



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Mark's Catholic Primary School

URN: 148973

Carried out on behalf of the Most Rev. Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham on:

Date: 19-20 October 2023

Overall effectiveness The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....	1
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Collective worship (p.7) The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.....	1
The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	✓
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	✓
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- The passion and inspiring work of the leadership team ensures that the school's Catholic life and mission permeate the whole community.
- Catholic social teaching has encouraged pupils to become vehicles for change in their local area and the wider world.
- The school's powerful, inclusive welcome ensures that all are cared for with dignity, especially those in need.
- Progress in religious education is strong because of the subject leader's vision and staff's commitment.

- Pupils and staff appreciate the wide range of prayer opportunities, which lead to prayer being central to school life.

What the school needs to improve:

- Promote Catholic social teaching across all curriculum areas.
- Provide feedback within religious education that enables pupils to know what they are doing well and how they can improve.
- Extend opportunities for all pupils to plan, deliver and evaluate high-quality prayer and liturgy sessions throughout the school.

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:.....

1

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

All stakeholders agree that the mission statement at this school underpins all its work. Pupils understand that 'Proudly and joyfully, we love, live and learn as God's children' and use this to guide everything they do. Pupils know that the school is committed to following Jesus and, as such, find joy in supporting others in need locally and in the wider world. A pupil explained, 'We have a responsibility to change the world'. Owing to this secure understanding, pupils can be proactive in their response to the principles of Catholic social teaching and undertake opportunities to do so willingly, such as by being members of the school's mission teams, including the Laudato Si team Catholic Leaders, Minnie Vinnies and Guardian Angels. Pupils within these teams have a particularly insightful and lived understanding of Church teaching and articulately share this with their peers to engage and involve the whole school. Pupils see their role as putting concern into action, which they do regularly and in an exemplary manner. Examples of this can be seen in their support for local groups such as an older people's residence and Father Hudson's. Subsequently, they show deep respect for one another.

Staff commitment to the school is impressive because of the passion and determination of the principal, who successfully aspires to create a culture of inclusion and welcome for all. Staff embrace these aims and work tirelessly to demonstrate them to the school community. Therefore, they are exceptional role models to pupils because they are proactive in initiatives such as feeding people experiencing homelessness as part of the 'Feed Brum' initiative, taking part in the 'Big sleep out', and preparing meals for those in need on Christmas Eve. As Christ is consciously at the heart of the school, there is an authentic sense of care for everyone. This leads to a powerful sense of family and community. All school community members are treated with dignity and care because of the excellent Christ-like pastoral provision for pupils and families. This is often targeted to those most in need and ensures that the most vulnerable are supported in an exemplary way. The school is

determined to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met. This is achieved through initiatives such as being a 'school of sanctuary' and the recent opening of the new Rainbow Room to support pupils who may require space to reflect.

Leaders and governors are unwavering in their commitment to their school's Catholic life and mission, resulting in a genuine commitment to all the families they serve. Governors are ambitious for the school, which can be seen in their energy and passion to ensure Christ remains at the heart of their decision-making. Their subsequent support and challenge ensure that the school's mission remains a priority for all stakeholders. Parish links are strong, and pupils benefit from the flourishing partnership developed through a strong, mutually supportive relationship of service. For example, families, the school, and the parish work hard to celebrate a regular family Mass offered with staff and pupils; equally, members enjoy attending weekly Mass held in the school hall. The principal is inspirational in her witness to the gospel; this passion permeates all aspects of the school's work. As a result, some areas of the school's curriculum feature Church teachings and work has already begun to ensure that different subject areas reflect and support this. However, this is not yet complete across the full breadth of the curriculum.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

1

Provision

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

2

Leadership

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

1



Pupils make good progress in religious education, and their attainment is above average compared to other core curriculum subjects. Teachers plan lessons based on previous learning that motivate pupils to achieve well. Pupils are engaged in lessons and are committed to their learning, allowing them to know, remember, and do more as they move through the learning programme. Pupils enjoy their lessons and approach them with enthusiasm. One pupil even told inspectors that 'RE is like no other subject.' Pupils take pride in their work; consequently, their books are well-presented and of high quality. Pupils are religiously literate and can articulate their learning confidently, including when given opportunities to reflect on their learning. They think deeply and can say how what they have learned in religious education lessons might affect their religious commitment in everyday life. As a result of teacher feedback, pupils understand how well they have met the aims of a lesson, though they are less able to articulate what they must do to improve further. Pupils are encouraged to look back at their work and improve it using 'flashback' sheets designed for each unit. However, these are not yet fully embedded, and pupils are not yet using them regularly to improve their work.

