



# DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT

incorporating Section 48 and Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on  
behalf of the Archbishop of Southwark

URN 137681

St Catherine's Catholic Girls School

Watling Street

Bexleyheath Kent

DA6 7OJ

Inspection date: 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Chair of Governors: Anthony Moffatt

Headteacher: Mrs Nicola Thompson

Inspectors: Damian G Fox

James Jukes

## EDUCATION COMMISSION

St Edward's House, St Paul's Wood Hill, Orpington, Kent BR5 2SR  
Tel 01689 829331

Director of Education: Dr Simon Hughes



## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

## FULL REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Catherine's is a comprehensive Academy in the Local Authority of Bexley. It is in the trusteeship of the La Sainte Union Sisters. It is situated in the Bexley Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. The principal parishes it serves are St Mary of the Crays, Crayford; St John Fisher, Bexley and Our Lady of the Angels, Erith. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 49%, The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10% in Key Stage 3 and 10% in Key Stage 4.

The school takes pupils from 11-16 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 1016. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average. Around 7% of pupils receive extra support in class (21% are receiving support through the tutoring programme). Pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups (71.2%) is well above the national average. The main ethnic groups are White British (22.5%) and Black African (49%). The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is 22%.

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## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Catherine's School is a Grade 1 Catholic school because:

- The school's Catholic identity is extremely strong and its mission statement underpins all school policy and practice. It embodies 'Faith in Action'. All members of staff care deeply and holistically for each child; pastoral care is exceptional. It is reflected in the inclusive and welcoming nature of the school and in the caring and considerate relationships between all members of the school community.
- Leadership at all levels is outstanding. Leaders demonstrate a distinct understanding of their role in providing a school that ensures every member of the community is valued. Respecting the dignity of each individual as a child of God is their fundamental purpose and is realised in all aspects of school life. All pupils are happy knowing that they are safe and well cared for.
- Governors and the Headteacher form a highly effective partnership. They are ably supported by dedicated and experienced senior leaders. Outstanding leadership of Religious Education and chaplaincy ensure pupils continue to learn and grow in a Christian, caring family.
- Collective Worship at St Catherine's is outstanding. Prayer and worship opportunities reflect the liturgical year and provide many occasions for the school to celebrate as a worshipping community. Prayer forms an integral part of the school day and of school life.

### WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER:

- Continue to develop student leadership to provide further opportunities for younger pupils to plan and lead activities that reflect the Catholic Life of the school.
- Provide further opportunities for leaders and teachers of Religious Education to continue playing a role in modelling good practice to support professional development across the school.



## Overall Effectiveness

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.	1
<b>Catholic Life</b>	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.	1
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.	1
<b>Religious Education</b>	1
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.	1
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.	1
<b>Collective Worship</b>	1
How well pupils respond to and participate in the schools' Collective Worship.	1
The quality of provision for Collective Worship.	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.	1

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## CATHOLIC LIFE

1

### **The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.**

Pupils benefit greatly from the many opportunities to contribute to the Catholic life of the school. Pupils understand that relationships must be built on the belief that 'We are one with God and with each other'. They play a significant part in this in response to the school's commitment to them. Pupils know they belong to a community that cares and empowers them to live life to the full.

Pastoral care is a significant strength of the school. Pupils know they belong to a Christian family that understands the unique dignity of each person. They acknowledge and appreciate the level of care and support they receive from all teachers. They are appropriately supported to ensure full participation in all aspects of school life. One pupil said, 'teachers know us as people'. The Pastoral Centre for more vulnerable pupils typifies the overriding Christian purpose of the school.

Pupils are proud of their school and are responsible members of it. They follow the school's 'Ready, Respectful and Safe' maxim. As a result, behaviour is exemplary and demonstrates a commitment to creating a school that loves and prays. Pupils understand their role in contributing to the wellbeing of others.

