

# St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School

URN: 142369

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Middlesbrough

11–12 June 2025

## 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

- St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School is fully compliant with all the requirements of the Diocesan Bishop.
- St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School has responded to and met the areas for further development which were identified during the last inspection.

## What the school does well

- Pupils know they are loved and they feel a deep sense of belonging. Adults know that they are highly valued.

- Leaders are inspirational in their dedication to the pupils in their care. They are highly ambitious for all and are persistent in their pursuit of excellence. Christ is at the centre of decisions they make.
- Standards in religious education are exceptionally high. The subject knowledge pupils display in lessons is outstanding as a result of highly effective teaching. Work is presented well and with a deep sense of pride.
- Links to the parish are exceptionally strong and this is highly valued by the community.
- Pupils enjoy school greatly. They display joyful dispositions during prayer and liturgy and create a culture of mutual respect. They are inspired to grow spiritually.

### What the school needs to improve

- Build the school's capacity to sustain exemplary Catholic leadership into the future.
- Use Bibles in lessons to ensure pupils develop a deeper knowledge and understanding of authentic scripture translations.

## 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 have a deep sense of belonging to St Bernadette's and thrive because the ethos of the school is rooted in the teachings of Christ. Their actions are underpinned by their deep commitment to care for one another and our common home. They have a lived understanding of Catholic social teaching because this is mapped across the curriculum and explicitly taught, with a specific focus for each year group. Pupils know they are unique and loved and recognise their responsibility to be committed citizens. This is reflected in their relationships with one another and in their active participation in the school and wider community. They willingly and proudly contribute to and lead initiatives which enrich the community. For example, their regular visits to a local residential home are greatly enjoyed by all. Pupils' behaviour across the school is exemplary because they are supported to develop a deep understanding of what is right and good. They know their opinions are important, and that they can take actions which impact positively on others. This is exemplified by their fundraising, their litter-picking activities, their letter writing to prisoners, and when they contact their MP to campaign against injustice. One pupil reported, 'I know I can brighten someone's day by my actions.'

Staff provide exceptional pastoral care because they are highly dedicated to ensuring that all pupils and their families are known and loved, and therefore they are able to act swiftly when they recognise a need. They fully embrace the school vision statement, 'We will be courageous and inspire each other to excellence, shining in the light of Christ and making a positive impact in our world,' and therefore aspire greatly for their pupils. They are exemplary role models in their commitment to enabling every pupil to flourish academically and spiritually. Parents highly value this and report, 'Love and kindness is always shown, our children know this is a safe place to take risks.' Staff create an environment which explicitly celebrates the Catholic character of

the school. Attention is given to the indoor and outdoor environment so that it carefully contributes to the formation of all members of the community. The oratory is treasured by pupils because staff ensure it is inviting, explicitly prayerful and well-resourced. Relationships and sex education is taught systematically, in line with the expectations of the Bishops' Conference, and pupils are therefore very well prepared for their next stage.

Leaders are exceptionally driven in exercising their duty to make God known. They enthusiastically prioritise the school's Catholic identity and fervently articulate its mission. This is highly valued by parents who report that 'Christ is at the centre of every action.' The leaders' pride in the school is reflected in the rich experiences offered to pupils. Their passion and ambition inspires others and parents recognise that, 'All leaders are genuinely invested.' Senior leaders model the highest of standards in their interactions and their vision is fully embraced by all. They are now well placed to distribute leadership responsibilities more widely. The school's Catholic character is deeply evident because leaders, including governors, have embedded this across the taught curriculum and all aspects of school life. They provide many opportunities for pupils to undertake charitable acts, to develop pupils who are 'kind, thoughtful and confident in their faith.' Leaders effectively monitor the school's provision and proactively seek the opinions of key stakeholders to inform further developments. In response to the pupil's desire to engage more fully outdoors, leaders have empowered Mini Vinnies to develop and sustain the peace garden, which is a powerful example of the rich daily experiences that pupils prepare and experience.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

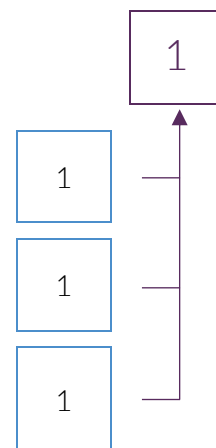
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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 engage actively in religious education lessons and are able to reflect on and fluently articulate what they have learned. They know and remember key concepts and use religious vocabulary with understanding to clearly explain their learning. Pupils of all abilities concentrate exceptionally well and respond carefully to feedback given in lessons. Consequently, they make consistently good progress from their starting points to achieve strong outcomes in relation to the planned curriculum. One child reported, 'We use the fruits of the Holy Spirit to do our best.' Because of opportunities presented in lessons, pupils are able to use their knowledge to reflect theologically and spiritually. They therefore deepen their understanding of religious commitment in life. Pupils demonstrate high levels of independence in their contribution and response to lessons, and they have a curiosity which is inspired by staff. They are enthusiastic and proud of their achievements and, therefore, present their work well. They are responsive to creative approaches used in lessons, including art, drama, 'hot seating' and dance, because their contributions are celebrated generously. They appreciate lessons which are 'very active because they make learning fun!' Behaviour in lessons is exemplary as a result of their commitment.

