



# St Agnes Catholic Primary School

URN: 100949

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster

06–07 February 2025

## Summary of key findings

### Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

1

#### Catholic life and mission (p.3)

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission

1

#### Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

1

#### Collective worship (p.7)

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

1

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

## Compliance statement

- The school is fully compliant with the norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference
- The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop
- The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

## What the school does well

- Leaders have a highly ambitious vision for the Catholic life and mission of the school.
- Christ is at the heart of this school, there is a lived sense of community, evident in the quality of relationships and a strong culture of welcome.
- Pupils enjoy religious education, leading to exemplary behaviour in lessons.
- Pupils are extremely religiously literate and can confidently demonstrate their religious knowledge.
- Prayer and liturgy offer a wide range of engaging and creative experiences of the breadth and richness of the Catholic tradition.

## What the school needs to improve

- Enhance pupil self-assessment by investigating additional strategies to help them more fully articulate their progress and development as learners.
- Pupil Chaplains to support each year group in the planning and evaluation of prayer and liturgy, giving all pupils an even greater voice and sense of ownership.

## Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

### Catholic life and mission key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

#### Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

#### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

1

Catholic values are central to life at St Agnes and pupils have a very clear understanding of the school's Catholic identity. The school motto 'With Jesus beside us, we do our best' is known and lived by all. Pupils can clearly express an understanding that they are valued and cared for as unique persons, made in the image and likeness of God. They are happy, safe and confident. Pupils are taught that God calls them to serve - they support the Bow Food Bank and The Passage. The school ensures that pupils gain high quality leadership experiences ranging from pupil chaplaincy, well-being ambassadorship and the school council. The pupil chaplains want to 'help other children to have a good understanding of God', whilst the well-being ambassadors advocate inclusion for anyone who finds playtimes and learning difficult. The school councillors, want to make their school a better place by caring for their common home, with a focus on turning off lights and using recycled water bottles. Year 1 are leading the way in this.

Christ is at the heart of this school, there is a lived sense of community, evident in the quality of relationships and the strong culture of welcome. The school goes the extra mile to provide an exceptionally supportive and joyful community for each of its members. One parent commented 'the community is the most important part for me'. Staff are exemplary role models for pupils through their relationships with each other and the love and care they show for pupils, which consistently bears witness to the school's Catholic life and mission. The school promotes inclusivity and respect, ensuring every pupil feels welcomed and accepted. Displays across the school environment are of a high quality and bear witness to the school's Catholic life, for example, 'If racism vanished for a day' and 'SEN-Sational. 'We may all be different fish. But in this school, we swim together'. The chaplaincy team are full of enthusiasm and take their role seriously, leading class worship on a Wednesday and whole school liturgy of the word on Friday.

Relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) is carefully planned and meets diocesan requirements. It is firmly rooted in the teachings of Christ. All policies and procedures as well as the school website reflect the strong Catholic identity of St Agnes.

Leaders and governors are able to clearly articulate the Church's mission in education. The chair of governors said, 'Our ethos is to see each person as made in the image of God, with a right to be loved and cherished'. They ensure that Christ is always at the heart of the school. Leaders and governors are inspirational witnesses to the Gospel and to Catholic social teaching in their direction of the school at every level. For example, any excess bread, fruit or vegetables left over from breakfast club are given to families and sandwiches are made each morning for children who have not had breakfast. Staff appreciate that leaders have an open-door policy and they feel very well supported. At St Agnes the whole of the taught curricular, with religious education at its core, are a compelling expression of the Catholic understanding of reality. There is a richness across the breadth of the curriculum. In literacy, Year 6 study 'The London Eye Mystery' which supports representation and inclusion. Year 5 study 'Varmint', a picture book on the environment, celebrating 'Laudato Si'. The school has strong links with the local church; the priest is a frequent visitor, and his time spent in school is greatly valued by the community. Governors offer challenge and support and ensure that the school's Catholic mission is always given the highest priority.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

**Pupil outcomes**

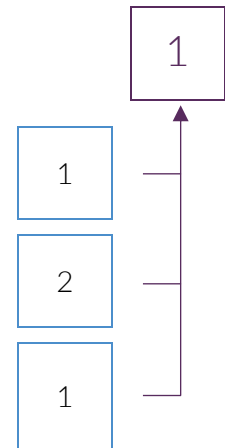
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

**Provision**

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education

**Leadership**

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education



The school introduced the *Religious Education Directory* in January 2024 and teachers are implementing the branches from Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 6; one cycle has been completed, and they are refining it this year. As a result, pupils are developing excellent knowledge, understanding and skills. Religious education data indicates good or better progress for all pupils, and parity with English and mathematics data. Lessons connect effectively to prior learning, and pupils can recall scripture and think ethically and theologically; as a result, pupils can demonstrate how they can put their faith into action. This was evident in a Year 4 lesson on being marginalised, ‘How is it our duty to reach out to the marginalised in society, just as Jesus did’. Pupils were able to recall their Catholic social teaching, link it to scripture and give examples where people were marginalised. Pupils produce work of a consistently high quality, demonstrating excellent presentation, individuality and creativity. Good coverage was seen in books, showing clear progression across year groups. Pupils are religiously literate and actively engaged in their learning. They concentrate extremely well and are interested learners. Behaviour is outstanding and pupils enjoy their religious education lessons.

Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and appreciate how the subject lead and headteacher disseminates training and supports them. All lessons observed were linked to the Galilee to Jerusalem branch of the *Directory*. Lessons consistently begin with the lighting of a candle, and a prayer to set a calm and reflective mood. Lessons are consistent in the use of scripture, key vocabulary and reflection on prior learning. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and effective questioning techniques. The subject lead spoke about the need for pupils to be able to confidently articulate their progress and development as learners. Pupils are provided with feedback, but this is not yet consistent across the school. Celebration of effort is clearly evident throughout the school. In all lessons observed there was a link between scripture and

how this can be reflected in the pupils' everyday lives. In a Year 3 lesson, the painting, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, effectively stimulated discussion on how pupils could apply the message to their everyday lives. This reflected back to their worship and 'You shouldn't exclude people who are different'. Teachers give time and space in lessons for pupils to reflect and relate their learning to Catholic social teaching. Additional adults are used effectively to support pupils with additional needs. Pupils present their work using a variety of forms of expression including music, art, drama, information technology, history and geography.

The curriculum for religious education is ambitious. The religious education subject leaders have embraced the *Directory* and ensure that subject content is introduced systematically, in an increasingly demanding way as pupils progress through the school. Religious education has parity with other core subjects in terms of timetabling, budgets and outcomes. Leaders are committed to ensuring that staff avail of high-quality professional development within the school, from the subject lead and the diocese. The leaders of religious education are inspiring in their leadership. Their vision and support for staff helps to ensure that teaching is often outstanding and at least consistently good. A wide range of enrichment activities are provided, which illustrates that the curriculum is a compelling expression of the Catholic understanding of reality. Governors offer challenge and support and are keenly aware of the next steps to improve religious education.

## Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

### Collective worship key judgement grade

**Pupil outcomes**

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

1

**Provision**

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

1

**Leadership**

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

1

1

The prayer and liturgical life provided by the school is full and rich. Pupils are exposed to a wide variety of prayer opportunities that are part of the Catholic tradition. Year 6 led a worship on Racial Justice Sunday. They gathered pupils from Years 1 to 5 to discuss 'what does it mean to be just?' and 'what does racial justice look like at St Agnes?' The experience provided full and active participation, ensuring that pupil voice was extremely strong. Year 6 were strong leaders in their faith. There was a beautiful moment when a younger child burst into spontaneous prayer. During the inspection, a variety of worship opportunities using scripture, symbols, silence, meditation, reflection, and song were witnessed, and this is typical of the range on offer. Pupils work collaboratively with other pupils and teachers to prepare creative and well-constructed experiences of prayer and liturgy. The pupil chaplains play an active role in leading worship and are full of enthusiasm for their role: they are looking forward to training up the current Year 5. The shape and meaning of the Church's liturgical year is woven across worship, with themes on Racial Justice Sunday, the Feast of St Scholastica and World Day of the Sick.

Prayer is central to the life of the school. There is a creative balance between routine and spontaneous prayer. Each year group has a class prayer book to ensure progression in prayer incorporating traditional prayers. Well-chosen scripture passages formed the heart of observed prayer and liturgy in the 'HOOP' and liturgy of the word gatherings, and in lessons. Mass is celebrated on the feast day of St Agnes and pupils wear national costumes to celebrate diversity. Senior leaders are highly skilled in supporting staff and pupils to confidently plan and lead well-constructed prayer and liturgy. After modelling the 'HOOP' worship for a year, the religious education leader has passed responsibility on to the teachers on a fortnightly basis. Teachers early in their career spoke about the strong support they receive: 'It's a wonderful school; I moved my children here - their Catholic journey is better supported here'. The school

has identified creative spaces to heighten prayer and liturgy. The hill can be Calvary during holy week, or a shrine to Mary for the May procession. The secret garden provided a space for quiet reflection to open the Jubilee Year of Hope. After the Year 6 leavers' Mass, pupils donate a rose to the rose garden, so their legacy lives on. There is a flourishing partnership with the local parish priest which helps pupils participate more fully in the liturgy. Both the school and the parish appreciate their strong relationship.

The leadership team are inspiring role models. Leaders are outward facing and are always looking at ways to improve their practice. As they move through the school, pupils are increasingly able to plan, participate in and evaluate prayer and liturgy. The 'HOOP' worships offer Year 6 pupils a vehicle to develop their leadership role. Leaders plan the liturgical year carefully. They timetable Masses and Reconciliation at key times of the year. Professional development opportunities in prayer and liturgy are of high quality and focus on liturgical formation. Senior leaders take part in diocesan training so that all staff fully understand the centrality of prayer. As a result, staff are highly skilled to support and lead prayer and liturgy. Budgets are significant and reflect the highest importance placed on the development of prayer and liturgy. Leaders, including governors, ensure that evaluation of prayer and liturgy is impactful and focused on improvement. Pupil voice is integral and valued.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Agnes Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	100949
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	2113397
Full postal address of the school	St Agnes Catholic Primary School, Rainhill Way, Bow, London, E3 3ER
School phone number	02089803076
Headteacher	Brid McDaid
Chair of governors	John Hayward
School Website	<a href="https://www.st-agnes.towerhamlets.sch.uk/">https://www.st-agnes.towerhamlets.sch.uk/</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	January 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

## The inspection team

Deirdre Finan  
Mary Ainger

Lead  
Team

## Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement