as fast as other kids.

An excellent school in which my daughter is learning greatly and her confidence is growing daily.

Holy Cross Girls' has a big part not just in their schooling but their attitude and outlook in home and beyond.

A Parish school...

Holy Cross Girls' provides a high standard of education and care and has an excellent reputation in the community.

Pre-schools

Our local Nursery School and Playgroups enjoy visiting our school for our concert at Halloween and Nativity Play at Christmas. We hold Open Days in the first term when parents of nursery age children may visit and see first-hand the education on offer.

Our Primary 1 teacher visits the new children in their pre-school setting in May to get to know them before the Primary 1 Induction Day when the children visit us to spend time playing in their new classroom.

Primary Schools

Holy Cross Girls' joins the boys parish school, Holy Cross Boys', for the reception of the sacraments and for all the parish celebrations including The Feast of the Holy Cross.

Post Primary Schools

Throughout the year Mercy College deliver a Transition Programme to our Primary 7 pupils.

Primary 6 and Primary 7 attend a range of activity days in Dominican College, Fortwilliam, St Dominic's Grammar School and Mercy College.



Community Links

Each year the school values the contribution made by Supporting Families NI in providing classes for P1 parents in Food Values, Healthy Eating Programme in Primary 2, Self Esteem Programme in Primary 4 and Moving On Transition Programme in Primary 7.

Cross Community

PeacePlayers International deliver cross community basketball coaching with our girls and the children from Wheatfield Primary School.

We have just begun a Shared Education programme with Primary 1 and Primary 2 to develop our outdoor play with Primary 1 and Primary 2 in Wheatfield Primary School.

Our Parish School

Our School Choir are holders of the FISCA Tom Foley cup for "most promising junior choir" and regularly perform with the City of Belfast Youth Orchestra.

Pupils are involved each year in our Intergenerational Programme with our partners, Bradley Manor Care Home. The pupils and residents have together participated in a gardening project, reminiscence sessions as well as an art project, with work displayed in the care home. The pupils are trained in Dementia Awareness and have been awarded Dementia Aware certificates. We are proud of our work with our parish partners.

Pupil Voice...

Holy Cross Girls' prides itself on being a happy, welcoming school where the children contribute well to the decision-making process. We believe this is important for their self-esteem and sense of responsibility.

The Pupil Eco Council, has worked hard to earn the school GREEN FLAG STATUS. The council encourages the pupils to be responsible for their own health and to be aware of their environmental responsibility.



Eco Council



Digital Leaders

“We made soup with leeks and potatoes from our garden. It was yummy!”

“Children contribute well to the decision making process within the school”
(ETI March 2015)

We have a school Pupil Council made up of pupils elected from each class. Pupils are consulted on whole school issues and their ideas and suggestions are respected and valued.

Our Digital Leaders programme helps children develop confidence and leadership skills. They also provide meaningful support to teachers and other pupils throughout the school.

“I feel smart when I help the teachers and classes with their work on the iPads.”



Student Council

“Our school garden looks great. I love planting and eating the food we grow.”

“We have new benches in our playground – thanks to our School Council who talked to Mrs McNally.”

Making Successful Learners **Confident Individuals** Responsible Citizens

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