

# St Philip Howard Catholic Primary School

Woods Avenue, Hatfield, Herts, AL10 8NN

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 11 November 2021



## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### A. Classroom religious education is good

- A good curriculum is offered that actively engages pupils and is based on the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*.
- Most pupils make good progress in their knowledge of the Catholic faith.
- Attainment is as good as in other core subjects.
- Pupils' attitude to learning is good, and this contributes to the progress they make.
- The typicality of teaching is good.
- Leadership ensures staff are well supported, teaching is monitored over time and there are good systems in place to support teachers.
- The contribution of religious education to the Catholic life of the school is strong. Religious education permeates all aspects of learning in this school.
- The link governor for religious education is actively involved in the school and contributes effectively to the subject.

### Classroom religious education is not yet outstanding because

- There are missed opportunities to use scripture to create links and deepen pupils' understanding of topics taught.

### B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- Senior leaders lead by example and so pupils have experiences of Catholic life that provide them with a deep understanding of what it means to live according to Catholic faith and traditions.
- Religious education has a high priority in this school and leaders ensure that resources supplement their vision for the subject as the heart of the curriculum.
- Worship and prayer are central to the life of the school and pupils experience a prayer life that encompasses the richness of Catholic tradition.
- Pupils express their gifts and talents as they plan and creatively enhance collective acts of worship.
- Leaders' engagement with the Common Good results in pupils having a deep understanding of Catholic social teaching.
- There are excellent systems in place to support new staff and develop existing staff thereby contributing to the Catholic life of the school.
- Governors make a significant contribution to the work and Catholic dimension of the school.
- Leadership is the driving force in the school's commitment to the education of young people.

## A. Classroom Religious Education

### What has improved since the last inspection?

Key points from the last inspection were to improve the teaching and learning still further by ensuring teachers provide activities that are well matched to pupils' abilities, particularly the most able and to ensure new members of staff are given support and training to develop their understanding of the levels of attainment and the school's moderation procedures.

The school has provided a curriculum for religious education that is progressive and well matched to pupils' abilities. Inspectors observed teachers using questioning techniques that challenged more able pupils. Systems have been implemented to address assessment in lessons. New members of staff are very well supported to deepen their knowledge of Catholic education and moderation procedures have been effectively addressed.

### The content of classroom religious education is good

The content of the religious education curriculum of St. Philip Howard meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory. The school uses the scheme *The Way, The Truth and The Life* effectively and supplements this programme with 'Caritas in Action' to ensure a programme of study that is meaningful and relevant to pupils. The school recognises that a creative approach in religious education is needed to meet the needs of all pupils particularly after recent lockdowns and this was evident in some of the lessons observed. The programme of study has carefully considered global influences and related the emerging outcomes of COP 26 to Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si* thereby enabling pupils to consider world events from a Catholic viewpoint.

Delivery of content is structured to ensure progression and in the best observed examples scripture was used to enable pupils to work at a deep level and make strong links between the Word and their learning in class.

### Pupil achievement in religious education is good

The school has worked hard during the COVID lockdown to continue to moderate pupil progress against other deanery and diocesan schools via zoom. This work has ensured that pupil progress is measured against appropriate benchmarks and attainment is as good as in other core subjects.

The school has implemented a new system to facilitate feedback because of key recommendations from its last inspection and there is evidence that this is having a good effect in addressing misconceptions. In observations, it was noted that the school has begun to ensure pupils further deepen their understanding by linking scripture in lessons and using 'big questions' to delve deeper. However, this was not consistent practice. The new class feedback system ensures teachers consider previous pupil outcomes and in best practice observed, reflection on previous learning was effective in enabling pupils to gain a deeper understanding of the topic. Where teachers allowed reflection time to address misconceptions and posed big questions to challenge further, pupils made good progress and had a clear understanding of how to improve their work.

Pupils' attitude to learning is consistently positive, they like to discuss issues raised in class and do so effectively. In an observed Year 6 lesson, pupils were discussing injustice. Their use of religious literacy as they debated demonstrated high levels of achievement. There are high expectations of good behaviour, pupils are very attentive and actively engaged. In a Year 5 lesson scripture was used effectively, pupils read Genesis 6:18-21 and used the passage to understand Noah and discuss the meaning of the word covenant.

## **The quality of teaching is good**

Teaching is consistently good. In a Year 1 lesson observed, good quality questioning as well as effective use of scripture engaged pupils and encouraged deeper learning on the topic of Remembrance. Pupils related the symbol of the cross to the symbol of the poppy and considered the sacrifice Jesus made to save us and the sacrifice made by soldiers who died for our freedom.

