

St Catherine's Catholic Primary School

Vale Drive, Barnet, EN5 2ED

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 20 September 2019



Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education is outstanding

- Religious education is at the heart of this school community and permeates the outstanding relationships, learning environments and behaviour throughout the school.
- The scheme of work meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory.
- Pupils make good progress from their starting points and are religiously literate. End of key stage outcomes in religious education are in line with those for other core subjects.
- Teachers plan lessons that encourage participation of all pupils, ensuring they are fully engaged and motivated to learn.
- Pupils have outstanding attitudes to learning and use religious vocabulary confidently.
- The religious education leader's highly competent leadership and exceptional knowledge is reflected in the excellence evident in religious education throughout the school. Participation at both deanery and diocesan moderation is exemplary.
- Teaching is monitored effectively and coherent staff training has been established by the leadership team to support teachers in delivering high quality lessons. Robust systems are firmly in place for demonstrating pupil attainment and monitoring progress.
- Excellent systems are established to ensure the induction and development of new staff is rigorous and effective.
- Governors take a keen interest in the attainment and progress of the pupils and are committed to striving for excellence.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school, with one commenting, 'I couldn't wish for a better religious education for my daughter.'

B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- The Catholic life of the school permeates the whole community in the outstanding opportunities it provides on a daily basis.
- The vision of the headteacher has ensured that commitment to its Catholic identity is evident in all aspects of the work of the school.
- 10% of curriculum time is given to religious education, as required by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.
- The school embodies its mission statement – 'Loving and Learning Together as Jesus Taught Us' intrinsically through the kindness, care and positive relationships evident around the school.
- The school's vision that, 'everyone will grow in their faith journey and be inspired to be the best person they can be' is shown in the variety of opportunities given for human flourishing.
- Worship, prayer and liturgy are integral to the daily life of the school and is evident in a variety of engaging ways.
- Pupils engage with the Common Good in a dynamic way. One pupil commented, 'We serve others because we believe that through doing this, we are serving Jesus.'
- The religious education leader is uncompromising in her aims to ensure the Catholic life of St Catherine's remains at its heart.
- Pupils speak with pride about their faith and the call to serve the Church family through their engagement with a number of charities.
- The governors' shared vision in promoting the Catholic life of the school is instrumental in ensuring its continued success.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

The school provides opportunities for pupils across the school to use Bibles on a regular basis and they are becoming increasingly confident in using these to evidence scripture. -The religious education (RE) leader uses staff training, peer observations, book scrutinies and shared planning to develop and consolidate the knowledge of all teachers of RE. A record of training is kept as evidence. The use of ICT to record and further enhance the creative, innovative and dynamic aspects of the RE curriculum in this school continues to ensure pupils are provided with increasing opportunities to use ICT in a creative way.

The content of classroom religious education is outstanding

The content of St Catherine's RE curriculum fully meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory. The RE leader ensures her outstanding knowledge of the curriculum is developed with all staff and, therefore, the curriculum is clearly embedded and is a solid foundation on which to deepen the pupils' religious literacy. There is evidence to show creativity in the teaching and learning of RE with the learning styles of pupils clearly taken into account. Topics are revisited throughout their journey through the various key stages and pupils have a well-developed religious vocabulary. Assemblies consolidate the learning in the classrooms and children's responses show a clear understanding of liturgical themes. The parish priest is a regular visitor to the school and shares his expertise in a number of ways to enhance the content of the curriculum. The school continues to develop the teaching of Judaism in every year group and are aware of the need to provide the children with an increasing understanding of other world faiths in more detail. The governing body, with the school's leadership team, ensures that religious education has generous funding to support the updating of key resources for RE.

Pupil achievement in religious education is good

Pupils at St Catherine's are proud of their achievements in RE and were able to articulate this clearly to inspectors. They are religiously literate and can talk about the range of topics they have covered in a meaningful way. When asked challenging questions related to scripture, their level of religious literacy is clearly apparent. Their attainment is at least as good as in other core areas and improves steadily as they move through the school. The quality of work observed in books is of a good standard and there is a variety of activities evident. As staff become increasingly confident in teaching the RE curriculum and encourage the pupils' independence, there will be less need for prescriptive tasks and question and answer style responses. Although pupils achieve well, an increasing focus on providing more open-ended tasks to engage pupils in using and applying their sound religious knowledge will show their developing rigour and challenge. Pupils are evidently ready to become even more independent by taking increasing ownership of their learning through a wider range of differentiated tasks. Individual pupil assessment is secure and pupil progress is tracked effectively. Staff know the children well and pupils feel confident to ask questions. On the whole, pupils know how well they are doing and how to improve their work by way of feedback from teachers as well as through highlighted key words and phrases related to their learning objectives.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

