

The Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School

URN: 142742

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Northampton

27–28 June 2024

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

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

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

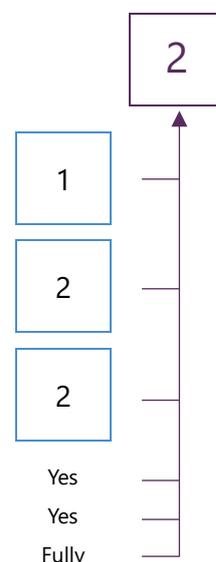
Collective worship (p.7)

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

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



What the school does well

- The headteacher’s passion for the mission of the Church has driven transformational change.
- The religious education subject leader’s vision, evaluation and support has resulted in good and improving teaching and learning.
- The respect leaders demonstrate for the dignity of workers is inspirational and has resulted in a harmonious staff team committed to the school’s mission.
- Recent work around the curriculum has resulted in children remembering and articulating more of their previous learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure more able students are challenged to go further and deeper by making links between different scripture and generating questions about their learning.
- Embed Catholic social teaching across the curriculum.
- Increase opportunities for parents to be involved in the prayer life of 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

Pupil outcomes

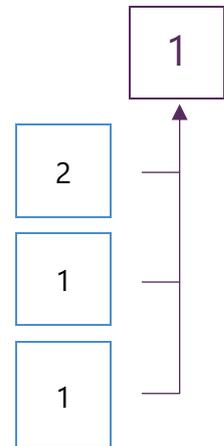
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

Provision

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

Leadership

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



Catholic life has been at the forefront of transforming The Good Shepherd School. The passion of the headteacher for her own faith has helped to inspire the whole community. There is a warm welcome extended by both staff and pupils. Pupils at the school not only understand but also actively uphold the mission statement, demonstrating a profound understanding of its impact on their lives. They understand the concept of The Good Shepherd's unconditional love, for all. As a pupil in Year 1 said, 'He loves his sheep even if they are naughty.' Pupils at the school have a strong sense of worth, feeling both loved and secure within their school. They know where they can go for support in times of need, 'If I am upset, there are loads of people that I can talk to.' The virtues to Live by hold a central position in the school's Catholic Life, frequently integrated into collective worship sessions and religious education lessons. These virtues shape the way children behave, with one Year 3 pupil saying, 'We don't have rules; we follow the 'virtues to live by'. The mission team and Minnie Vinnies provide opportunities for pupil leadership, contributing to their spiritual development and fostering independence on their faith journey. They are quite rightly proud of their charitable activities within the school, such as supporting organisations like McCarthy Dixon, Air Ambulance, Cafod, Cynthia Spencer Hospice, and St David's Foodbank.

Staff are positive role models for their pupils. During pupil meetings, the children said they were 'proud of their school because the teachers were loving, caring and kind'. The physical environment is an effective witness to the school's identity and mission. Display boards in the hall reflect the 'virtues to live by' and classroom display uses colours that reflect the liturgical calendar. Religious artefacts, statues of class saints and crucifixes are evident in classes and around the school, including in the chapel. The school embraces their work with children from vulnerable groups. They are willing to go the extra mile to ensure children get the very best and most suitable provision. There is extensive pastoral support for families through the leadership team, the family support worker and SEND co-

ordinator. The Good Shepherd has consulted with parents on the relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) curriculum, and shares information regularly. The RSHE lead can articulate clearly how the scheme is faithful to the Church's teaching and can demonstrate the progression made throughout the school. Well-presented floor books provide evidence of the children's work, including that by children with special educational needs. The forest school fosters collaboration and mutual respect among pupils, whilst cultivating an appreciation for stewardship and God's creation. Pupils really value the forest school, with one saying, 'We are the luckiest school because we have a forest school.' Another, while harvesting food, said, 'We can give it to people who don't have any food.'