Pupils make an effective contribution through leadership. Prefects are appointed in all areas of the school. Catholic Life prefects, for example, lead on developing an awareness of the needs of others through the plethora of fundraising activities. They can relate this to Jesus' message to love one another. As a result, pupils express a commitment to serving people in the local community and beyond, regardless of race or religious belief.

Pupils acknowledge their responsibility in maintaining high standards of moral and ethical behaviour. Through their words and actions, they ensure the community is inclusive of everybody. There is genuine concern for each other and the environment. Pupils are aware of the need for justice and forgiveness and the responsibility they have for their own actions.

### **The quality of provision of the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.**

The words of St Catherine of Siena, 'be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire', is the foundation of the school's mission to serve and support its pupils. It inspires pupils to express and live the faith. The community is manifestly one with God.

The school is distinctly Catholic. The Catholic ethos and identity are visible throughout the school in the religious imagery, and in contributions made by pupils. Opportunities for pupils to express their faith and to respect the faith traditions of others creates a strong sense of family for all connected to the school. All members of staff are fully committed to ensuring



the mission of the school is a living reality. Staff from across the school are fulsome in their praise of the genuine sense of service that is evident in all areas of daily life.

Chaplaincy provision is exemplary and offers valued support for the school's Catholic life. The chapel is an exceptional and integral part of the school. It is physically and spiritually central to the life of the community.

**How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.**

Leaders and managers are deeply committed to the Catholic life of the school. They ensure it is part of school life at all levels. The vision for leadership is a clear expression of their belief that they are there to serve and give pupils an opportunity to take their faith beyond the school. Staff and pupils understand this and live out a mission based on Gospel values. Self-evaluation is honest and reflects a deep understanding of their vocation in Catholic education.

Well-planned decisions by Governors have ensured the quality of the Catholic Life of the school has remained strong and vibrant. As a result of governors' commitment to the Catholic mission in education, the school provides highly effective spiritual and moral education. Governors ensure they are well informed. Consequently, they know the strengths of the school. Strategic plans are in place to sustain a continual development of the efficacy of the Gospel in the lives of the community.

Leaders and governors have effectively fulfilled their responsibilities in ensuring the Relationships and Sex Education Policy of the school is reviewed by governors and follows diocesan guidelines.

The headteacher is an excellent role model and is passionate about the Catholic life of the school. The sense of unity reflects her vocation of service to others. It is explicit in her decisions that benefit all members of the school community, including effective induction and CPD programmes. It informs the direction of the school and inspires a cohesive staff team. She is given strong support by a cohesive and expert SLT who share her passion for providing the best for staff, pupils and their families.

Parents and carers are recognised as partners in the education of their children. They are very supportive of the school and appreciative of the Catholic education it offers.



## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

1

### **How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is outstanding.**

Outcomes in Religious Education over the last three years have been outstanding. Evidence from the school's own records indicates that almost all pupils have continued to make at least expected and above expected progress. Pupils, relative to their age, are religiously literate and engaged young people.

All pupils approach lessons with great interest and enjoyment. They acknowledge their enjoyment of Religious Education and are motivated to learn because of the teaching and encouragement they receive. They confirmed the teaching and support they consistently received through on-line learning during the pandemic.

By their learning and attitudes in class, pupils demonstrate a genuine interest in Religious Education and a commitment to further progress. The quality of written work reflects the high expectations they have of themselves and the pride they have in their achievements as a result of the expertise and unstinting support of teachers.

### **The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is outstanding.**

Teachers of Religious Education are committed to maintaining high standards of teaching and learning. They work together to ensure all pupils achieve well in Religious Education and do so with interest and enjoyment. Observations show a high degree of consistency in planning and assessment. As a result, all pupils are provided with teaching that engages them in learning.

On line learning recently did not negatively impact on outcomes. They have remained constant as a result of teachers' determination to ensure each pupil had access to high quality teaching and resources.

'Stretch and Challenge' is an important part of planning. It is realised in classroom teaching with challenging learning aims and the use of advanced vocabulary. Pupils understand this and recognise they are challenged. They equally appreciate the support which is given in equal measure by teachers. This ensures all pupils, particularly those who have special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils, make progress with confidence and interest. Pupils respond positively to the challenge and grow in self confidence because of the encouragement and praise from teachers.

