

St Catherine of Siena Catholic Primary School



Horseshoe Lane, Garston, Watford, Hertfordshire WD25 7HP

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 13 May 2022

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education is good

- Pupils are welcoming, articulate, and enthusiastic and demonstrate a real thirst and resilience for learning.
- The scheme of work used is mapped to the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* which forms the basis of the teaching provided.
- Staff create a positive, safe and nurturing climate of learning for all pupils.
- Pupil attainment is in line with other core subjects.
- Pupils are offered a range of opportunities to support them in becoming critical and independent thinkers.
- Behaviour and attitudes to learning by all pupils are exemplary.
- Effective teaching strategies are evident in RE lessons and lead to good outcomes for most children.
- The headteacher, governors and the leads for religious education show and articulate a strong commitment to driving forward standards in religious education.

Classroom religious education is not yet outstanding because

- There are some inconsistencies in approaches to teaching, so opportunities for challenge and progress are sometimes missed.
- The RE programme needs further enrichment in order to enhance pupil progress and ensure a deeper level of content for all groups.

B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- This is a very welcoming and vibrant school, fully living out the school mission: 'Be who God created you to be and you will set the world on fire'.
- There are excellent systems in place to develop and enhance the contribution of all staff, including those of other faiths, to the Catholic life of the school.
- Pupils are proactive in supporting those in need at a local, national and global level.
- The quality, strength and warmth of the relationships of all members of the school are outstanding and this creates a tangible sense of unity and mutual respect.
- The partnerships between school, parents, parish, governors and diocese are exceptional. The shared vision and deep commitment to St Catherine's is visible and permeates all areas of school life.
- The headteacher, leadership team, staff and governors are an example for all - outward facing and inclusive - and they have created a cohesive and joyful school community.
- Worship and prayer are central to the life of the school and pupils are offered many opportunities to celebrate the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation throughout the liturgical year.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

All the recommendations in the previous inspection report have been fully addressed. Teachers effectively use probing questions and activities are well matched to pupils' interests. Consistent feedback is given so that pupils know how to improve their work.

Both school leaders and staff are continually striving for improvement in classroom teaching and are ready to adapt current practice in order to improve standards.

The content of classroom religious education is good

The content of the religious education (RE) curriculum of this school meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory. Pupils are encouraged to be creative and are given the opportunity to present their learning in a variety of ways including art, drama, music, posters, models, Powerpoint presentations, debates and discussions. The emphasis on prior learning enables pupils to consolidate their knowledge as they move through the key stages of learning. Pupils are encouraged to wonder and to think through the 'deepening my faith' questions; enrichment units mapped against the Curriculum Directory help them to become informed, independent and critical thinkers. Key vocabulary is highlighted effectively for pupils during lessons to encourage them to talk and write about their knowledge and understanding of their faith. One parent commented that 'my child comes home each day talking about Catholic values and parables and about God's kindness, looking after each other'. In learning about other faiths through the experiences of their fellow pupils of other faiths, along with visiting speakers, pupils show a tolerance and respect for all faiths and cultures and all feel included in the Catholic mission of the school.

Pupil achievement in religious education is good

Pupil achievement is good. Pupils are articulate, enthusiastic and demonstrate a real thirst and resilience for learning. The behaviour and attitude of pupils observed across the school is exemplary. Pupils are keen to share their work and discuss what they know about RE. The Feedback Friday Targets, shared with parents at home, contribute to pupils' good progress in the subject. Internal, deanery and diocesan moderations are used to improve teacher subject knowledge of the age-related expectations, thereby developing a shared understanding of assessment across the school. Pupil attainment is in line with other core subjects. Most pupils make good progress in RE and pupils' discussions in RE demonstrate a confidence in their use of religious vocabulary and in their understanding of key concepts.

