

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

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....

1

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.....

1

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education.....

1

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

URN: 106463

Carried out on behalf of the Most Rev. Malcom McMahon, Archbishop of Liverpool on:

Date: 17th -18th May 2023

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- The mission statement is central and is at the core of all that the school does.
- Relationships between all members of the school family are palpably strong, warm and caring.
- All school staff are united in their drive to support each other with love and to provide the best care and education they can for all in their school family.
- School leaders, including governors, especially the head teacher and religious education lead provide a powerful model of Catholic leadership.
- The pupils' behaviour, both during learning and socially, is exceptional, which is evidenced through their engagement in class and care for each other.

What the school needs to improve:

- Build upon the already-strong practice of articulating with clarity how the Catholic identity of the school influences the whole of the taught curriculum.
- Produce further opportunities for more pupils to experience leadership roles throughout the school.
- Continue to enrich the existing process that ensures lower attaining pupils are exposed to learning and teaching strategies, which develops their independence and enables them to express what has been learnt more creatively.

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

Pupils thoroughly embrace the mission statement and demonstrate it in different ways through their actions. In discussion pupils stated, 'We think about what Jesus would do.' The central theme of 'Hand in Hand with Jesus' permeates the whole of school life. Pupils take seriously their role as Hand Disciples and enthusiastically share all their actions to promote the teachings of Jesus. Pupils wholeheartedly recite the school prayer and understand its meaning. They are proud of their school and state that they are all unique, special and made in God's image. Pupils demonstrate this understanding in their behaviour to each other by treating their peers with genuine love, kindness and dignity. Pupils shared their knowledge and understanding of Catholic social teaching and its impact on school life. For example, pupils led a children's charity day and spoke about raising funds for charities important to them. One pupil raised money for a cystic fibrosis charity with her friend whose family has been touched by this. Parents commented that, 'The mission statement...is embedded in everything St. Aidan's does. Each child is at the heart of what it stands for.'

Christ is at the heart of this school and this deep understanding is shared by all. The Catholic life and mission of the school are deeply rooted within scripture. The school provides opportunities for all members to be of service to each other and the wider community. There is genuine care for all in the school family of governors, parents, staff and pupils. There is an embedded culture of welcome for all. Strategies are used sensitively, building on strong relationships, where vulnerable

people are identified and treated with compassion. The pastoral manager and senior leaders know their families well and find creative ways to support. For example, food bank collections, uniform and costume swaps. Relationships, sex and health education is well planned and led and in accordance with diocesan requirements. The school environment is well cared for and opportunities have been exploited to enhance the Catholic curriculum. For example, a large display in the hall reflects the core themes of Catholic social teaching. Choices have been made based upon the needs of the pupils and in keeping with the school's Catholic identity. Pupils explore other faiths and cultures not only through religious education but through other subjects such as art, personal, social and health education and book choices in English. Some curriculum choices in other areas have been influenced by the Catholic understanding of reality. Leaders could explore this further to make connections between subject areas to deepen this understanding and draw upon the richness of Catholic contributions to culture.

Leaders and governors are enthusiastic in their role and take seriously their responsibility to be 'guardians of the mission.' Governors are passionate about and actively involved in the Catholic life of their school and are highly experienced and skilled. They stated that it was a privilege to support the school and were strong in their assurance that the mission was a 'lived reality' which reflected 'genuine investment from governors, staff, parents and pupils.' They participate effectively in the school's self-evaluation processes and provide a good balance of support and challenge. The religious education governor provides a strong link with the parish community and is active in strengthening these links. The head teacher and deputy head are passionate and determined in their pursuit to share the school's mission and are inspirational in their role. The head teacher shares her knowledge and experience throughout the Archdiocese by supporting the development of the wider family of schools. One example of this is the provision of guidance for a new head teacher in the area and through membership of the school improvement trust. The deputy head teacher who is the religious education lead, actively supports other leaders within the local cluster as well as those new to the role. Through the leadership of the head teacher and deputy head, experienced staff as well as those new to the school, have a profound understanding of the school's mission.

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.....	1
Leadership How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....	1

Pupils make consistently strong progress in religious education. They are developing excellent knowledge, understanding and skills. This is reflected in consistently high levels of attainment and progress. When asked do you enjoy religious education, one pupil commented, ‘Oh yes, I love it. It’s the best.’ Their exemplary behaviour in lessons reflects their high levels of engagement and enjoyment of religious education because their teachers plan interesting lessons which build upon prior learning. For example, in a Year 6 lesson about the role of hospices, children thought deeply and used research to create a job description for a hospice volunteer. They are articulate and religiously literate and enjoy asking and answering challenging questions. Pupils reflect on their learning and how it may impact upon their lives. In the same lesson, they related the work of hospices to the call of Jesus to help the sick and how they may be invited to follow this call. Most pupils are independent learners and produce high standards in recorded work. Lower attaining pupils are well supported. However, this level of support should be carefully considered so that it does not detract from their independence. Children in the early years make good progress because of excellent opportunities for learning provided in continuous provision and direct teaching inputs. For example, in one lesson pupils explored many activities about friendship including enjoying a parachute game where all players needed to work together. Pupils make strong progress in religious education and attainment is high. This is in line with other core subjects.

Teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding of pedagogy because of high quality training and support provided by senior leaders. They cascade new learning from the Archdiocesan team. This takes place often and is planned. Planning reflects effective use of the Come and See programme and how this is adapted to meet the needs of learners. Planning and observed teaching reflects high expectations. The use of a range of strategies deepens learning overall, for example, when using opportunities for group and partner discussions and hot seating. Through effective use of questioning which deepens and clarifies learning, pupils build upon prior learning. This was seen in a Year 2 lesson, where the teacher paused independent learning when she understood confusion could arise. In several observed lessons, teachers made strong references to Catholic social teaching and themes surrounding this, which had been previously shared. Each lesson concluded with time for purposeful reflection. This encouraged children to connect spiritually and morally with their learning. The teaching of religious education is enhanced by developing links with visitors to school, local parish groups and national charities.

Leaders and governors ensure that religious education is the core subject in school and all expectations of the directory are fully fulfilled. Religious education is well resourced and is given high status in terms of timetabling, staffing and training. The subject leader is enthusiastic and wholeheartedly committed to her role. She is active in ensuring consistency in standards, approaches and assessment. Teachers new to the school feel well supported by her. There is a full calendar of monitoring activities, which is shared with staff at the beginning of each school year. The results of monitoring help to support teachers and celebrate good practice. The status of religious education as *the* core subject in the school is emphasized by its prioritized placement in school reports and development plans. Minutes of governors' meetings and reports to governors also reflect this importance. Religious education data is shared with governors. This is scrutinized to ensure that all groups of pupils are making progress. School leaders and governors monitor and evaluate religious education in all its aspects and plan actions to further improve the already outstanding practice.

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

1

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 enjoy all prayer and liturgy opportunities provided by the school. They demonstrate full, active and conscious participation. In observed acts of worship, pupils reflected in prayerful silence on the scripture which had been shared. The pupils leading the worship posed questions to enhance this time of reflection. On another occasion, pupils burst into joyful song with clear enjoyment. In Year 6, with support from their teacher, pupils planned and led their own act of worship. The theme was appropriately chosen to coincide with the feast of the Ascension. All present, including staff, were inspired by the words of St Teresa of Avila to be the hands of Christ in the world. Pupils know many traditional prayers and responses that reflect the Catholic tradition. They understand the pattern and rhythm of the liturgical year and speak about their celebration of major feasts and seasons and how these are expressed in their life of prayer. Further consideration could be given to how scripture is shared with reverence, drawing upon Catholic tradition.

Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school. This is emphasized by the daily sharing and recitation of the school prayer. During the inspection, this was recited several times with ease and strength of meaning. Scripture is at the heart of prayer and liturgy. Passages are well chosen and acknowledged by the children. Provision is planned so that all can participate, including parents, staff and governors. Parents and governors are regularly invited to prayer and liturgy. This provision is increasing. Prayer and liturgy utilise some of the traditions of the Catholic church. These include traditional prayers, introduction of the rosary and the liturgical year. Music is used skillfully to create a prayerful and serene atmosphere. Hymns and songs are well used and

consequently many pupils enjoy singing with enthusiasm. Prayer spaces are provided throughout the building and pupils use these spontaneously in their own and personal life of prayer. Pupils spoke about how these areas help them to pray. The Hands Disciples also create prayer boxes for each class. This encourages children to pray for different reasons and groups of people. The school joins the parish family for Mass in church each week. Strong links are being forged with parish catechists. Several were recently welcomed into school for a special celebration in gratitude for their work in preparing pupils for first communion.

The school's policy for prayer and liturgy is lived out consistently in practice across the phases of school. All pupils are enabled to engage in appropriate prayer and liturgy relevant to their age and stage. Teachers have attended training and are well supported by the head teacher and deputy head teacher who monitor, cascade and model excellent practice. Consequently, staff lead and support pupils in providing highly accessible and meaningful opportunities for prayer. On occasions pupils share these skills with the whole school community, which includes parents. There is a calendar for prayer and liturgy with weekly themes selected. These are based upon the Church's year, including all seasons, holy days of obligation and major feasts. The deputy head supports teachers by planning a weekly act of prayer and worship based upon the gospel of Sunday, to be shared with all classes. This reflects and enhances pupils' understanding of liturgical sources including the missal and lectionary. Prayer and liturgy are regularly monitored and evaluated by the deputy head teacher and head teacher. This is shared with governors who are interested and supportive. They continually seek ways to remain actively involved in the development of prayer and worship.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Aidan's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	106463
Full postal address of the school	Holmes House Avenue, Winstanley, Wigan, WN3 6EE
School phone number	01942 223544
Name of head teacher or principal	Mrs J. Farrimond
Chair of governing board	Mr J. Leake MBE
School Website	www.saintaidansprimary.org.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Not Applicable
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	3-11 years old
Trustees	Archdiocese of Liverpool
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	Tuesday 27 th January 2015
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

Mrs Louise Byrne

Lead inspector

Mr Alan Saunders

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