

Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Primary School, Blackpool

URN: 119596

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Lancaster

13–14 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

2

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

2

Collective worship (p.7)

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

2

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

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

Fully

2

What the school does well

- The school's Catholic vision and values are well established and provide a foundation for all pupils, staff, and other stakeholders to build positive and loving relationships, based on Jesus' teachings.
- The staff team work hard to ensure children and pupils receive the highest levels of pastoral care.
- A carefully planned programme of Masses and liturgical celebrations, throughout the year, ensures that the school community places Christ at the centre of its work.
- Teacher subject knowledge in Religious Education supports pupils to attain well and comparably to other subjects, including English.

- Children and pupils enjoy religious education lessons. Great progress has been made by the school to engage harder to reach pupil groups, improving their contributions to lessons and their outcomes.

What the school needs to improve

- Leaders and governors must plan and undertake a regular and well-designed programme of monitoring and self-evaluation that targets and documents planned improvements in the areas of inspection.
- Leaders and governors must ensure that a policy is formulated that reflects best practices in the preparation of prayer and liturgy, including pupils' skills of participation that are appropriate to their age and increase throughout their time in school.
- Provide training for the preparation and delivery of high-quality prayer and liturgy, enabling teachers and pupils to plan, undertake and evaluate their experiences together.

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

2

Provision

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

2

Leadership

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

2

2

Our Lady of Assumption places Christ at the heart of all its work. Children and pupils understand the Catholic identity of their school and can articulate, in basic terms, how they contribute to its distinctiveness through their actions towards each other and through the charities they support. The school's motto, 'in all things charity', is known by the pupils and they speak with compassion when recalling their support for Cafod, the food bank and especially Brian House Children's Hospice. Pupils do not yet fully understand the theology underpinning Catholic social teaching and why, as Catholics, they should work for the common good. Pupils feel safe and happy in school and enjoy learning. The school's mission is visible throughout school and well known by the pupils. The words Care, Learn, Respect, and the values that support them, provide a memorable basis for them to demonstrate the school's Catholic identity. Pupils who do not yet meet the school's high expectations, are supported through effective pastoral care. The Growing in Faith Together team (GIFT), made up of all Year 5 pupils, is developing its chaplaincy work, 'to bring smiles to people's faces' in school and the extended parish community. All pupils highly value the chaplain, who spends two half-days per week in school, building and facilitating their understanding of the Catholic faith.

Leaders have formulated a clear and well-established mission statement, underwritten by core values, that is understood by the whole school community. When asked, one child said, "God wants us to treat everyone equally. This doesn't mean treating everyone the same, as we all need different things". Staff reiterate this in their own commitment to the Catholic life of the school and when celebrating pupils' efforts, relationships, and adherence to the values through golden awards each Friday. Inviting parents to this assembly, would increase the already strong sense of community that parents acknowledge. The staff are highly supportive of one another and are valued by pupils. Parents speak highly of them, appreciating the help they are given in

difficult circumstances. One parent spoke about the care and support provided after a bereavement that really helped her child to understand and come to terms with the death of a loved one. Pastoral care is a high priority in school including gaining formal help for children with additional needs and the organisation of early help for vulnerable pupils. The Catholic identity of the school is visible throughout the building and the patron, Our Lady, is a prominent feature. A child noted, "The crosses we have in school show us we can live in peace – without sin. Jesus gave his life".

Our Lady of the Assumption fully promotes the bishop's vision for the diocese and the school has recently joined the Blessed Edward Bamber Catholic MAT, through which additional opportunities have been provided to enrich the Catholic life of the school. A well-developed programme of Masses and liturgical events exists to support Catholic life throughout the year. Leaders and governors are committed to improving the school, in all areas, but are not yet fully able to monitor and evaluate current practice. As such, school improvement priorities have not been effectively identified. Leaders and governors have expressed a wish to improve parish links and great progress has been made in this area due to the involvement of two parish priests taking the roles of governor and chaplain. Parents are highly appreciative of this and view it as a strength of the school. These links also strengthen the school's ability to offer professional development to staff in Catholic theology and subject knowledge. Opportunities for all staff to benefit from this, whether existing or new to the school, should be built into the school's improvement plans, as well as carefully formulated plans to support staff well-being.

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

2

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

2

2

Pupils are developing secure knowledge in curriculum religious education, as directed by the school's chosen schemes of work and the *Religious Education Directory*. School data shows they achieve well and in-line with other subjects, including English. They are developing their religious literacy and are starting to reflect in a spiritual manner that adds depth to their work. When asked, pupils openly said they enjoyed religious education lessons and their engagement in lessons, in most classes, demonstrated this. One pupil said, "I like learning about Jesus. He saved the world". Another said, "RE is interesting. You learn new things and then you can share this and tell others". Pupils are completing work regularly and most try hard to present their work to the best of their ability. The quality of work across the school is not yet consistent and should be a focus for monitoring to assure standards. Individuality and creativity in the way pupils present their work, and further planned adaptations to enable all pupil groups to reach their potential, would increase attainment further. Pupils are able to select work they are proud of and explain why, but they are not yet able to articulate how they are doing in religious education, or how to improve further.