Teachers' subject knowledge is strong, meaning they plan a wide range of creative and engaging activities for pupils at different ages and stages of the religious education curriculum. Assessment of pupils' learning is linked to future planning, supported by initiatives such as 'mini missions', which enable pupils to recall previous learning within a sequence of lessons, demanding higher thinking skills. Staff have an excellent understanding of the wide-reaching benefits of religious education, especially concerning pupils' spiritual and moral development. Therefore, pupils also understand the importance of reflection and are becoming increasingly skilled in their ability to reflect critically on what they have learned and how it links to previous learning and their everyday lives. Teachers' questioning is good, and they skillfully identify what pupils have learned and where they may need further explanation or coverage. However, questioning is used less effectively to extend thinking and learning for pupils, especially those with higher prior attainment in religious education.

Leaders and governors ensure that religious education remains a core subject within the school and has equal priority to other core curriculum areas. As a result, staff and pupils consider the subject integral to the school curriculum. Staff appreciate the wide range of training opportunities they are given and use the knowledge gained to maximise pupils' learning. Effective training has been provided internally by experienced staff and beyond the school from the diocese and the multi academy company (MAC). This further demonstrates the commitment of leaders and governors to developing religious education across the school. The leadership of religious education within the school is a strength. The subject leader is passionate and committed to her role; she is forensic in her monitoring, evaluation, and improvement approach. Her vision for the subject is inspiring, and she works effectively with other senior leaders and staff to ensure this vision is realised. Leaders ensure pupils receive the support they require in religious education and are supported as needed through teaching adapted to their needs. However, the curriculum does not always meet the needs of pupils with higher prior attainment because the challenge level is sometimes insufficient.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

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

2

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

Pupils engage fully and confidently in all the opportunities to participate in prayer and liturgy. Because prayer is central to school life and is experienced regularly, pupils respond reverently to various prayer forms, including singing, silence, reflection, and spontaneous prayer. They also use drama confidently during prayer and liturgy sessions to give messages and themes to others. For example, to convey the need to support others in need following a visit to Father Hudson's Care. Pupils know that there are a range of traditional Catholic prayers but are less confident in using them. Upper Key Stage 2 pupils are confident to plan, deliver, and evaluate their own creative and impactful prayer and liturgy sessions for their peers. However, this is less developed in younger years, where pupils are less able to articulate their planning and delivery of prayer sessions. The Church's liturgical year is well known by pupils as they can talk about different times and seasons. For example, they understand October to be the month of the Holy Rosary. Whilst pupils understand the importance of prayer and participate willingly, they cannot consistently articulate how prayer has influenced their thinking and actions.

There is a developed pattern of prayer within the school, central to its daily provision. Pupils and their families are invited to participate in a range of well-planned opportunities for prayer, such as a rosary club and weekly Mass. Prayer bags are also thoughtfully provided for families to support their prayer at home. Pupils enjoy the opportunity this provides for them to include their families in their prayer life. Scripture is used very well to support prayer and liturgy within the school by adults leading prayer and by older pupils who confidently lead their prayer and liturgy. This is supported by senior staff who are highly skilled in leading prayer and liturgy and who act as inspiring role models for others. The school environment has been creatively designed with spirituality in mind and is conducive to prayer. Each classroom has its own prayer space, but other areas, such as the rainbow room and prayer garden, are also quiet spaces where pupils can have time to reflect. Pupils appreciate these spaces and take ownership of them.

Leaders and governors clearly understand the different levels of skills required by pupils at various stages of school life to participate in and lead prayer and liturgy. Consequently, a progression pathway has been developed. It is in the early stages of use within the school to support staff in becoming confident in upskilling pupils to become independent prayer leaders. However, this is not yet fully embedded, and it is too soon to see its full impact on the community. Leaders carefully plan opportunities for prayer and liturgy throughout each year using their excellent knowledge of the Church's liturgical calendar. This allows pupils to have opportunities to celebrate significant saints' days, participate in sacraments such as Reconciliation at certain times of the year, and commemorate holy days of obligation that fall within term time. The principal is also passionate about providing formation opportunities for staff, and several retreats and other experiences have been organised. This enables staff to provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop their faith through prayer. Leaders are well-skilled in supporting the pupil mission teams to participate in leading their peers in acts of prayer and liturgy. For example, the Catholic leader pupil group willingly and ably support the principal in her gospel assemblies by reading scripture and prayers.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mark's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	148973
Full postal address of the school	Almond Croft, Great Barr, Birmingham, B42 1NU
School phone number	0121 357 9892
Name of head teacher or principal	Danielle Linley
Chair of governing board	Philip Hancox
School Website	www.stmarkrc.bham.sch.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St John Bosco Catholic Academy
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	4 to 11
Trustees	Archdiocese of Birmingham
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	May 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Michelle Walsh

Lead inspector

Marina Smith

Team inspector

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