In a Year 3 lesson observed, the children reflected on previous learning to reinforce their understanding of the psalms. This lesson focused on stewardship linking learning to Genesis 1:28-31 and asking pupils to consider their responsibilities to look after our common home. Most pupils make good progress over time; however, questioning does not always provide opportunities to delve deeper and further challenge pupils in class.

Teachers plan lessons considering the world in which their pupils live. The recent lockdown has impacted pupils' lives and because of this, teachers have adapted their lessons accordingly. COP 26, which at the time of the inspection was taking place in Glasgow, was considered and used effectively in planning the topic of stewardship to provide hope as pupils learned how world leaders are attempting to help our planet. In an observed Year 4 lesson this was linked to St. Francis of Assisi and scripture. There is a positive climate in lessons and pupils are eager to do well.

During lockdown, pupils had learning grids to access their learning in RE and homework continues to contribute well to pupils' learning. Pupils take pride in their religious education work, and their books reflect this.

## **The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education is good**

The school has two RE leaders, one of whom has been in post since September. She is ably supported in her new role by senior leaders who have a clear commitment to, and vision for Catholic education. Systems and structures are in place to ensure the quality of RE is good. Leaders provide staff with support, encouragement, and challenge, and this is a strength of the school. The head has a clear vision for staff development which in turn ensures staff feel valued. The commitment to the educational mission of the Church is evident as staff are supported to attend foundation courses for those new to Catholic education. The school supports those who wish to undertake the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies (CCRS) and staff are appreciative of this. Leaders recognise prospective teaching talent and support those who are studying to develop their teaching expertise.

There is a shared focus on improving teaching and learning in RE and the subject is well planned. Religious education is developmental, and progression is evident across key stages.

## **What should the school do to develop further in classroom religious education?**

- Ensure pupils gain a deeper understanding of the topic being taught by using where appropriate, relevant links with scripture.
- Develop the role of the new religious education leader.

## B. The Catholic life of the school

### What has improved since the last inspection?

The key point from the last inspection was to provide more opportunities for pupils to plan, prepare and participate in collective acts of worship. During this inspection pupils were observed to have planned worship very effectively. Scripture links were appropriate, music was thoughtfully chosen, prayer spaces were beautifully displayed, and creativity was in evidence.

### The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

**is outstanding**

RE receives the 10% curriculum time in each key stage. Religious education is at the heart of the school as is evident in the high standard of communal displays. Pupils were keen to discuss the displays in the hall and consider the impact they had on their learning. Pupils take pride in showing their work. For the display entitled 'The Eyes of the World' pupils enthusiastically discussed its relevance to COP 26. The display for CAFOD and the other charities the school supports prompted pupils to discuss their responsibilities as Catholics to help others. The St. Philip Howard display and the pupils' knowledgeable reaction to it, was evidence that they clearly understand the history of the school's patron saint.

It is evident to all that religious education is at the core of the curriculum. Prayer tables are given prominent positions in every classroom. Liturgical colours draping displays remind pupils of the relevant time in the liturgical year and these spaces encourage pupils to engage in private prayer. Governors offer outstanding support and actively work with senior leaders to review the place of religious education in school. They have recently reviewed the mission statement, 'We are part of God's Family. We follow the way of Jesus by loving, learning and doing our best', to ensure that it continues to reflect St. Philip Howard School. Governors actively guide and support senior leaders to continue to improve religious education even as the school emerges from recent lockdowns. Governors ensure a significant proportion of the school's budget is spent on RE and this is in line with other core subjects. What has been achieved in this school and what has been done to support the community by senior leaders leaves no doubt that this is a school totally rooted in Christ.

### The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community

**is outstanding**

Inspectors visited on Remembrance Day and the pupil chaplains had prepared a piece of worship for the occasion. The prayer space was themed appropriately, and the display of poppies enhanced the worship experience for all. The worship was conducted online in accordance with COVID regulations; pupils set out to ensure awe and wonder and zoom did not detract from the experience. It is evident that this is common practice for pupils as in an observed Year 2 collective act of worship, pupils had planned their worship reverently using appropriate pieces of scripture. They had set up a prayer space that sought to engage and offered reflection time to their peers in recognition of the need for prayer opportunities. Worship is a very real celebration in St. Philip Howard school. Fr Francis is a regular visitor and supports leaders by offering many opportunities for pupils and staff to celebrate the Eucharist and Sacrament of Reconciliation. Fr Francis' involvement cements the school's vision of itself as a worshipping Catholic community. Parents of pupils from other faiths and traditions told inspectors how they experience a total respect for their traditions in this school. Christian Orthodox parents commented on how their children were encouraged to practise the sign of the cross in the Orthodox manner. Parents from other faiths also commented on how they feel totally included in this community.