The school leadership team are ambitious. They have demonstrated an unwavering commitment to the Catholic life of the school and can articulate the mission of the Church as well as the Bishop's vision. They have fostered links with the local parish, with regular school Masses enriching the spiritual life of the school community. Despite challenges arising from other commitments, the parish priests have ensured that key services, such as Ash Wednesday are celebrated. At The Good Shepherd, a profound commitment to the dignity of workers is evident, with a genuine focus on staff development and support during times of need. The governing body has notably prioritised embedding Catholic values into the school culture, as seen in the revised behaviour policy reflecting the school's ethos, resulting in a tangible improvement in pupil behaviour guided by virtues. For early career teachers (ECTs), robust support mechanisms are in place, including a comprehensive induction programme and a focus on understanding the school's mission statement. The provision of resources such as 'Christ at the Centre' and the completion of the Catholic basics course have further bolstered their understanding and commitment to the school's Catholic faith. The early career teachers were very positive about the leadership's support in facilitating effective planning, highlighting the strong foundation of Catholic faith and professional guidance within the school community.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

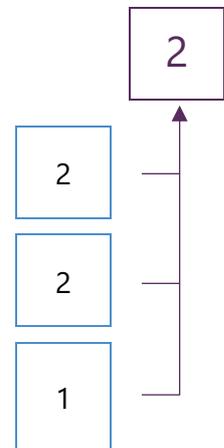
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 scheme of work is appropriately sequenced to support learning and ensures that pupils are taught the requirements of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. Pupils are developing secure knowledge, understanding and skills in their learning journey. They demonstrate the ability to recall prior learning, showcasing fluency when discussing past lessons. Where there is the best teaching, children have minimal misconceptions. Feedback from all pupils confirmed their enjoyment of religious education, expressing their fondness for delving deeper into the teachings of Jesus, which aids them in forging a closer connection with God. Additionally, they enjoy exploring other faiths, broadening their understanding and appreciation of diverse beliefs. While the majority of children's work is well-presented, this is not consistent in all classes, therefore, expectations need raising to achieve consistency of presentation. Pupils independently use Bibles as standard practice during religious education lessons, highlighting a robust understanding of the Bible that is progressively reinforced over time. Furthermore, the development of theological vocabulary equips children with the tools to articulate their learning effectively. The school acknowledges the potential for more able children to be further challenged. Encouraging them to establish connections between various scripture and sacraments, and prompting deeper reflection through insightful questioning, would foster a deeper level of critical thinking and engagement in learning.

During religious education lessons, teachers reinforce prior learning, thus improving retention among the children. The three questions about recent, medium-term and long-term learning help to ensure consistency across the school. The Good Shepherd fulfils the Bishop's requirement of 10% religious education. The inclusion of diverse creative activities in pupils' books, ranging from writing to art and music appreciation, helps to engage pupils. The children's endorsement of these activities highlights the positive impact of such a varied curriculum on their overall learning experience. Pupils are given regular feedback. They value the help they get from the teachers, 'When we are struggling with

something, the teachers help us.' While the use of pink and green highlighters for marking literacy skills is effective, there is scope for enhancing feedback specifically related to religious education skills. The adept use of effective questioning by teachers to gauge understanding is a strength in the best lessons. The school's support for children with special educational needs and disabilities, both through adult assistance and scaffolding, is evident in all. This inclusive approach ensures that all students, irrespective of their individual learning needs, make progress in line with their peers. Parents are positive about the standard of religious education teaching at The Good Shepherd. For example, one parent wrote, 'I am very happy and proud to send my child to The Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School. The teachers spread the message of the Gospel and are so kind and helpful.'

Improvements in teaching and learning of religious education since the last inspection have been driven by outstanding leadership. There is a commitment to professional development, including engaging in all available opportunities that are delivered by the diocese. The religious education lead is dedicated to ensuring staff are well-informed about the latest developments, at both a school and a diocesan level, with time allocated in each staff meeting to facilitate this. Operating with a clear vision for the subject, the religious education lead aims for all pupils to embody the school's mission statement upon completion of Year 6. Long- and medium-term plans are meticulously prepared by the religious education lead for the upcoming year, ensuring a carefully sequenced curriculum. Inclusive practices are an important part of classroom practice. Lessons are structured to provide adequate adult and peer support, supplemented by scaffolding techniques such as writing templates and visual cues, enhancing independent learning. Leaders have used work scrutiny to compare pupils with special educational needs and disabilities with their peers to ensure that all children are being challenged. This has resulted in all groups making good progress. Staff members exhibit a strong drive for self-improvement, readily seeking feedback through learning walks to enhance outcomes for their pupils. Current pedagogical methods are integrated into all religious education planning, highlighting a commitment to effective teaching strategies. The outstanding contributions of the religious education lead are widely acknowledged within the school community, with early career teachers speaking highly of her support and guidance. Rigorous book scrutinies demonstrate a broad variety of enriching activities across the curriculum, including engaging exercises using concrete resources such as handling a rosary, constructing with Lego, engaging in role-play, and analysing art.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