A rigorous and robust process of assessment is in line with school policy. Assessments are used to identify pupils who make exceptional progress or who may need further support. High quality feedback is frequent in lessons. As a result, pupils concentrate well and have a clear understanding of their level of progress and how to improve further.



**How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is outstanding.**

Leaders and governors use their experience and expertise to ensure that standards of teaching, learning and assessment have remained consistently high over time. They are ambitious for pupils' excellence in Religious Education.

Religious Education at all key stages is a particular strength of the school, reflecting its position within the core curriculum in a Catholic school. Leaders and governors have ensured the correct allocation of curriculum time is given to Religious Education.

The link governor is vastly experienced. She uses this experience to ensure governors know and understand the strengths of the Religious Education department. Through regular monitoring visits and learning walks, governors are well informed of present standards and ensure plans are in place to sustain further progress.

The headteacher is an inspirational leader. She is passionately committed to the academic achievement of each pupil as evidenced in the relentless drive for high-quality teaching. She is supported by effective and passionate co-heads of Department who have a high level of expertise and a clear focus on how to improve teaching and learning.

Effective monitoring and assessment systems are established that will lead to a sustained improvement in teaching and learning. They ensure effective CPD and support to ensure teachers develop their confidence and expertise in delivering the curriculum.

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## COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

**How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.**

Pupils participate in collective worship with genuine interest and enthusiasm as evidenced by the assembly and form prayers. They display reverence and an obvious respect for their faith and the faiths of others. The assembly observed during the inspection was led strongly by pupils which reflects the confidence they have in preparing and leading acts of worship.

Pupils are empowered to contribute to assemblies across the La Sainte Union partnership. The leading role pupils take in preparing and delivering acts of worship has given them an understanding of the value of prayer in the wider community. Pupils were able to articulate pride in their work and their importance in offering prayer with and to others.

Pupils said that prayer is a normal part of the school's day-to-day activities. Praying before lessons across the curriculum reflects the importance prayer plays in the lives of the community. Teachers are at ease participating with the pupils and supporting them as they prepare acts of worship.

Prefects effectively take a lead in ensuring pupils are able to participate fully. Pupils always offer their own intentions. Pupils speak highly of school celebrations and are keen to play their part.

**The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.**

Collective worship is central to the life of the school. The wide range of opportunities for prayer and worship reflect the liturgical year and provide many occasions for the school to celebrate as a worshipping community.

On-line worship and prayer ensured that pupils were able to participate in assemblies and periods of meditation. They expressed appreciation for the many opportunities to join together with friends during lockdown.

Chaplaincy has a significant impact on the life of the school. It is highly effective in providing liturgy that is accessible to all students and inspires thoughtful spiritual responses from pupils. A comprehensive programme of carefully planned liturgies, assemblies and class prayers ensures high quality provision in which staff and pupils are involved.

The chaplain and prefects actively participate in school life. Prayers and scripture are provided for all teachers to support them in daily acts of worship. The experience of living and working in a faithful, praying community, has a profound effect on the spiritual and moral development of pupils, irrespective of faith background.



**How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.**

Leaders and governors have a deep understanding of their role as Catholic leaders. They carry out their responsibilities with faith and a genuine commitment to the community. In partnership with the headteacher and with visits to the school, they ensure acts of worship are genuinely spiritual occasions.

The headteacher is passionately committed to strengthening the authentic Catholic community. Together, with senior leaders, she has ensured strong and highly effective chaplaincy provision across staff and pupils. Collective Worship is truly inclusive of pupils of other faiths.

Chaplaincy constitutes a significant strength of the school. Prayer and collective worship are well planned and well resourced. This enables all teachers to ensure prayer is an integral part of daily school activities.

Observations show that leaders and governors place a high priority on teachers' professional development. This ensures all teachers develop an understanding of their role in daily occasions of prayer.

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