



## Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for **St Alban's Catholic Primary School**

URN:103466

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

**Date: 26-27 January 2023**

Overall effectiveness The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....	<b>2</b>
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.....	2
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

### Summary of key findings

#### What the school does well

- There is a strong culture of welcome which is deeply rooted in all members of the St Alban's community.
- Relationships throughout the school reflect the dignity of each person.
- Staff, including leaders and governors, are fully committed to providing high levels of care, particularly to the most vulnerable.
- Teachers confidently share their knowledge of the religious education curriculum to pupils.
- The importance of prayer and liturgy is prioritised throughout the school leading to active participation from pupils.

What the school needs to improve:

- Ensure assessment is accurate, particularly for pupils working towards higher levels of attainment in religious education.
- Maximise learning for all by adapting tasks and explanations according to pupils' responses in religious education lessons.
- Increase pupils' confidence and independence in leading worship and in making links between it and their lived experience.

## 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 mission of the school, 'Following in the footsteps of Jesus we love, live and learn together' is embraced by all members of the community. There is a noticeably warm welcome which is reflected in the school's recent accreditation of the 'School of Sanctuary' award. Pupils can express that they are valued and understand that they should value each other. They are proud of how they welcome new pupils into the school and are starting to link their learning to the key principles of Catholic Social Teaching. Pupils' behaviour in all classes is based on respect for staff and for each other. There are a number of opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles, including altar serving, reading, being a member of the Mini Vinnies, the Chaplaincy team or a Champion of Christ. Older pupils are 'faith friends' with younger pupils which leads to strong bonds and wider opportunities for moral and spiritual growth.

Staff are clearly supportive of the school's mission and have worked together to implement the principles of Catholic Social Teaching into other aspects of the curriculum. Staff are fully committed to serving the community of St Alban's. All are welcome and valued, including those from other belief traditions. One pupil was proud of how she had shared her faith with pupils from her class and others. Relationships are supportive. Staff know the needs of each other and the pupils in their care. They value the support they receive from one another. Many parents expressed strong opinions about the length leaders go to when supporting them in various aspects of school life, but specifically during their child's preparation for the sacraments. The school environment is well used to enhance the formation of pupils. There are sacred outdoor spaces which are used by pupils throughout the day.

Leaders and governors are passionate about the Catholic mission of the school ensuring all

decisions reflect this priority. This is acknowledged and appreciated by staff and parents. The strong link to the parish has led to regular opportunities to enhance the formation of pupils. Parishioners take active roles in leading pupil activities, such as Mini Vinnies, leading to increased understanding about the wider role of the parish. The pupils are able to learn about the work of the St Vincent de Paul Society and link their projects to the work of this established parish group. Parents are supportive of the school and value the work the staff do for their children. They feel that they are engaged in the life of the school through different occasions when they are invited into school. Staff report that leaders and governors are inspirational witnesses of their faith. Staff know they are valued and talk about how they are supported, both professionally and personally. Governors understand the priorities of the school, providing a good level of honest challenge and support through the religious education link governor. Evaluation of recent improvements show evidence of impact and there are plans in place to improve the school even further. Pupils are asked to contribute to the school's evaluation of Catholic life and mission. They are proud of the suggestions they have made and are keen to make even more.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade.....	2
<b>Pupil outcomes</b> How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....	2
<b>Provision</b> The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....	2
<b>Leadership</b> How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....	2

Pupils' knowledge of religious education is good. Progress of pupils, including those with special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils, is good. The most vulnerable pupils are supported through the deployment of support staff. Pupils are religiously literate and can talk about how religious education lessons help them to follow in Christ's footsteps. Work produced in books is mostly well-presented with a variety of activities used to present key concepts to children. However, in lessons observed and work seen, there are limited opportunities for pupils to reflect spiritually on their learning and this limits some pupils' ability to think more deeply about the issues studied. Pupils work well independently and cooperate well in groups and paired work. All year groups use talking partners to support pupils in their work. Behaviour in lessons is excellent throughout the school and all pupils are actively engaged in lessons. They complete work set by staff with enthusiasm, saying that they enjoy religious education lessons. Pupils can explain how they know if work has been done well. They ask their teachers if they are unsure in lessons. Some parents indicated they would like more information about how well their children were doing in religious education lessons.