Teachers are highly confident and competent in delivering the religious education curriculum because of the range of effective training provided for them. They ensure that lessons are sequential, so pupils are supported to progress extremely well. They have very secure subject knowledge which they use to enhance, consolidate and extend pupils' learning. They skillfully adapt lessons to ensure that all pupils keep up with the curriculum and they make effective use of resources to enable pupils to work with high levels of independence. They use effective questions to elicit pupils' understanding so that they can quickly address misconceptions in lessons. They use insightful comments to challenge pupils to think deeply and to make links to

prior learning. Teachers use accurate assessments to inform planning and so lessons are ambitious for all. One pupil reported that 'teachers give us challenges which push our thinking on.' All classroom staff significantly extend pupils' knowledge and understanding and therefore contribute to supporting the sustained progress of all. They authentically celebrate success, which is highly motivational. Teachers ensure that scripture is featured in lessons, however, pupils do not consistently have opportunities to navigate Bibles and interrogate authentic translations, so there are occasions when some pupils' recollections lack full accuracy.

Because leaders, including governors, rigorously monitor the provision for religious education, they have a clear and accurate overview of learning. They have a vision which is aspirational, focused, well-informed and fully shared by staff. They have the highest expectations of pupils and staff and therefore ensure that the curriculum is progressive, demanding and delivered with creativity. They ensure that expectations have parity with other core subjects and that lessons are ambitious. Leaders have high levels of expertise in leading teaching and learning and they therefore secure effective pedagogy for the teaching of religious education across the school. They invest in resources and wider experiences, including visits from members of the community, which enhance the curriculum. They ensure that high quality professional development builds on the strengths of staff and supports them to develop excellent subject knowledge and to deliver inspiring lessons. Staff report that they consequently 'feel confident... and training helps us to plan for progression.' Governors are regular visitors to school and have diligent oversight of teaching and learning in religious education. They are therefore able to make informed decisions and to offer appropriate support and challenge to senior staff, thus ensuring pupils have outstanding 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

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

Across the school, pupils engage in prayer and liturgy with great enthusiasm and the highest levels of reverence and respect. They are joyous in their participation, singing with high levels of zeal and joining in with communal prayer with energy. They respond fully to opportunities for spontaneous and traditional prayer, with one pupil commenting that prayer 'makes me feel like the Holy Spirit is with me. It is very special.' Pupils engage eagerly in a wide variety of ways to pray from an early age, including Lectio Divina; examen; guided meditation; breath prayers; rosary and litany. They eloquently express how prayer helps them to grow closer to God, and they recognise the changes in the pattern of prayer across the liturgical year. Appropriate to their age and abilities, pupils plan, lead and evaluate celebrations of the word and other prayer experiences which are well constructed and deeply moving. They are able to use what they have learned in lessons to support their planning. They are highly motivated because of the deep culture of prayer in school and consequently they are enthusiastic in facilitating awe-inspiring prayer opportunities, both indoors and out. They are well prepared for undertaking ministries and are excited to share prayer and liturgy with the wider community.

Prayer is at the heart of St Bernadette's and staff ensure that they offer pupils a rich variety of ways to pray so that it is meaningful to them. Prayer provides the rhythm of the day and staff ensure that Holy days and special events are marked with communal celebrations enriched by hymns and reflections. They provide many opportunities for spontaneous prayer and pupils respond enthusiastically to these because they recognise prayer as 'a powerful way to talk to God.' Staff are excellent role models in the way they plan and lead prayer, using carefully chosen scripture. They are highly skilled in supporting pupils to plan and lead their own celebrations. They create an environment which promotes personal prayer and spiritual development so that pupils are deeply moved and inspired to deepen their relationship with God. Staff provide a wide

variety of prayerful experiences, including retreats to Osmotherley and Ampleforth, which reflect the richness of Catholic tradition as well as contemporary styles, to support the spiritual growth of pupils in a personal way. Staff are highly skilled in supporting pupils with additional needs and therefore all pupils feel included and able to engage fully in celebrations.

Leaders place the highest priority on prayer and liturgy and therefore they ensure that there are daily rich, varied and progressive experiences for the whole school community. Leaders ensure that staff regularly pray together and this 'binds us like a family, held in the hands of God.' The school's policy is clear and relevant, and consequently, the spiritual development offered to all is meaningful and inspiring. Leaders ensure that there is a comprehensive planned calendar of events which reflect the liturgical year and ensure there are many opportunities for parents and parishioners to join pupils to pray in school and the parish church. The parish priest is highly supportive of the prayer life of the school and leaders work with him to ensure that the sacraments are regularly offered to pupils. Leaders are highly reflective on the impact prayer and liturgy has on pupils, and they proactively seek their opinions to inform strategic planning. In response to speaking to pupils, leaders introduced prayer journalling as it was recognised that pupils had limited opportunities to make personal reflections. Prayer and liturgy is prioritised for staff development and when allocating resources, and so worship is greatly enhanced.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	142369
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8063362
Full postal address of the school	St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School, Cookgate, Nunthorpe, Middlesbrough, TS7 0PZ
School phone number	01642 310198
Headteacher	Sarah Brady
Chair of governors	Mary Bilous
School Website	<a href="https://stbernadettes.npcat.org.uk">https://stbernadettes.npcat.org.uk</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Choose an item.
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	17-18 June 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

## The inspection team

Barbara Reilly-O'Donnell

Mark Brennan

Lead Inspector

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