

St Helen's Catholic Primary School

URN: 401385

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Cardiff

18–19 September 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

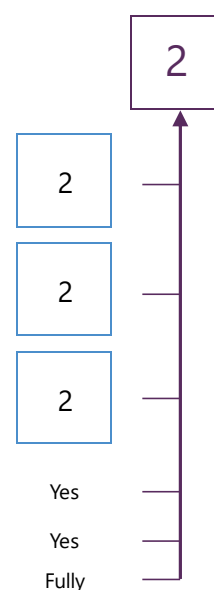
Collective worship (p.7)

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

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

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



Compliance statement

- The school is compliant in relation to the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference. For example, religious education is a core subject in the curriculum and is accorded the same academic rigour as other core subjects like English and mathematics.
- The school has complied in relation to any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop, for example, by embedding the use of the Catholic Pupil Profile programme and fulfilling the requirement of relationships, sex and health education (R(S)HE).
- The school has fully complied in relation to the previous areas for improvement. A systematic monitoring, evaluation and review cycle is in place and marking processes ensure that pupils have opportunities to respond to teachers' commentaries on learning.

What the school does well

- St Helen's RC Primary School is an attractive and welcoming Catholic school that celebrates the dignity and uniqueness of every community member.
- The presentation of pupils learning is of a high standard in books, digitally, and on displays.
- Pupils are proud and happy to be part of this community; they feel safe, nurtured, and valued and show high standards of good behaviour.
- Strong relationships and the dedication and commitment of leaders, governors, and staff contribute effectively to the success of all at St Helen's.
- Pupil planned and led worship is strong and contributes well to the spiritual development of pupils and sense of belonging to this warm and nurturing community.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop a mission statement that is a clear expression of the Catholic identity of the school and visibly lived out by the whole school community.
- Develop opportunities for pupils to be actively engaged in responding to the demands of Catholic Social Teaching and to be able to articulate aspects of the theology underpinning their actions.
- Leaders to continue to facilitate planning, implementation and monitoring of the *Religious Education Directory* and ensure the quality of teaching in religious education is consistent across the school, so that all lessons have pace and challenge and give opportunities for pupils to become more independent and reflective.

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

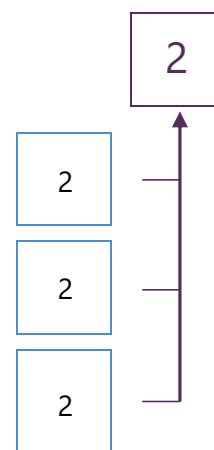
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



The school mission statement 'Strive to achieve, take care of our world, look after each other' is visible as soon as you enter the school. The school has taken measures to reinforce this for pupils, however, in discussion they were unable to articulate it. Moving forward, senior leaders and governors have plans to review the mission statement together with the involvement of all. This will allow the school to celebrate their renewed mission and vision.

The school chaplaincy group participates in activities to support those in need through Advent food bank collections and Cafod Lent appeals. However, pupils were not able to say why they support those in need or explain the theology underpinning their actions. Catholic Social Teaching through the use of Cafod resources has recently been introduced and pupils are beginning to understand the principles by responding to them in their lives. Pupils value the school's chaplaincy provision and were enthusiastic about being a member of the chaplaincy group creating ideas for their action plan, for example a bake sale. However, we agree with the school that the school chaplaincy group could be a more prominent part of the community, meeting more regularly, taking the lead and initiative in responding to concerns, and understanding why their response is rooted in Catholic faith and tradition.

Staff and pupils are committed to the Church's mission and actively participate in activities that offer service to the community, such as the pupil-led café which welcomes the community every Friday inviting members of the parish and community, encouraging parish links. However, the school's mission statement would benefit from renewing to make the mission of the school clearer. The chaplaincy group expressed a desire to understand their school patron saint and develop a school song or prayer to enhance the school mission. The quality of relationships and culture of welcome is a strength of the school. The school is a supportive and joyful community that values wellbeing and

pastoral care of all. The school provides a range of well-planned and effective opportunities for the spiritual and moral development of pupils and staff, such as the intergenerational gardening project, the Christmas fayre held by pupils, and the school choir. The culture of welcome includes valuing and supporting those from different faiths every year with 'other faith fortnight'. The school environment effectively reflects the school's Catholic character, with care and attention given to the quality of these spaces. The provision for R(S)HE meets statutory and diocesan requirements.

