

St Paul's Catholic Primary School

URN: 110006

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Portsmouth

27–28 June 2024

Summary of key findings

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

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

What the school does well

- The head teacher and her senior leaders work selflessly for the good of the entire school community and their commitment to the Catholic identity of the school is exemplary.
- There is a strong and tangible sense of Catholic purpose which permeates the whole school community; all staff, governors and pupils at St Paul's fully embrace the notion of being a Christian witness to others.
- Within religious education lessons, teachers provide activities that are highly stimulating and engaging. This enables all pupils to fully participate in their learning and develop their knowledge and understanding, to an impressive degree.
- Across the whole school, standards of attainment and progress achieved by the pupils within religious education are excellent.

- The school provides a wide variety of experiences of prayer and liturgy for the pupils, which are of a very high quality. Pupils consistently take part in opportunities for prayer with enthusiasm, respect and reverence.

What the school needs to improve

- Leaders should plan to augment the religious education curriculum even further, so that pupils benefit from a greater range of stimulating and enriching learning experiences.
- Leaders and governors should develop a more systematic and consistent approach to monitoring the provision of collective worship, so that they have a precise understanding of provision in this area.

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

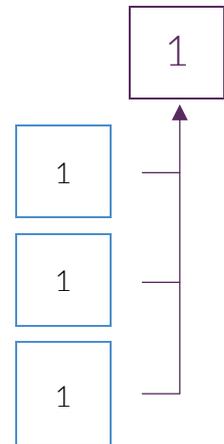
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 Catholic mission of St Paul's is embraced by everyone in the community, not least the children, who have an excellent understanding of what it means to be part of a Catholic school. Pupils clearly understand that they are special and created by God to serve a particular vocation and this understanding is reflected in their confidence and happiness within the school community. Pupils flourish at St Paul's and embrace the opportunity to act as Christian witnesses to others. This is particularly evident through the work of the school Mini-Vinnie group who have supported a variety of charities and causes such as McMillan, CAFOD and by helping with appeals for various causes around the world. Pupils also work hard to support initiatives within the local parish and wider area, including those that are related to the protection of the environment. Pupils are highly respectful of one another and the fact that many come from a diverse range of backgrounds, further emphasises the unity within the school. Their behaviour and attitudes demonstrate their deep respect for the Catholic identity of the school and are exemplary. The parish priest is a strong advocate of the school and regularly visits to celebrate Mass and support in religious education lessons.

The school mission statement 'United through Jesus in faith, love and learning' is known and understood by everyone in the school. Opportunities are taken throughout the year to regularly emphasise it and remind people of its central focus, with all staff and pupils enthusiastically embracing the charism of the school. Staff are very grateful for the warm and nurturing environment in which they work and acknowledge the support given to them by senior leaders. A number of staff come from a variety of ethnic and faith backgrounds, but all acknowledge the warmth and acceptance with which they are received, resulting in a strong 'family feel' within the school. This results in a happy and productive workforce with all adults in the community

providing an excellent example to the children in their care. No member of the St Paul's school community is left in a vulnerable or difficult position, because of the shared desire to support one another. The school environment is unmistakably Catholic; the variety of statues and artefacts that emphasise the Catholicity of the community are well kept and attention is given to these, so that they are highly prominent. The school ensures pupils have a firm understanding of relationships and health education through its delivery of the 'Life to the Full' program, although leaders acknowledge that more could be done to monitor its impact.

Leaders and governors are, without question, highly committed to the Catholic life and mission of the school and prioritise it above all else. The head teacher in particular, has a very strong commitment to the school's Catholic mission and leads by example, helping others to carry out their Christian obligations with energy and zeal. This is emphasised for example, by the fact that every year, the head teacher and RE leader give up a number of their Saturday mornings to help children in the school prepare for First Holy Communion within the parish. Leaders and governors at the school are wholly supportive of the Bishop's vision for Catholic education within the diocese and embrace diocesan initiatives with eagerness. Parental links are strong, meaning that most parents understand and are supportive of the school's Catholic mission. One summed up the general mood by stating 'The caring and nurturing nature of St Paul's, following the teachings of Christ, have had such a positive impact on my son's first year at school. It's such a lovely and welcoming school...' Catholic social teaching is embedded within school life and leaders and governors take every opportunity to emphasise its importance. Governors take a keen interest in the Catholic life of the school and some regularly visit to see first-hand, the wide range of activities on offer.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

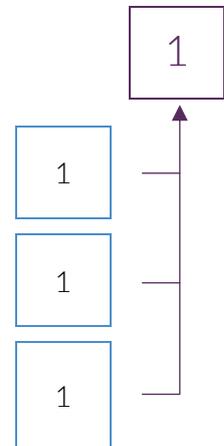
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Religious education is paramount at St Paul's and pupils develop an excellent understanding of the Catholic curriculum, consistently making very strong progress in every year group. On entering the school, many children have low levels of religious literacy but through strong support and guidance, particularly in the Early Years, they quickly develop their understanding within the subject. Those who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs are also supported effectively and achieve proportionately strong outcomes. Pupils are able to articulate their understanding of their learning in religious education and have a relatively deep theological and spiritual capacity. Within lessons pupils speak fluently about what they have learnt and can quickly retrieve key ideas and facts which have been previously taught to them, proficiently applying these to new learning concepts. They work diligently and with care and attention across all classes, demonstrating good levels of independence and excellent attitudes to learning. As a result, the work produced in their religious education books is of a very high standard. Pupils take pride in their work and obviously enjoy religious education lessons which always stretch and challenge them. In the majority of classes they are supported very effectively to self-assess their religious education work and those who are older, can talk fluently about how they have made progress in the subject. Standards achieved in religious education within the school are the strongest of any subject and further demonstrate its priority within the curriculum.

