

Our Lady and St Kenelm Catholic Primary School

URN: 103850

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Birmingham

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

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 general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

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

Yes

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

Fully

1

Compliance statement

- This school fully complies with the general religious education norms laid down by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.
- This school is fully compliant with all additional requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- This school has fully responded to previous areas for improvement.

What the school does well

- The headteacher is a faith-filled leader, energised by the school's mission. Her vibrant approach to providing outstanding Catholic education is infectious and is shared by all staff.
- Catholic social teaching permeates all aspects of school life, from the governors' direction to class-based learning and social outreach projects.
- Outcomes in religious education are excellent because staff have very high expectations and are well-skilled in communicating these to pupils.
- Leaders deploy a rigorous monitoring and evaluation cycle, which enables rapid improvements to the school's Catholic life and mission, religious education, and collective worship.
- Pupils participate fully and actively in a wide range of Catholic prayer styles. They enthusiastically respond to the invitation to lead prayer for others.

What the school needs to improve

- Establish consistency in how pupils are challenged to respond at a deeper level to all areas of the religious education curriculum.

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



Pupils express proudly they are Christ's disciples. They know this entails specific behaviours because the staff make this explicit, and opportunities are abundant for them to enact the school's mission. They work hard 'for the benefit of all' by supporting the Black Country Food Bank, the Welcome Group, and Fr Hudson's, for example. They say this helps them to know they are part of God's Holy Church. Pupils are very confident that God is the creator of all things. Even the youngest children in the Early Years Foundation Stage know that God made them, meaning they 'Need to be nice' to one another. Because pupils' attitudes to each other are consciously respectful, they are exceptionally happy and confident at school. Their behaviour is exemplary. Catholic social teaching is a real strength. It permeates every aspect of school life, from curriculum to social action, in ways that excite the pupils. Consequently, they embrace opportunities to lead initiatives such as reducing food waste in school, learning about a local supermarket's 'food ranger' programme, and leading during 'refugee week'. There are many chaplaincy activities where pupils flourish because they are empowered to lead them, including a thriving Mini Vinnies group. Our Lady & St Kenelm is a child-led school where pupils are keen to spread God's love in word and action.

The mission inspires the school community in its work because it is kept at the forefront of daily activity. A recent review identified a need to update it to remain meaningful to the current school population. Consequently, staff and pupils speak about it assuredly. Staff are deeply committed to living out this mission. They view their vocations as 'an absolute privilege and honour'. They describe Our Lady & St Kenelm as 'A place where all staff and children lead by example, with Christ at the centre of all we do.' There is a vibrant sense of community within the school. Staff go the extra mile to provide an exceptionally supportive community for pupils and their families.

For example, they offer a uniform swap shop, help families with pastoral issues outside the working week, and proactively support the parish. The overwhelming majority of parents say they are welcomed into school and value that their views are attentively heard and responded to. The school provides excellent pastoral care for its pupils. They work closely with external agencies, including the NHS, who say, 'The support for children's social, emotional, and mental health needs is exceptional; it is like no other.'

Governors have heavily invested in staff training to ensure their high standards are met. Governors demonstrate a steadfast commitment to the Church's social principles in their direction of the school, typically through their investment in people and prioritisation of their respect for workers' rights. The chair and headteacher meet regularly and discuss needs within the school, thus ensuring resources are always well-targeted. Leaders' self-evaluation is rigorous and robust. This is because a comprehensive range of views, including staff, pupils, and parents, is sought to assure evaluation accuracy. Parental views are published on the school's website, along with leaders' responses, fostering a good level of transparency from the school and trust from parents. Leaders are outward-looking and benchmark their achievements against diocesan expectations and those of other schools to ensure they are at the forefront of developments concerning Catholic school improvement. The leadership of Catholic life and mission, including the Catholic social teaching curriculum, is highly competent and effective in positively impacting pupils' lives.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

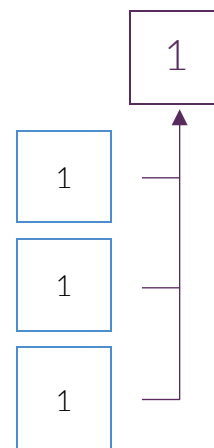
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Pupils are highly engaged in religious education lessons and share great enthusiasm for their learning. As a result, they are encouraged to make excellent progress in their lessons, and most are thriving. Attainment in religious education compares very favourably to that in other core subjects, which has been sustained over time. As pupils have developed the ability to work independently, they are confident when talking about their personal learning journeys and how they are building on prior knowledge. Focusing on religious literacy relentlessly means pupils use technical words accurately and confidently. They have a developed capacity for remembering words they have learnt and using them in new topics they learn about. They are incredibly confident and enthusiastic about sharing their learning with others. Pupils value how staff give them feedback and strive to work to the best of their ability to meet the school's high expectations; subsequently, they talk clearly about how they know they are achieving in lessons. For example, they talk passionately about aiming to be given the 'excellent' stamp in their work. Pupils' work is consistently of high quality; it is always completed fully and reflects the breadth of knowledge demanded by the curriculum.