The head teacher and deputy head teacher are both very passionate and committed to the school and its community and have a keen sense of vocation in all that they do. All leaders are clear in the Church's mission for education and promote the diocesan vision strategically, taking on board and responding to all policies and training. They work well with the local parish and the parish priest is an integral part of the school community, highly valued by staff and pupils. The school has effective strategies to engage with parents for the benefit of pupils, such as Family Mass, prayer bags, and welcome services. Leaders and governors demonstrate respect for the dignity of workers by adapting policies, holding wellbeing days, and actively supporting pastoral care for staff. Governors are actively involved in the monitoring, evaluation, and review of the school, visiting regularly. The link governor has created a prayer book for all staff which includes prayers, feast days, links to resource materials, and a booklet for parents to learn more about the Catholic faith. Governors are a strength in the running of the school, both challenging and supporting the school and its development. A cycle of self-evaluation activities includes an annual whole-day self-evaluation session for governors and staff, giving opportunities for professional dialogue evaluating the Catholic life of the school.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

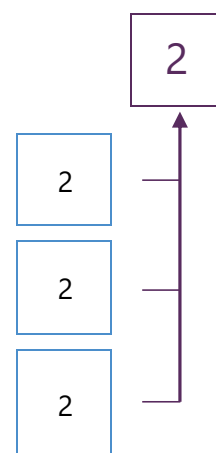
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Pupil engagement in lessons is good, particularly in the youngest classes where there is effective use of indoor and outdoor space and resources. Pupils expressed their enjoyment of religious education and how art and digital opportunities creatively support their learning. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is very good. The adoption of the *Religious Education Directory* is in its early stages and pupils are becoming more secure in their knowledge and skills. For example, pupils in Year 2 were able to explain that the rainbow was the sign of God's covenant to his people. Evident in pupils' books and digitally produced work, pupils make good progress from their starting points. Pupils spoke with confidence about a piece of work they were proud of. For instance, a pupil in Year 6 shared an example of work for which she had received a 'Cracking Cardinal' award. The reflection and marking policy is beginning to ensure that pupils reflect on their learning and identify ways forward. Pupils identified how they had responded to teachers' feedback questions to consolidate or extend their understanding of the learning objective. Pupils produce good work that is presented well and show signs of emerging individuality and creativity as observed in digital examples of work presented.

Teachers are becoming more confident in their subject knowledge, effectively supported by the religious education link governor who has given training on the Directory topic and held 'drop-in' directed time for staff if they needed support. Subject knowledge needed to effectively teach the Directory is being addressed through staff audits of support, training, and cluster work. Teachers are clearly committed to religious education and effectively communicate this. All adults are used effectively to optimise learning for all pupils. During the inspection, teaching was varied across the school. In the best lessons observed, effective questioning was used to recall prior knowledge, and appropriate activities were planned according to the age and stage of the pupils, enhancing their learning and engagement in the lesson. However, in some lessons observed, where pace was slow and questioning less effective, pupils were not challenged appropriately or able to take the initiative and

develop their learning. Celebration of effort, verbally and through their written work and display, is effective in motivating learners to achieve. All staff recognise the impact religious education has on the holistic development of pupils, however, opportunities for reflection during lessons were limited.

Leaders and governors ensure that the school curriculum for religious education is a faithful expression of the Directory. Senior leaders have taken the time to trial and review resources available and seek support from the cluster. Leaders have a clear vision for successful implementation across the school, but this is still an area to be developed further. Religious education is identified as a core subject and timetable priority is given. Performance management ensures opportunities for knowledge and pedagogical development. Leaders also ensure professional development is available for staff. For example, the link governor delivered training on the meaning of the scripture passages being explored in the curriculum topics, increasing staff understanding of the key concepts and messages. The monitoring, evaluation and review cycle includes all stakeholders and gives leaders the opportunity to evaluate all areas of religious education. For example, governors spoke passionately about their involvement in the school self-evaluation day. However, self-evaluation including the Catholic self-evaluation document needs to more strongly focused on the areas of development, actions, and impact to lead to further improvements in the school. Senior leaders are effectively supporting the relatively new religious education lead.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

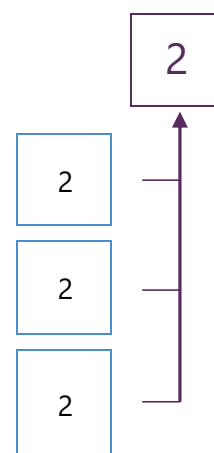
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

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



Collective worship at St Helen's is an integral part of school life. Pupils are provided with a range of opportunities which are age appropriate and engage pupils' interest. For example, class worship, phase worship, Christian meditation and daily prayers. Worship such as the Rosary Club, Lent services, Ash Wednesday and 'Burying the Alleluia', help pupils to live the liturgical year and be confident in articulating their faith. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about hosting the Friday Mass for parishioners and parents. Collective worship references the Pupil Profile virtues and Catholic social teaching. For example, a phase-led liturgy based on the Directory branch 'Creation and Covenant' linked to 'Stewardship' and growing in the virtues of 'curious and active'. Pupils gathered with reverence, listened intently and offered heartfelt responses. They are clearly proud to share their prayer experiences and use of the *Gweddiwn* resource contributes well to their spiritual development. For example, having listened to the story of the 'Garden of Eden', Year 6 pupils created their own 'Trees of Life' using natural materials in the outdoor classroom. The level of independence in preparing worship increases from the youngest to the oldest pupils, who display confidence in their role. Pupils articulated the impact that their worship has on them, saying, for example, that it brings them closer to God.

The provision for prayer and liturgy is good. It includes well-established routines of daily prayer, adult-led and pupil-led worship. The links with the local parish are strong. Prayer bags for the youngest learners, Friday Mass in school and Family Mass in church are well attended and help to develop the relationship between the school, home and parish. All staff are very good role models who capably guide pupils in their planning of prayer and liturgy. Themes for prayer are often reinforced in lessons, helping pupils to apply them to their daily lives. For example, following the phase-worship exploring the creation story, pupils in Reception class responded creatively to the Word of God in the outdoor environment using natural materials. There are a wide range of religious artefacts available, which

demonstrate the breadth of tradition. The school environment, both indoors and outdoors, is well used with appropriate prayer tables in all classrooms. The religious education lead has carried out learning walks to monitor, support, and share best practice. All classrooms have displays for religious education which support prayer and learning. Prayer foci and displays in communal areas are a strength of the school. Notable examples include the 'Prayers and Praises' board in the foyer, where all members of the school community can share prayers they have written, the pupil-designed mural in the school hall, and the dedicated Reflection Room.

Leaders and governors promote collective worship well and are good role models. The school has developed a policy on prayer and liturgy and provided impactful training for all staff in developing and delivering collective worship. Governors and the parish priest regularly attend liturgies and complete monitoring activities, for example a collective worship learning walk, following which feedback and ways forward were shared with staff. The parish priest meets with leaders throughout the year to plan and adapt worship where needed. The governing body is well informed of the range and quality of the experiences pupils receive. Leaders have a thorough understanding of the Church's liturgical year, its seasons and feasts and the necessary skills to develop meaningful themes for assemblies and other liturgies. The views of pupils are regularly sought about their own pupil-led prayer times, however, evaluation of the quality of the full range of prayer and liturgy would allow collective worship experiences to develop even further.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Helen's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	401385
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	6763310
Full postal address of the school	St Helen's Catholic Primary School, Lansbury Park, Caerphilly, CF83 1QH
School phone number	02920852532
Headteacher	Sophie Sanchez
Chair of governors	Robert Thomas
School Website	www.sthelensrcprimary.com
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	13 th – 15 th October 2014
Previous denominational inspection grade	GG

The inspection team

Juliet Stack
Laura Taylor

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