The quality of teaching is outstanding. Teachers create a very positive climate for learning and pupils are interested and eager to learn. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary; pupils are kind, courteous and polite. Systems for high quality teaching and learning in RE are embedded and staff make use of these effectively. Examples of systems such as weekly 'talk partners' encourage all children to have the confidence to participate in discussion. Collaboration during lessons is well

developed and pupils are able to discuss their learning with their peers in a calm, considered way. Pupils do not worry about being 'stuck' as they are conversant with 'growth mindset' and, in discussion with them, told the inspectors that they never think they cannot achieve something they put their mind to. In discussion with the pupils, one said, 'I always think on the positive side. It encourages me to keep going and not give up.' They know what to do if they find things challenging and enjoy using the expertise of their talk partner, table group or other resources to support them with their learning. Lessons are planned well to suit the needs of the pupils and, in lessons observed, the pupils were highly engaged with such activities as 'hot seating,' 'elevator pitches' and quizzes. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and want them to do well. 'Green pen' questions aim to challenge the children's thinking and will develop over time to become increasingly differentiated in response to pupil outcomes. Teachers have good subject knowledge in religious education and the children benefit from this by being challenged to develop their knowledge and understanding of the RE curriculum. Teaching is typically good across the school, with some outstanding lessons seen. In the best lessons observed, children were asked open ended questions and were given opportunities to think independently without work being too heavily supported for them. Impact was greatest in lessons where pupils were given time to reflect on and discuss their learning without an overreliance on question and answer style discussion.

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

Leaders are highly ambitious for their school and are committed to high expectations from all the pupils at each key stage. They have thought carefully about the development of their pupils and ensure learning is age appropriate from their induction into the school. This is very clear in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Year 1 where the enjoyment, creativity and pleasure of learning in RE takes precedence over heavily directed writing tasks. Pupils are given plentiful opportunities for writing in conjunction with a range of creative tasks and, during the inspection, the joy they were clearly experiencing in learning about the world God created was expressed with real clarity. The RE leader is an exceptional support and mentor for staff and enables all to develop their expertise through effective training. She is valued by pupils, parents and governors alike for her leadership skills. She was described by one parent as 'an amazing leader' and by governors as 'inspirational.' The leadership team ensures that there are many opportunities for staff training through deanery and diocesan moderation and including those new to teaching and to Catholic education. The school, under the direction of the RE leader, have worked with the new 'Standards in RE framework' effectively and are committed to ensuring pupils continue to make excellent progress.

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

- Encourage the pupils to take increasing risks by giving them ownership of their learning and opportunities to think creatively and deepen their understanding independently.
- Ensure feedback to pupils in books is differentiated in order to encourage them to think more deeply, and so support them in accessing scripture in a less prescriptive manner.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to study a wider range of other world faiths in detail.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

Pupils have an excellent understanding of the Common Good and are the driving force behind many charitable initiatives. They are able to articulate the theology and practice of the Common Good in their everyday lives.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

is outstanding

10% of curriculum time is given to religious education, as required by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. The RE leader, with the support of the headteacher, has ensured that RE is the foundation of all that happens at St Catherine's. The learning environment is outstanding and shows particularly detailed consideration of the school as a Catholic foundation. This attention to detail starts in EYFS where focus areas are carefully planned to reflect learning in RE. The prayer focus in each classroom is a central feature and is regularly updated to reflect the liturgical year. General areas are also carefully planned to reflect the Catholic identity of the school and pupils are proud of their contributions. Feedback from a parent via the questionnaire stated, 'St Catherine's has a strong Catholic ethos which permeates throughout all aspects of school life. Sometimes I am astounded by my daughter's knowledge of the Bible, Catholic traditions and her Catholic role in society.'

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

is outstanding

Worship and prayer are outstanding and are central to the life of St Catherine's. The school's SEF celebrates that each gathering of pupils, staff, governors, parents and visitors is underpinned by the understanding that 'Where one or two are gathered, I am there with them.' (Matthew 18:20) The pupils are grateful for the opportunities given for prayer and worship and the pupils spoke highly of the weekly Gospel assemblies which reinforces their understanding of scripture. These assemblies are carefully planned to reflect the Catholic mission of the school and Church to develop an awareness locally, nationally and globally. During the inspection, the pupils contributed in a respectful and reverent manner to prayers and hymns during the headteacher-led assembly. They offered articulate explanations of how they could be 'stewards of creation' in response to Pope Francis' encyclical, 'Laudato Si.' In a collective worship observed in Key Stage 1, the pupils participated with interest as they engaged with the teacher in developing the story of creation. Activities in response to this collective worship were given pride of place on a designated wall space. The school provides numerous opportunities for prayer and worship for the parents, including class prayer services, Masses and gatherings within the context of the liturgical year. The parish priest also offers weekly meditation sessions for pupils and parents which has been received exceptionally well. There is the opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Advent and Lent.