Teachers understand the importance of having solid subject knowledge in helping them plan and deliver knowledge-rich, exciting lessons that engage pupils. Teachers plan lessons that provide opportunities for pupils to consolidate previous learning and further develop their understanding. Various strategies, such as skilled questioning, extended writing, annotating images, analytical thinking tasks, and teacher modelling, are used across both phases and support pupils in demonstrating learning well. The consistent and highly effective use of adults around the classroom is a real strength, and careful thought is given to the best ways to capture pupils' learning, which might otherwise be lost. Teachers know the requirements of the diocesan curriculum and routinely plan to meet its demands. There is a 'no ceilings' culture at Our Lady

and St Kenelm, where all pupils are supported to achieve the learning objectives using strategies tailored to individuals' needs. Staff take great care in planning lessons to maximise learning for all. There is some expert practice in how some teachers challenge pupils throughout religious education lessons, including in highly skilful adaptive questioning. However, such approaches are not yet consistent throughout all classrooms. Teachers understand the contribution of the subject to pupils' spiritual and moral development and plan opportunities to focus on it.

Leaders and governors prioritise religious education and ensure that full parity with other core subjects is given to it regarding resourcing and staffing. The subject enjoys the highest priority in school improvement plans. The quality of subject leadership is exceptional; complemented by a robust and effective approach to monitoring. Improvement actions are quickly identified, leading to the provision of high-quality training opportunities, which always have their impact on the standards measured. The subject leader puts herself at the service of the Archdiocese of Birmingham in several ways to ensure her expertise benefits other Catholic schools. The curriculum is sequenced well to ensure knowledge is introduced to pupils increasingly demanding; adapting diocesan unit markers enables pupils to demonstrate their developed knowledge. Governors are proactive in budgeting to support the school with training needs, which is highly valued by all staff who talk confidently about its impact on the school's teaching and learning. For example, several staff spoke about how studying for the *Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies* has increased their teaching of the synoptic gospels.

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

1

1

Pupils participate fully and actively in prayer. This is because the school clearly communicates high standards, excellent practice, and its central importance within the school. Consequently, pupils know that prayer is a special time when they talk to God and treat it with deep reverence from the moment they join the school community. Little Kenelm's Preschool captures each child's rapid acquisition of prayer skills in a detailed prayer journal, a practice continued throughout the school. Pupils confidently explain the Church's various liturgical seasons and their importance. For example, they knew the colour rose is used for a short time during Advent to represent joy and that Pentecost is a special time of year because 'It tells us that God sent down the Holy Spirit to the disciples and that is how He is with us today, as a fire in our hearts'. They are aware that prayers change at these times of the year but are not confident in the specific details. Pupil leadership is the norm here. They regularly collaborate to design and lead prayer services. For example, the Y6 Bible Group works independently of staff to lead prayer for younger pupils. Because pupils know the prayer's purpose and because staff are highly skilled, pupils undertake leadership roles and ministries confidently. Prayer evaluation happens routinely, meaning all pupils know 'what went well' and 'even better if', and are given the opportunity to enact development points. Pupils speak well about how the curriculum shapes it. For example, they pray for people who have their human rights violated when learning about human dignity as part of the Catholic curriculum. Pupils routinely pray petitions for their own needs and intercessions for others in response to the community's needs. They readily make connections between prayer and their life experiences.

The school provides many types and styles of prayer, from formal liturgies, such as the weekly celebration of Mass and Eucharistic Adoration, to spontaneous prayers, where pupils pray in the Mary Garden for their personal intentions. Several times a week, liturgy leaders invite their peers

to ask Our Lady for her intercessions using the Hail Holy Queen and Hail Mary. God's word is integral to all acts of worship. Age-appropriate texts and resources enable pupils to access His message in meaningful ways. Staff use the Ordo when planning Mass; relevant optional memorials are used where appropriate. All staff are committed to being excellent role models for pupils: they use gestures and words confidently so that pupils become confident in using them quickly. The assured and respectful responses and gestures of pupils observed during a whole-school Mass at the time of inspection were a joy to behold. Families respond well to invitations to Mass, Stay and Pray sessions and sacramental workshops and value the opportunity to use prayer bags to pray with their children at home.

Leaders and governors have recently updated the school's prayer and liturgy policy to provide clear guidance to staff on structuring prayer and helpful ideas for meeting these expectations. Staff have a developed understanding of how to build up prayer skills and participation as pupils grow older. Through a system of handover and liaison with previous class teachers, staff in each pupil's new class ensure continuity of progression at the start of each academic year. Regular formation opportunities are provided for all staff, not only so that they are well-skilled to lead pupils in prayer but also so they understand the purpose and meaning of prayer. The parish priest said this approach enables staff 'to lead with their hearts, not just their minds.' Robust evaluations lead to highly effective improvements in the school's practice.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Our Lady and St Kenelm Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	103850
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	332 3357
Full postal address of the school	Bundle Hill, Halesowen, B63 4AR
School phone number	01384 816880
Headteacher	Christine Finnegan
Chair of governing board	Peter Johnson
School Website	www.our-lady.dudley.sch.uk
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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	May 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Ben McArdle
Kerry Cox

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