The quality of teaching is good

The quality of teaching across the school is good. This leads to pupils achieving well over time. Through carefully planned professional development, teachers have improved their subject knowledge and this is leading to the planning and teaching of lessons which are beginning to deepen pupils' religious literacy. Teachers make links to previous learning in order to deepen understanding. In Year 6, for example, pupils made links between Passover, the Last Supper and the Eucharist. During probing questioning, they were able to explain the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. They were then given the opportunity to express their learning in a symbolic drawing. These drawings were to be displayed at church during the First Communion Mass for Year 3 pupils. The teaching in the Reception classes included a good variety of activities which ensured the interest and

engagement of all pupils. All staff have worked hard to develop their learning intentions to improve outcomes for pupils. Support staff were observed playing a key role in supporting children with higher needs. Teachers endeavour to ensure all pupils are engaged in their learning. However, there needs to be further consistency in applying the strategies of pace and challenge to all classes in the school.

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

Leadership and management of RE are good in this school. The RE leaders, along with the headteacher, have a clear vision which is shared by all staff members and the governing body. The self-evaluation is largely accurate, recognising areas for development and highlighting effective strategies already in operation to address areas for improvement. Religious education targets are part of staff appraisals and reflect the current priorities in the school development plan. Teaching is monitored regularly over time. The leadership team have worked hard to develop systems to support the staff in planning and delivering good RE lessons which engage and challenge pupils. The school recognises its areas for development and is committed to moving the school further forward. The governors are well informed and have been instrumental in ensuring that there is a clear vision and commitment to the school's key role in the educational mission of the church.

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

- Ensure teachers continue to receive appropriate support to further develop their subject knowledge in RE.
- Enrich and adapt further the RE curriculum to enhance pupil progress and ensure a deeper level of content for all groups.
- Provide more opportunities for the use of ICT in RE lessons.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

All of the recommendations of the previous inspection report have been fully addressed. There are now effective systems in place for monitoring the Catholic life of the school. There is also good sharing of best practice with both Catholic and non-Catholic schools to aid pupils' transition to secondary school.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

is outstanding

The curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference with 10% of curriculum time allocated to RE. The budget for RE is considerably higher than the budgets for other core subjects. This has been used to prioritise extensive professional development of staff and the construction of a new chapel in the school. The school rightly places religious education as 'the core of the core'. All staff have completed the Foundation Stones course and are extremely well-supported in their professional development for the teaching of religious education. The leadership team, supported by the parish priest, the chaplain of St Michael's secondary school and governors, work very hard to ensure that pupils are provided with the best opportunities possible and that staff are supported in their professional development. Teaching assistants are allocated to every RE lesson as well as appropriate 1:1 adult support for pupils with special educational needs. RE displays and prayer corners are in place in every classroom with key words being prominent to enhance pupils' religious literacy. There are themed displays in all communal areas throughout the school and pupils regularly contribute art work for display in Our Lady and St Michael's church. Parents recognise the importance the school places on its Catholic life. Governors are very well informed and work closely with the leadership team to develop and review the quality of pupils' religious experience and are aware of areas for further development. The school clearly places a high emphasis on the centrality of the Catholic faith to its mission and life.

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

is outstanding

The school excels in offering daily opportunities for pupils to pray and reflect. It meets its commitment to ensuring prayer and worship are part of the daily rhythm of pupils' experience at school. There is an excellent planned programme for prayer and worship so that pupils are afforded every opportunity to experience the breadth and richness of the Catholic tradition. The liturgical year is the foundation upon which the rich prayer life of the school is based. Mass is celebrated on Holy Days and Feast Days throughout the year. In addition, each class attends Mass weekly on a rota basis at Our Lady & St Michael's church with pupils actively participating in the preparation and planning of the liturgies. Class Masses in school are also timetabled. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered at key times. Parents are invited to attend Masses and weekly acts of worship. One parent commented that 'the spiritual enrichment is amazing'. Since the pandemic, pupils are becoming more confident in preparing and leading acts of worship and do so with reverence and pride. Even the very youngest pupils in the Reception classes are able to show reverence during prayer times. The school chapel is a special place for worship. Pupils and adults are able to use this sacred space for class liturgies and quiet reflection. The school's chaplaincy team, Christ's Crew, recently suggested that the chapel be made available to pupils during lunchtimes. This has been implemented by school leaders so that pupils now have daily opportunities to voluntarily use the space to pray and reflect. Christ's Crew also take an active role in monitoring and evaluating the prayer life of the school.

