



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for **St Francis Catholic Primary School**

URN: 104239

Carried out on behalf of the Most Rev. Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham on:

Date: 29-30 March 2023

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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

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- The school environment is vibrant and celebrates its Catholic life and mission well, helping pupils to learn and grow in faith in an exciting, inclusive, faith-filled atmosphere.
- Staff are positive role models for pupils, showing love and care for them. Therefore, pupils are happy, feel safe, and secure at school.
- The faith ambassadors demonstrate a deep-rooted sense of belief and stewardship in their role, actively leading and contributing to the chaplaincy opportunities available.
- The teaching of religious education is good because teachers have secure subject knowledge, which they use to consolidate pupils' prior learning. As a result, the quality of pupils' work is of a high standard.

- Behaviour in religious education lessons is a school strength, meaning pupils enjoy and engage well in learning.

What the school needs to improve:

- Ensure strategic plans have clear, focused, current priorities that all leaders and staff can articulate.
- Consistently provide appropriate challenge for all pupils in religious education, including those with higher prior attainment.
- Review the prayer and liturgy policy to ensure clear expectations for building up the skills of participation in each year group are defined, ensuring progression throughout the school.

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



The school environment is vibrant and welcoming, effectively celebrating and promoting the school's Catholic identity and mission. Investment in the environment has clearly impacted pupils' understanding of the school's mission, 'I am a sign of God's love'; they can describe how they follow their school motto of 'being kind'. School leaders have worked tirelessly to ensure that the Catholic life and mission of the school are at its heart, resulting in pupils who are happy and proud to be part of the St Francis family. Faith ambassadors deeply value their opportunities to lead aspects of the school's chaplaincy provision, which all pupils willingly engage in. Pupils are proactive in supporting those in need; however, they are not yet confident in articulating their understanding of how the curriculum supports the principles of Catholic Social Teaching. Faith ambassadors are actively monitoring and evaluating Catholic life and mission, resulting in further environmental improvements and a wider variety of charitable outreach.

The mission is rooted in God's Word as celebrated throughout the school. Staff fully embrace the school's mission and are committed to it. Consequently, it is witnessed by the whole community, which works closely together as a team and offers support to one another. Because of this, pupils see Gospel values lived out each day, such as respect for the dignity of the human person, patience, and compassion. Strong relationships at all levels result in an embedded sense of welcome based on embracing all faiths and traditions. A high level of pastoral care for both pupils and staff results in everyone feeling genuinely valued, further contributing positively to the inclusive Catholic mission. Because leaders give training the highest priority and an effective programme is offered, which results in a common understanding of the school's mission, staff are excellent role models for pupils and

consistently model discipleship behaviours.

Governors are highly effective in evaluating the school's Catholic life and mission and therefore know the school's strengths and areas for improvement well. They are highly ambitious and passionate about it, offering appropriate challenge and support, effectively contributing to school development. They work closely with the senior leadership team to ensure that Catholic life and mission are prioritised, resulting in a school where Christ is at the centre of its work. Leaders' evaluation is a coherent analysis of the school's achievements because all stakeholders actively contribute. Although monitoring activities lead to well-planned and effective improvements, strategic documentation does not always reflect the school's current priorities. Leaders and governors understand the principle that St Francis Catholic Primary School is at the service of the local parish and seek to work well with it. The school's partnership with parents is a strength; parents are encouraged and supported effectively in their vocation through workshops, for example. Consequently, because they know the school's mission well, parents genuinely appreciate the high levels of care and support provided to their children. As one parent told inspectors, 'The head teacher welcomes all and is a friendly face, ensuring she knows all the children who attend her school. She shows love and respect each day.' Leaders are firmly committed to the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, as demonstrated by their active promotion of Cafod's *LiveSimply Award* and their provision of the *Building the Kingdom* staff training programme. Staff highly value the attention leaders give their physical and mental well-being, resulting in a happy team.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

2

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.....

2

Leadership

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

2

The subject leader is highly committed to her role and has a clear vision. She conducts regular and robust monitoring to identify strengths and areas for development across the school. The support that she offers staff has resulted in improved teaching and learning. An effective programme of training, meeting the school's needs, has been provided, which addresses areas needing improvement. This has subsequently made teachers increasingly confident in imparting their subject knowledge. Teachers utilise these opportunities to plan a variety of engaging lessons, resulting in pupils enjoying their religious education lessons and being highly motivated and enthusiastic in their learning. Consequently, pupils make good progress in lessons and confidently articulate their learning, demonstrating good recall of prior learning. Teachers are implementing creativity in religious education lessons following recent diocesan training, resulting in engaging and creative lessons being planned across all year groups. Children are particularly engaged in activities such as debates, role play and evaluating religious artwork which results in pupils deeper thinking and detailed responses. Children in Nursery are able to reflect on the feelings of Jesus and Mary through the use of musical instruments to represent the feelings of sadness when Jesus died on the cross. In most lessons there is a good balance between teacher and pupil discussion, which results in well-paced learning and further ensures pupils' active engagement. Teachers ensure a focus on learning and using key religious vocabulary in lessons, identifying it in their planning. Consequently, pupils' responses in lessons are precise and confident, demonstrating good levels of religious literacy. Through well-planned activities and effective teacher questioning, pupils can reflect spiritually and link their learning in religious education and their own lives. Pupils are encouraged to use evaluation techniques to support their ideas, using various sources, enabling them to think deeply. However, this challenge level is inconsistent throughout the school and requires strategic development.