Teachers' subject knowledge for religious education is a strength of the school. The commitment of staff is clear to see in all year groups and results in all pupils valuing their lessons. Planning takes account of most pupils' needs, however, pupils with high prior attainment have limited opportunities to show they continue to meet greater depth criteria. Teachers' use of questioning is not always adapted to the specific needs of the class. For example, in one class teachers explained the concept the children had already grasped but did not challenge the pupils' misconceptions in enough depth to lead to improved learning. When providing pupils with feedback, the recent change in policy has led to teachers providing

additional questions to embed learning. Moderation takes place within school but this has not looked closely enough at the accuracy of assessment as pupils are assessed as more able when outcomes in books are the same as those of pupils achieving expected outcomes. Teachers ensure that religious education lessons develop pupils spiritually and morally. The inclusion of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching are starting to have an impact with pupils being asked to think about how their learning links to the wider needs of the world. There are a wide variety of activities and resources used in religious education which bring the curriculum to life for the children.

Leaders ensure that the delivery of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* is enhanced through the use of creative resources. Leaders have identified priorities for religious education and have actions in place to meet them. This is evident in leaders' strategic improvement of the progress of pupils with special educational needs. Monitoring is leading to improvement, for example, the implementation of the new feedback policy which is consistently used by staff. Professional development is used to target improvement priorities. The religious education leader is conscientious and staff feel well supported by her. She has a clear vision for teaching and learning and has improved the quality of religious education through planning support and team teaching. The religious education link governor provides support and challenge for leaders and reports back to the full governing body regularly.

## Collective worship

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

Religious education 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



Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school, leading to full and active participation from pupils. During the celebration of Mass, the pupils observed moments of prayerful silence as well as singing joyfully. Through a wide variety of opportunities given to pupils within school and through strong parish links, pupils demonstrate knowledge of different ways to pray. The outdoor environment is used for prayer with effective links made between liturgy and the forest school. Pupils understand the liturgical year and can link specific prayers to certain times of the year. They reflect on how prayer makes them feel, however, pupils lacked confidence in articulating the connections between what they experience in prayer and liturgy, and how they relate that to action in their own lives. Pupils enjoy the liturgical ministries they are given and take part in them with confidence. Whilst there was evidence of pupils routinely planning liturgies, this was not apparent in an observation of prayer and liturgy, which mainly focused on staff-led liturgy. When pupils lead liturgy, there is a reluctance from staff to allow pupils to be fully independent.

The centrality of prayer is acknowledged by all, with high quality prayer and liturgy being part of all times when staff and pupils gather. Both staff and pupils respond to the needs of the community through spontaneous prayer which reflects the sincerity with which each person is known and loved in the school. Staff are creative in the way they introduce prayerful activities to children. They want pupils to experience God in rich ways which reflect the traditions of the Church. Scripture is at the heart of prayer and liturgy at St Alban's. Pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage were witnessed showing great reverence for the word of God in the way they carried the Bible from their prayer table. Inspirational prayer is modelled by

leaders whose faith is a beacon for the staff and pupils. Families support the prayer life of the school and value the ability to participate in shared celebrations such as Mass and class liturgies.

Prayer is prioritised by leaders and the celebration of the liturgical year is central to school life. Significant days in the Church's calendar have a high priority and leaders ensure there are frequent opportunities for pupils to receive the sacraments, for example, Reconciliation during Lent. Teachers receive high quality professional development which is regular and appreciated. Support staff receive clear guidance from teachers but lack opportunities to improve their knowledge of prayer and liturgy through well-planned effective professional development. As a result, some are unclear about how they are supported to plan and lead liturgy. The active involvement of both the parish priest and his assistant priest provide high quality chaplaincy support which engage and inspire the pupils. Self-evaluation is used to reflect the views of all members of the community through formal and informal methods. Parents' views are welcomed, parishioners meet with staff after the school Mass and pupil leadership groups carry out some monitoring of prayer and liturgy.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Alban's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	103466
Full postal address of the school	Broad Lane, Kings Heath, Birmingham, B14 5AL
School phone number	0121 444 6530
Name of head teacher or principal	Rebecca McKinney
Chair of governing board	Alan Grant
School Website	<a href="http://www.stalbanscatholicprimary.co.uk">www.stalbanscatholicprimary.co.uk</a>
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Trustees	Archdiocese of Birmingham
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	October 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

## The inspection team

Karyn Oakley

Lead inspector

Rachael Batson

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