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

It is clear that the school is a very nurturing environment where pupils are encouraged to develop and celebrate their gifts and talents so that they can flourish and become valuable members of the community. Pupils have many opportunities to explore and share these talents. The school prides itself on its adoption of sustainability measures such as the reduced use of plastics in displays and furniture. All pupils are given the opportunity to work as stewards of creation on the school farm. Pupils are currently establishing a garden to tend in the parish grounds. Pupils' gifts and talents are celebrated in weekly award assemblies and via the school's social media channels. Pupils speak about how they feel valued by the acknowledgement of their gifts and talents during these celebrations. Pupils are extremely polite, welcoming and friendly and it is evident that they are taught to respect, value and celebrate everyone in their school and the world around them. The school promotes service and self-sacrifice in all aspects of school life and this is modelled by the senior leadership team. As a result, the pupils understand the importance of supporting those in need. They have been actively involved in collecting, delivering and preparing food for distribution at the Watford food bank. They speak most enthusiastically about their Walk Against Hunger and are ready to respond wholeheartedly to the most recent appeals for aid for Afghanistan and the Ukraine. Through regular assemblies and fundraising events for charities, including the New Hope Trust for the homeless, pupils understand that the Catholic community has a collective responsibility to be of service to the local community and to the wider world. Pupils are able to speak knowledgeably about the papal encyclicals *Fratelli Tutti* and *Laudato Si'* and Pope Francis' call for all Christians to care for creation and for each other. Led by Christ's Crew, pupils are committed to answering the call to service as active global citizens.

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**

Partnerships at all levels are outstanding and the school should be proud of its work in this area. Parents are very complimentary and appreciative of the school's work as demonstrated by the responses when meeting inspectors and by the questionnaires reviewed during the inspection. Parents appreciate the welcome the school offers and the many invitations to join their children in worship. They also value the class prayer bags sent home for prayer times with families. The school leadership team work closely with other Catholic schools in the academy trust, the deanery and the diocese for moderation, collaboration and to participate in meetings and training. The leadership team and the governing body are forward thinking – keen to seek out and develop a variety of positive partnership opportunities.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The headteacher with the senior leaders, governors and staff are an example for all – outward facing and inclusive - and have created a wonderful new, close and joyful school community. Senior leaders have a clear and accurate action plan which identifies the areas for further improvement. Governors are clearly effective and play a proactive role in supporting the Catholic life of the school. The link governor for religious education is highly involved and works with school leaders to provide insightful, strategic challenge. All leaders are fully committed to the Church's mission in education and the school's mission statement 'Be who God created you to be and you will set the world on fire' (a quote from St Catherine of Siena) is at the heart of all

they do. Staff spirituality is supported through the annual Vision and Mission Day at which staff and governors review and evaluate the school's mission. The vision of true human flourishing through a rich experience of Catholic life is shared by the whole school community. As a result, pupils and staff experience an inclusive community dedicated to the development of the whole person. The outstanding leadership enables pupils and staff, of all faiths and none, to be nurtured and developed.

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

- Further develop the partnership with parents by developing more opportunities for home learning.

Information about this school

- The school is a one-form entry Catholic primary school in the locality of Watford.
- The school serves the parishes of Our Lady and St Michael's, Garston, Holy Rood and St Helen's, Watford and St Saviour's, Abbots Langley.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 79%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 9% and from other faiths is 10%. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 30%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 2.
- There are 13% of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 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 the national average at 53%.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above the national average at 33%.
- There is a below average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 25 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (10%).

Department for Education Number	9195211
Unique Reference Number	138288
Local Authority	Hertfordshire

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	281
The appropriate authority	Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust
Chair	Mr Mike Pargeter
Headteacher	Ms Nicola Kane
Telephone number	01923 676022
Website	www.stcatherinescatholicprimaryschool.co.uk
Email address	admin@st-catherine.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 November 2015
Grades from previous inspection:	
Classroom religious education	Good
The Catholic life of the school	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 7 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended 2 class 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 Norah Flatley

Lead Inspector

Ms Margaret Hanley

Associate Inspector

Ms Patricia O'Donnell

Associate 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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