Teachers plan activities and tasks that offer opportunities for pupils to collaborate effectively and work independently. Because of this, pupils' behaviour in lessons is good, and they enjoy religious education. Lesson planning meets the needs of most pupils; however, it does not provide great enough challenge for pupils with higher prior attainment, and although highly effective adaptations are made for some pupils with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), the consistency of this provision is not yet embedded throughout the school. Teachers provide regular feedback in line with school policy; therefore, pupils can reflect on their learning and address misconceptions. This is further supported by effective questioning, which is a strength of the school. Frequent use of open-ended questions consolidates learning for most pupils, contributing to good progress for many pupils.

The high regard leaders place on religious education is seen in their curriculum time allocation, which exceeds the bishops' minimum requirements. This means that the quality and quantity of work pupils produce is of a very high standard throughout the school, is at least in line with other core subjects, and is often better. The curriculum effectively meets most pupils' needs; this is largely because of the way committed staff consistently check and monitor their understanding. Leaders and governors regularly monitor and evaluate religious education, leading to effective analysis and self-challenge, ensuring that the school accurately identifies areas for well-targeted improvements. However, the school's strategic action planning documents are not sufficiently focussed as they do not show relevant threads of improvements to ensure they are effective. The subject leader regularly reports on standards to governors and provides detailed information about pupils' attainment. Governors question and challenge leaders' analysis of this, resulting in a strong knowledge of the school and standards in religious education.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

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

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

2

There is a daily pattern of prayer that reflects the rhythm of the Church's prayer life, which means pupils know a variety of prayers and can confidently talk about how the cycle of seasons and feasts influence prayer. Pupils show great respect and reverence during Mass and respond well to prayer. This is because prayer and liturgy are planned well and effectively use appropriate images, artefacts, and music, enabling pupils to raise their hearts and minds to God. Pupils' behaviour during Mass is exemplary, and the meaningful and appropriately chosen hymns for the season of Lent during the inspection were sung joyfully and enthusiastically: this is a real strength of prayer and liturgy at St Francis. Pupils are confident in delivering well-planned and meaningful prayer services; they can justify their prayer and hymn choices. Other pupils are clearly uplifted by the prayer and liturgy experiences created by their peers. Staff, including senior leaders, are models of good practice in delivering prayer and liturgy. Leaders have ensured that staff have the relevant skills and knowledge to support pupils in planning and leading prayer in classes. Consequently, pupils are confident in planning and leading prayer; they work well with teachers and others to prepare engaging experiences of prayer and liturgy.

Prayer and worship are central to the life of St Francis. Pupils have a secure knowledge of the structure of prayer and liturgy and can clearly describe the components of gathering, listening, responding, and going forth. All sections are well planned, and Scripture is always prioritised during prayer. Prayer has a clear message and purpose; themes for Masses and assemblies always reflect the liturgical calendar. Seasonally appropriate Scripture passages are central to prayer and liturgy, which enable those present, including parents, to participate fully. The school successfully supports and encourages families in prayer by sending home prayer bags. Parents value this resource and the opportunity to attend assemblies and school Masses in

the parish church. Whilst pupils experience a range of ways of praying, they are yet to experience a wider variety of prayer types, including meditation and quiet reflection.

High priority is given to the quality of learning spaces across the school, including the outdoor prayer garden, resulting in them being of a high standard. The reflection room is used effectively as a calming area for prayer and reflection, dedicated to a past pupil. She is remembered in a place of peace and joy, where groups or individuals can pray or reflect. Pupils are involved in evaluating prayer and liturgy, leading to improvements. The Faith Ambassadors monitor and ensure that the prayer areas around the school are relevant to the liturgical seasons, that the Bibles are open, and that an appropriate Bible story is linked to the time of year. As a result, pupils value the prayer areas of a high standard, liturgically correct and encourage prayer. Governors regularly attend Mass and liturgies, providing regular opportunities to monitor and review prayer and liturgy first-hand as part of the school's self-evaluation process. Findings are shared and acted upon with staff and the wider governing board. These findings lead to an effective, prioritised training programme, helping staff feel supported to develop their understanding of prayer. The school's prayer policy does not yet specify a clear progression of skills appropriate to pupils' age and capability throughout the school regarding the planning and delivery of prayer.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Francis Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	104239
Full postal address of the school	Mill Road, Shelfield, Walsall, WS4 1RH
School phone number	01922 682583
Name of head teacher or principal	Dawn Richards
Chair of governing board	Peter Gough
School Website	https://www.st-francis-p.walsall.sch.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	3 to 11
Trustees	Archdiocese of Birmingham
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	November 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Bernadette Corbett

Lead inspector

Paul Madia

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