



Prospectus

Holy Cross Girls' Primary School



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

www.holycrossgirls.com

A young girl with brown hair, wearing a red school uniform, is smiling at the camera. She is sitting at a red table with educational toys. In front of her is a wooden tray with six compartments, each containing a green frog-shaped toy. To her right are several circular wooden tokens with numbers on them. In the foreground, there is a large pile of colorful (red, blue, yellow, green) geometric shapes. A speech bubble is overlaid on the left side of the image.

I have NEVER
come across a
better school
than Holy Cross
Girls! {Parent}



PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

Dear Parent/Guardian,

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 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 Kathy Owens, Principal.

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

{ETI: 2015}



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 15 computers, Chromebooks, Surface pros and a 3D printer.

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, dedicated outdoor learning and fairy garden. We have an extensive school garden, which includes growing beds and a poly-tunnel.

We are delighted to have a new multi-media suite which has been created in conjunction with our local parish.

Our children are our most valuable resource...

SCHOOL DAY

Our breakfast club opens at 8am to provide our children with a hot breakfast.

8.00	Breakfast club
8.45	Children enter their classroom
9.00am	Lessons begin
10.30-10.45	Breaktime
12.15pm-1.00pm	Lunchtime
2.00pm	School finishes for P1 – P3
3.00pm	School finishes for P4 – P7

After school clubs

A variety of after school activities are available from 2-4pm each day.



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

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

PE Uniform (P4-P7)

White PE shirt

Plain navy shorts/track bottoms

Trainers/plimsolls

For Primary 4 – Primary 7 swimming lessons a one piece swim suit must be worn.

Children in P1-3 only require black plimsolls in PE which will be kept in school.



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 attends 2 days per week 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 Owens 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.

Pupils Supporting Each Other

Pupils learn to help each other within the school through our P7 Prefects and Digital Leaders programme. 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, Concorde Community Centre, Flax Centre, Men's Shed, WISPTAMHI and many more. Everyone in the community has been recognised for their involvement in making Holy Cross Girls' a School of Sanctuary.

Being Well, Doing Well

We are an EA Being Well, Doing Well school. The school provides support for pupils' emotional Health and Well-Being including: the curriculum, extra-curricular provision, pastoral care, counselling, a variety of initiatives, interventions and targeted support.



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: 2015}



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.

Each class teacher encourages self-esteem and self-discipline and operates a reward system for individual effort and achievement in her classroom. The school also takes a proactive approach by having in place a Values Education Programme.

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 and on school social media sites.

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

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

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

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: 2015]



Both my girls love Holy Cross Girls', staff are very helpful and friendly and I feel it is a great and safe environment for my children to learn.
[Parent]

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL 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.

We have a custom-made sensory room, which is available to pupils.

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, Izac9 Maths, Freckle Maths, Reading Partnership, Ready to Learn 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.



Learning in the caring and supportive environment, the children gain self confidence in their skills and are involved well in setting their own targets as well as regularly evaluating their progress and achievements. {ETI: 2015}

CURRICULUM

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.

AREAS OF LEARNING:



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



In the effective practice, the teachers' planning is comprehensive. Lessons are well planned and differentiated appropriately, with good pace and progression. [ETI: 2015 - Learning and applying concepts.]

USING ICT

We are committed to considerable investment in our Using ICT curriculum, to deal with the ever evolving world we live in, including computers, chromebooks, interactive whiteboards, Surface Pros, iPads and a 3D printer. We believe that ICT competence is necessary for pupils who will be living and working in a digital environment. Therefore Using ICT is an integral part of the curriculum. We provide a range of opportunities so that pupils can develop their skills in areas such as Digital Art and Design, Coding, Managing Data, Digital Audio and Digital Storytelling. We have a new multi-media suite, which has been developed in collaboration with our local parish.

We use the Seesaw online learning tool to communicate with parents, as well as to allow pupils to showcase their work in school and at home. We have a number of trained Seesaw Ambassadors on our staff, as well as a Seesaw Certified Educator and an Apple Teacher.

Pupils are encouraged to apply for the position of "Digital Leader" so that they can use their experience to support others in the school. Primary 6 pupils are also able to work with Microsoft Dream Space as part of their Digital Ambassadors programme, where they learn new skills and also get the opportunity to pass these on to other pupils.

We have received the Digital Schools NI Award, which celebrates the hard work undertaken in the area of ICT. Our ICT co-ordinators have been involved in working with CCEA to develop an online hub to support and promote the use of ICT in primary schools across the country.