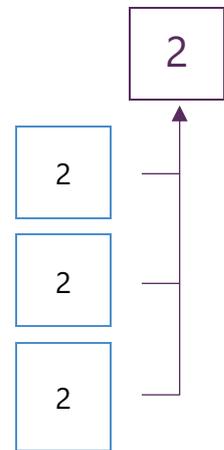
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school’s collective worship

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

Leadership

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



Pupils demonstrate active participation by engaging in singing, prayers, responses, and various actions. The Mission team is well established and see their role as bringing people, ‘closer to God.’ They oversee a liturgy club that aims to facilitate a deeper spiritual relationship with God. Pupils display a clear understanding of the liturgical year, incorporating its significance into the prayer life of the school - such as the tradition of praying the Rosary during the Month of May. Furthermore, pupils actively contribute to the planning of end-of-topic collective worship sessions as part of their curriculum. While pupils demonstrate enthusiasm for participating in collective worship planning, they expressed a desire for increased opportunities to engage in the planning of whole-school collective worship events, highlighting their eagerness to contribute meaningfully to the spiritual development of the school community. Parents are extremely supportive of the school’s provision for prayer and liturgy and can see the development of their children’s spirituality as they move through the school. One parent who responded to the inspection survey wrote: “The focus on prayer and spiritual development has helped my child build a strong relationship with God and live out her faith.”

The environment is used creatively to promote the prayer life of the school. Prayer spaces have been established in classrooms and reflect the liturgical calendar. The school chapel is regularly utilised by both staff and pupils fostering a lovely prayerful atmosphere. A small minority of parents would like to be able to participate more in prayer and collective worship. Leaders are looking at ways of developing this further. Daily prayers are shared on social media platforms, providing accessibility to the entire school community and beyond. Scripture is well chosen enhancing the overall quality of worship. The scripture aligns with the previous or upcoming Sunday’s Gospel. Staff members serve as exemplary role models during collective worship, setting a high standard of practice for both their colleagues and pupils. Prayer and liturgy sessions are carefully planned, ensuring a meaningful and engaging experience for everyone who is participating. The implementation of weekly virtues worship

sessions has significantly contributed to the integration of virtues throughout the school. This initiative has notably influenced improvements in behaviour, a fact acknowledged by the pupils themselves. The school community has the opportunity to celebrate Mass regularly and the Year 6 children celebrated Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament just before they took part in their end of year Key Stage 2 tests. Leaders understand the need to introduce the Sacrament of Reconciliation to enrich the offering for the school community.

The school's policy on prayer and liturgy is clear, relevant and confidently used. Leaders and governors have prioritised prayer and liturgy. Senior staff model effective liturgy and support staff in leading themselves. The May procession, to which parents are welcomed is one example of how the school offer experiences that are part of the Catholic tradition. Additionally, the Year 3 teachers organised a Mass to celebrate the children who have received First Holy Communion. Mass is always celebrated on Holy Days of Obligation either in school or in the local parish. Professional Development remains a focus, with in-house training opportunities, staff briefings and relevant attendance at Diocesan-led sessions. Four staff members have been enrolled in the CCRS course next academic year. Furthermore, the support provided for all staff to lead prayer and liturgy within the school highlights a holistic approach towards nurturing the prayer life of the school. The leadership's invitation to staff to lead prayers and the guidance offered indicate a thoughtful approach to fostering a community of faith within the school setting.

Information about the school

Full name of school	The Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	142742
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9413355
Full postal address of the school	The Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School, Kingsland Gardens, Kingsthorpe, Northampton, NN2 7BH
School phone number	01604714399
Headteacher	Carmel Dodds
Chair of Local Governing Body	Jamie Bray
School Website	www.thegoodshepherdatholicprimaryschool.org.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Academies Trust Ltd
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	May 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Mark Holdsworth
Hayley Gallagher

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