**The contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice –**

**is outstanding**

From the moment inspectors arrived the school's contribution to the common good was evident. A food bank has been set up in the foyer to which everyone is encouraged to contribute. To avail of the food bank, families have no need to book or ask in advance, they are encouraged to simply turn up and discretely help themselves. When COVID caused the school to close earlier in the year, leaders not only provided laptops to those who needed them to support learning, they also provided dongles for wi-fi access. Leaders are keenly aware of the needs of some of the community and have structured support in a way that ensures dignity is never compromised. Accordingly, pupils understand their responsibility as Christians to share with others and they have a strong sense of why they should act in this way. They have a keen sense of their call to serve and have an excellent understanding of the theology underpinning their actions. Everyone in this school is actively engaged in supporting those in need. One parent commented, 'we got so much support both for my son and for myself last year when my dad was ill, support in so many ways'. Another remarked, 'when my daughter was ill, the school really helped me through'. Yet another stated, 'if you need anything, they will help', and another 'during COVID times, I really needed help and they were there for me'.

**The partnership with parents, school and parish, and collaboration as an integral part of the diocese through its relationship with the diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf**

**is outstanding**

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of St. Philip Howard School. They feel welcomed and explained that the school cares for them as a community. Parents remarked that they are listened to and are proud of the school, often travelling long distances to attend. Parents value the close parish links. One parent for whom English is not the first language commented on how their child teaches them prayers in English at home. This school values its outstanding relationships with parents and works closely with them to develop a shared understanding of the mission of the school. Fr Francis who has recently taken on the role of link governor for religious education, together with school leaders, are working to help families return to Church after COVID as the school recognises the parish as the main experience of Church for its families. The school works closely with other deanery schools to form effective partnerships within a diocesan community that contributes to excellence at every level of Catholic life. No aspect of daily life is left unobserved as the school responds to the needs of others, as one parent commented 'in this school we see the Kingdom of God in practice'.

**The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school**

**is outstanding**

Leaders are fully committed to Christ's mission in education and Governors clearly make a significant contribution to policy and practice. The governing body is reflective and has a clear understanding of the need to review practice. The school's leadership has been exemplary and dynamic in its response to its families during COVID. Their response has enabled pupils and staff to experience a richness of opportunities to fully understand a Catholic way of living. This is a vibrant school and one in which the richness of Catholic life, as one parent commented, 'transcends throughout the day for my child'. The head with the senior leaders and governors have energy and enthusiasm in abundance to support the community in which they serve. Parents of pupils with special educational needs feel well supported and consider that school communication is highly effective. This is a vibrant Catholic community where parents say they feel welcome and supported. Staff also acknowledged that the excellent systems in place to support induction into a Catholic school and

further develop them as Catholic teachers have contributed to their effectiveness as Catholic practitioners.

**What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?**

Further develop pupils' experience of prayer in all its forms and develop the prayer garden to enhance this experience.

## Information about this school

- The school is a two form entry Catholic primary school in the locality of Hatfield.
- The school serves the parishes of Marychurch and St Thomas More and St Peter's both parishes in Hatfield.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 60%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 23% and from other faiths is 6%. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 50%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 3
- There are 20% of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 16 (3.5%) have statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average at 77%
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average at 43%
- There is an average rate of families claiming free school meals of 15% FSM and 2% NRTPF when compared to the National average but above when compared to local.
- 75 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (17%).

<b>Department for Education Number</b>	9193388
<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117469
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary Aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 - 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	448
<b>The appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Linda Graham
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Mairéad Waugh
<b>Telephone number</b>	01707 263969
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.sphoward.herts.sch.uk">www.sphoward.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin@sphoward.herts.sch.uk">admin@sphoward.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	8 October 2015
<b>Grade from previous inspection</b>	
<b>Classroom religious education</b>	Good
<b>The Catholic life of the school</b>	Outstanding

## Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out (i) under the requirements of the Canon 806 and (ii) in accordance with the Framework for Diocesan Inspections 2015 approved by the Archbishop of Westminster and (iii) under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

- The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection.
- During the inspection 15 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended two acts of worship.
- Meetings were held with school staff, pupils and governors.
- Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

## Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

Ms Evelyn Ward	Lead Inspector
Mrs Margaret Hanley	Associate Inspector
Mr Daniel Keane	Associate Inspector
Ms Joanne Walsh	Shadow Inspector

## Information about inspection

The purpose of Diocesan inspection is to report to and advise the Archbishop on the quality of classroom religious education and the Catholic life of the school. The inspection report is also used to inform parents and carers, and the wider Catholic community. Inspection provides an opportunity to support, challenge, evaluate and promote the work of Catholic schools. It also assists schools in the work of self-evaluation and improvement, and enables the Diocese to celebrate with schools their sense of identity and their strengths as Catholic schools.

### Inspection Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

This report is published by the Diocese of Westminster and is available at:

<http://rcdow.org.uk/education/schools>

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