Teachers have confidence in their subject knowledge, and this is furthered through engagement with diocesan training for the new curriculum and through effective discussion within the staff team. They know the children well and regularly moderate learning, both in-house and annually with other Catholic schools. Staff value religious education and provide pupils with an increasing variety of questions during lessons that enable them to think, make links and build on prior learning, but this is not yet consistent across the school. Adaptation of tasks and expected outcomes, to reach and extend all pupil groups, can be variable and would benefit from a programme of subject leader monitoring and support. To enable pupils to understand how they have done in their work and their next steps in learning, verbal and

written feedback strategies should be agreed and shared, so school-wide consistency is achieved.

Leaders have chosen to follow the recommended diocesan format for integrating the new curriculum, beginning with reception, Year 1 and Year 3. A good start has been made and teachers have benefited from bespoke professional development for this. The remaining classes will follow the school's programme of change over the next two years. Religious education at Our Lady of the Assumption does have the same resourcing, timetabling and importance as other core subjects, but would benefit from additional professional development so that standards, expectations, and adaptations to learning can be made consistent across each key stage. Setting this out in policy, which is regularly reviewed by governors, will ensure existing staff and those joining the school in the future can meet the same requirements. Leaders enrich the curriculum and include learning opportunities from the liturgical year, such as holy days and key times in the life of Jesus. This increases children's understanding of scripture, which is incorporated into lessons, especially through the new directory's learning outcomes. The subject leader for curriculum religious education is relatively new to role and should now develop a structured monitoring programme that focuses on raising standards, supporting teaching, and enriching the curriculum. Self-evaluation and monitoring, including that undertaken by governors, is not yet sufficiently rigorous and challenging to develop and improve outcomes.

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

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

Leadership

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

2

2

Pupils participate in planned prayer and liturgy on a regular basis, in class and as a whole school. Masses and special events are also celebrated within the parish and multi academy trust. Most pupils understand the importance of reverence, gestures, liturgical music and traditional responses and join in willingly, but staff have identified that some children still require support to show the correct level of respect and participation in some prayer and liturgy. Whole school celebrations and those provided by the school's chaplain, contain a wide variety of ways of praying, including Christian meditation and periods of reflection. Class based prayer and liturgy, conversely, is limited in its creativity due to reliance on a published scheme that does not include personalisation when used as directed. As a result, although pupils do have opportunities to lead prayer and liturgy in class, there are few opportunities to plan and prepare these independently, except in upper Key Stage 2, and no opportunities to evaluate them afterwards. Despite this, pupils can explain how prayer influences some of their decisions and how they have been led to action through the themes of liturgy. For example, during the two days of inspection, class prayer and liturgy sessions focused on saints and their works. Pupils were able to reflect on how they could act in similar ways through their own actions.

Prayer and liturgy holds high importance in school and follows the liturgical year. Designated areas in classes provide a suitable focus for prayer and pupils are encouraged to look after these areas and choose suitable resources for display. School benefits from being situated next door to the parish church. Class masses and visits related to the curriculum, to learn more about the building and symbolism, are frequent. Leaders ensure that pupils of all ages are taught traditional prayers and understand that talking to God is central to their time at school each day. The chaplain, head teacher and subject leader complete annual whole school planning of prayer and liturgy, incorporating appropriate scripture, prayer, and music,

collegiately. This practice should now be shared with staff, through training, to raise their understanding of high-quality prayer and liturgy, and in turn, allowing them to help pupils plan and lead their own. The latest guidance on Catholic prayer and liturgy should be followed and over reliance on one scheme avoided.

Leaders and governors ensure that key times of the liturgical calendar and seasons of the Church are celebrated appropriately. They make provision for the sacraments, alongside parish catechists and provide opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Advent and Lent. Professional development has been prioritised for teachers working on the new curriculum, but this must now extend to all staff and include liturgical formation as well as training to ensure a higher quality of prayer and liturgy. There is currently no policy to guide and structure prayer and liturgy, so the skills pupils are expected to gain, age appropriately, are vague. Class timetables contain suitable allowances for prayer and liturgy, but the quality is lower than it should be because of limited adaptation and engagement with the resources currently used. Leaders and governors are not effectively monitoring prayer and liturgy. This must be a regular feature of leaders' work, so that consistency, quality and variety of prayer and liturgy is improved, and the skill of participants is increased.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	119596
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8903622
Full postal address of the school	Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Primary School, Common Edge Road, Blackpool, FY4 5DF
School phone number	01253 762833
Headteacher	Elaine Mannix
Chair of Governors	Gary Smith
School Website	www.ourladyassumption-sch.co.uk/
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	N/A
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	March 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	1 – Outstanding

The inspection team

Mark FitzGibbon
Arran Brogden

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