Teachers are highly practised at teaching religious education and have a strong pedagogical understanding and subject knowledge. There is a shared expectation across the school that religious education is the principal subject within the curriculum and great care is taken to ensure that lessons are planned to be as effective as possible and sequentially progressive over time. Within religious education lessons, teachers are skilful at questioning children, and probe them adeptly, encouraging them to explain their learning in detail. Religious education work is

celebrated to a good degree and the great majority of teachers provide feedback which enhances learning. Within lessons, teachers provide opportunities for children not only to develop intellectually, but spiritually and morally as well. A range of resources and approaches are employed within religious education lessons, which also enhance the learning experience.

As a result of the fact that leaders and governors consider religious education to be the most important subject in the curriculum, the standards achieved are very strong. A robust scope of professional development opportunities are employed by leaders and governors, so that staff are enabled to successfully teach religious education. The subject leader for religious education, shares the enthusiasm for the subject with the head teacher and governors. She regularly and systematically monitors standards within the subject, such as through observing lessons and monitoring religious pupils' education books. Governors also take a keen interest in the subject and discuss standards within the governing body, as well by visiting lessons and looking at religious education books themselves. The religious education curriculum has been carefully designed, to build on pupils' knowledge year on year so that very strong progress is made overtime. Whilst there is a very commendable academic drive within religious education, pupils would also benefit from a wider range of enrichment activities, which would further complement the scholastic approach delivered within classrooms.

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

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

2

1

Pupils benefit from a broad range of opportunities to engage in prayer, liturgy and celebration of the word. They consistently approach such times with an impressive degree of reverence and respect, demonstrating their understanding of the significance of prayer within the Catholic community. The depth of Catholic tradition around prayer is emphasised to pupils well and throughout the school they have a growing awareness of the customs within the Church. They are able to see how prayer changes throughout the liturgical year and how, for example, liturgical colours are used to reflect the Church's seasons. Pupils are given opportunities to work collaboratively with each other and adults to plan, provide and evaluate collective worship, prayer and celebration of the word. They undertake these liturgical ministries with a keen degree of enthusiasm. Whilst pupils are very adept at planning and providing such opportunities, most are still developing the ability to cohesively evaluate these occasions. Pupils are able to see how the religious education curriculum impacts the prayer life of the school and understand that prayer can sometimes be the consequence of learning about particular issues.

Prayer and liturgy are central to life at the school and everyone within the community instinctively understands this. Varied opportunities are planned so that children benefit from prayer and liturgy on a daily basis and such times are linked to the liturgical year, within the Catholic Church. Scripture passages are carefully chosen and communicated to a high standard so that children are clear on their message and the way this impacts their lives. All staff are highly committed to the prayer life of the school and follow the precedent set by leaders. Staff skilfully support pupils who are charged with planning and delivering opportunities for prayer, so that these are always of a strong standard and contain a wide variety of creative approaches. Imaginative use of space is made to deliver prayer and liturgy, such as by celebrating Mass in the woodland area, emphasising the beauty of the natural environment provided by God. Within

classrooms, dedicated spaces for prayer are maintained to a high standard. Parents and families are given opportunities to visit the school to participate in prayer and liturgy and the school also works highly effectively with the local parish in this respect.

Leaders have developed a carefully thought out policy on prayer and liturgy, which is used successfully to outline the expectations within this area. They have sensibly considered how pupils need to be supported across the school to grow in their appreciation of prayer and liturgy and the impact of this is evidenced through the joyful way in which pupils pray and participate. Attention is taken by leaders, including governors, to ensure that the main events featured within the Church's liturgical cycle are recognised and celebrated within the school. For example, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered during Advent and Lent for those children who are eligible, and the school community joyfully celebrates the feast of St Paul each year through Mass and a picnic, to which all are invited. Leaders and governors ensure that staff are effectively supported to plan and deliver prayer and liturgy which is meaningful and has impact. As a consequence of this, staff are very clear of the prominence of prayer and liturgy within the school and are highly supportive of it. Within the leadership team, there is a notable degree of expertise around what successful prayer looks like and this is shared widely. However, although prayer and liturgy is obviously a strength of the school, it is not routinely monitored in a systematic way, and therefore governors do not always have a precise enough understanding of provision in this area.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Paul's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	110006
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8693306
Full postal address of the school	St Paul's Catholic Primary School, City Road, Tilehurst, Reading, RG31 4SZ
School phone number	01189422003
Headteacher	Nuala Oster
Chair of Governors	Anne Dennehy
School Website	http://www.stpauls.w-berks.sch.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	Outstanding

The inspection team

Jamie Carroll
Sherlyn Lown

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