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



ASSESSMENT

Our staff employ a range of assessment measures as part of measuring the development of children, 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 testing, Literacy and Numeracy tests, Star Reading tests and Rising Stars Mental Maths tests, along with End of Key Stage Assessments are used throughout the school to identify progress. We work alongside CCEA, participating in a number of programmes, including recent pilots for Primary 7 Numeracy and Literacy assessment.

All the results are analysed by the Senior Management Team and teaching is 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: 2015}

The improvement process is highly inclusive of the school community, and makes outstanding use of the extensive internal school data relating to learning and teaching.

{ETI: 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 Him before our needs and the needs of our community.

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

Respect
Truthfulness

Justice
Duty
Forgiveness

Responsibility
Compassion

It is followed throughout the school and our school chaplain visits each week to support the children in their religious development.

We also follow 'The Flourish Programme', an RSE resource for use in Catholic Primary Schools on the island of Ireland. It aims to view the subject through a Catholic lens, fostering respect for self and others and helping the child, with the support of their family, to develop a moral compass.



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



OUTDOOR LEARNING

We love to extend our learning to the outdoors. We are an accredited Forest School with 4 of our teachers from the Foundation Stage right through to Key Stage 2 holding Forest School Level 3 Leader Awards from Northern Ireland Forest School Association. We are also a Nature Rangers school, providing an after-school programme.

Our children have the opportunity to use our school's wonderful outdoor spaces to experience everything from campfire cooking and den making, to gardening and nature spotting, with a lot more in between. Parents are frequently invited to join in our outdoor learning activities.

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



EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Holy Cross Girls' offers an extensive range of extra curricular activities including weekly Music tuition in flute, violin and tin whistle as well as 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 both staff and outside agencies. They run from 2pm-3pm for P1-3, and 3pm – 4pm for P4 –7.

Children from P5 onwards have the opportunity to join the school choir and compete in competitions, and perform at events including the Peace Proms Concert, as well as sing in the local care homes for the elderly and local shopping centres to raise funds for charity.

Our school Netball team compete in the Belfast Schools League and are coached by a Netball NI coach.

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!

A Primary 1 – Primary 3 Activity Club operates each day from 2.00pm – 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 & Craft |
| Orchestra | Football | Choir | Gardening |
| Netball | Camogie | Gymnastics | Transfer Test Coaching |



PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

COMMUNICATIONS

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

News Letters

Text Service

Facebook page

School Website:

www.holycrossgirls.com

Schools NI App

Seesaw

Twitter

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.

We regularly send surveys via Google Forms to our parents.

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. They receive a Pupil Profile which details their child's progress at the end of each school year.

PARENT COURSES

We regularly provide activities and courses for our parents which they thoroughly enjoy. Parents are also regularly invited to join class activities.



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 variety of transition workshops with Primary 7 in our school.

COMMUNITY LINKS

Each year the school values the contribution made by Ardoyne/ Shankill Partnership in providing classes for parents as well as a range of education programmes, a Healthy Eating Programme in Primary 2, a Self-Esteem programme in Primary 5 and the Moving On Transition Programme in Primary 7.

We work closely with NBWISP, who continue to support us to develop our school garden, and provide gardening classes throughout the year.

TAMHI (Tackling Awareness of Mental Health Issues) deliver Mental Health activities to our pupils, and encourage our pupils to deliver activities to younger classes in the school.


Our Primary 7 girls work with Women's Tec in their 'Not Just for Boys' Programme, which allows the girls to experience traditional male dominated jobs, such as bricklaying and car mechanics.

CROSS COMMUNITY

CRIS deliver cross community activities with our girls and the children from Wheatfield PS.

Our girls also enjoy working with PeacePlayers International, who deliver cross community basketball coaching with the children from Wheatfield Primary School.

We are continuing with our highly successful Shared Education programme with all classes in Wheatfield Primary School.



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 outgoing child.
[Parent]

PUPIL VOICE

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

The pupil Eco-Council continue to work hard to maintain our GREEN FLAG STATUS. The council encourages the pupils to be responsible for their own health and to be aware of their environmental responsibility.

"Children contribute well to the decision-making process within the school." ETI March 2015

We have a Pupil Council composed 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 and Dream Space Ambassadors Programmes help our pupils to develop confidence and leadership skills. They also provide meaningful support to teachers and other pupils throughout the school.





We have new equipment in the MUGA – thanks to our School Council who worked with Ms Shannon.

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



This school is the heart of our community. From every staff member to the parents, it's just overall the best place for children. {Parent}

Prospectus

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