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

is outstanding

As a result of carefully planned liturgical prayer and worship, the pupils at St Catherine's have a clear understanding of the Church's call to serve. During the inspection, they spoke eloquently about fundraising opportunities, explaining, 'Charity is not just about money but also about raising awareness.' This is also manifested in their experiences as a UN 'Rights Respecting' school and the children understand that everyone has the same rights and it is their responsibility to ensure that they help those less fortunate. Pupils have driven many fundraising initiatives and the school contributes to charities locally, nationally and internationally. These include local food banks,

Homeless in Barnet, Cafod, Catholic Children's Society, Water Aid, FSSA Zambia. The RE leader encourages the pupils to take ownership of fundraising activities by completing a form to show their commitment and detail to a project. During the inspection, the pupils were very keen to discuss the various activities that had been undertaken, from cake sales to football days. In the questionnaire, one parent commented, 'My daughter has, as she has got older, become very interested in ways she can help those less fortunate than her. The school takes these ideas seriously.'

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 with parents, parish and diocese are outstanding. There were a large number of returned parental questionnaires for the inspection team to consider. They concluded that parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school with comments such as, 'We are very happy with the Catholic education the school provides. We feel that the school allows us plenty of opportunity to participate in religious occasions' and 'I love the way St Catherine's supports the spiritual growth of our children.' Due to the response of a minority of questionnaires, the inspection team discussed parental participation in school prayer and worship with the senior leaders. They provided the inspectors with evidence of a number of opportunities for participation. The team also spoke to pupils, who confirmed their delight at their parents' involvement in class prayer services and Masses. The school clearly celebrates a variety of ways in which partnerships between parents, school and parish are developed. Staff are encouraged to attend moderation sessions within the deanery and the diocese, and they benefit from moderation with staff from a variety of schools to inform their assessment judgements. The school is very much involved in the local parishes and the school's parish priest spoke highly of the engagement of the pupils in and out of school. The inspection team had the opportunity to meet with a group of parents during the inspection. They spoke positively about the influence that RE and the Catholic Life of the school is having on their children. One parent described a time his child had come home with a box. He asked why the child had brought home an empty box, to which the child reported, 'It is not empty, it is full of God's love.' Another described their child's journey at the school from sitting on the school's 'buddy bench' looking to be included to now having a strategic role as a Rights Respecting Ambassador.

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

is outstanding

School leaders and governors are dedicated in their vision to maintain the highest standards of ensuring the promotion of the Catholic life of the school. The mission statement is known and lived by the school community and underpins every aspect of the pupils' day. The headteacher, along with the RE leader and senior leaders, drive forward the mission of the school and ensure it is intrinsically linked to all areas of the school life. Training is provided systematically to support members of staff at all levels. Governors are clearly effective and play a proactive role in supporting RE and the Catholic life of the school. The inspectors met with the 'Catholic Life' committee who monitor this area of school life by learning walks and talking to the pupils and so the self-evaluation is accurate.

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

- To provide pupils throughout the school with more opportunities to prepare and lead collective worship on a more regular basis.
- To celebrate the Catholic life of the school by sharing with the wider community, through the school website and other forms of communication, the excellent work undertaken of the children's contribution to the Common Good.

Information about this school

- The school is a two-form entry Catholic primary school in the locality of Barnet.
- The school serves the parishes of Mary Immaculate and St Gregory's, High Barnet and Mary Immaculate and St Peters, New Barnet.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 96%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 2.9 % and from other faiths is 1.1 %.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 60 %.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 16%.
- There are 10.4 % of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 4 have statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is above average.
- There is a below average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 47 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (10.4 %).

Department for Education Number	3023504
Unique Reference Number	101333
Local Authority	Barnet

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	3 -11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	501
The appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Alessia Errico
Headteacher	Miss Maureen Kelly
Telephone number	0208 4404946
Website	www.st-catherines.barnet.sch.uk
Email address	office@stcatherines.barnetmail.net
Date of previous inspection	24 April 2015
Grades from previous inspection:	
Classroom religious education	Outstanding
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 12 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended 1 assembly and an act 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.

Mrs Monica McCarthy	Lead Inspector
Ms Winnie Greer	Associate Inspector
Ms Maureen O'Donoghue	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:

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