



Driving home Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for
St Martin's Catholic Primary School

URN: 110038

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

Date: 11-12 October 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

- Leaders work incredibly hard to ensure that Catholic life and mission, religious education, and prayer are always at the forefront of the school's development journey.
- The mission is the driver for school improvement and initiatives. It is well understood by all community members, who are confident in implementing it.
- Catholic social teaching permeates every aspect of school life.
- Pupils enjoy religious education lessons and are keen to relate the Catholic faith to their life experiences.
- Celebrating sacraments and observance of significant holy days are central to school life, especially the celebration of the Eucharist.

What the school needs to improve:

- Consistently provide challenge for pupils with higher prior attainment in religious education, which enables them to make progress swiftly.
- Empower pupils to lead aspects of school improvement relating to Catholic life and mission.
- Establish systems whereby governors provide independent challenge to leaders, supporting strategic school improvement for Catholic life and mission, religious education, and prayer.

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:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

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

2

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

2

Following the raised mission profile, all community members know it and have an age-appropriate understanding of how God is calling them to live by faith and be known by love. They understand how the practical actions they demonstrate fulfil the mission. Pupils' awareness is heightened because they have a very secure understanding that God creates all people in His image and likeness; consequently, pupils at St Martin's are very happy. However, their awareness of the school's place within the national and global Church is limited. Pupils are very aware that they are called to be disciples of Christ and are enthused by this challenge. Because of the high profile of Catholic social teaching within St Martin's and a focus on how to enact its principles, pupils have a well-developed awareness of why it is essential to respond to God's call to discipleship. Currently, response opportunities are provided by adults within the school and harness much enthusiasm from pupils, though they do not take a leading role in generating such opportunities themselves. Pupils from other faiths and religions speak fervently of the respect and love they feel as pupils at St Martin's; a Hindu pupil said of St Martin's, 'Other religions are embraced, and diversity is celebrated'.

All staff are committed to fulfilling the mission because of its priority. This is most evident in their interactions with each other, pupils, and their parents. For example, their implementation of the school's behaviour policy is rooted in forgiveness and restoration. Staff use theological language to explain the rationale for their actions to pupils and consistently show love and care to their pupils in very tangible ways. The pastoral care provided to pupils is effective. This is because staff receive excellent induction into the school's Catholic life, meaning staff's approach to pupils' well-being is consistent. Consequently, attendance at St Martin's is very high. Chaplaincy activity is primarily provided by leaders and the parish priest. St Martin's and the parish of St Michael's have an excellent flourishing relationship. The school is very much part of the parish community; for example, altar

servers minister each week, there are monthly Family Masses in the parish church, and senior leaders provide catechesis to children who live in the parish but do not attend St Martin's. The school expresses its Catholic identity through physical signs and symbols. However, there are missed opportunities to do so in displays relating to other school initiatives and in communal areas other than the hall.

Leaders and governors prioritise their duty to strengthen the school's ethos further so that the future of Catholic education in the local area is secure, as reflected in development plans. Leaders empower other community members to lead aspects of the mission's implementation; for example, the Parent-Staff Association fundraises and has provided recycling bins throughout the site. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of leaders who swiftly respond to feedback. Leaders work tirelessly to safeguard the well-being of staff. A teacher told inspectors, 'Leaders lead with faith in their care of us'. Governors are actively monitoring Catholic life and mission through pupil voice exercises and learning walks, meaning they accurately understand the school's strengths and development areas. Although affirmative, governors do not always provide a sufficient independent challenge to the head teacher because they rely heavily on her guidance and expertise, meaning their role in planning school improvement is not always strategic. Pupils are involved in evaluating aspects of Catholic life, although they are not yet empowered to lead aspects of development in this area.

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.....

2

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

Attainment in religious education is good and has been sustained over time. Pupils' knowledge, understanding, and skills are developing securely because lessons follow the diocesan scheme of work. Pupils make good progress through the curriculum: they know more because learning is built upon sequentially; they do more because tasks require pupils to demonstrate their understanding of learning intentions, and they remember more because prior learning is routinely recalled during all lessons, especially at the start. This means that almost all pupils can confidently articulate what they have previously learned and are supported to build on this. Pupils use technical terms accurately and confidently because teachers are clear in their use of them. Consequently, pupils can competently reflect on the impact of religious belief on everyday life. Pupils' work is well presented, demonstrating their high regard for the subject. However, in some classes, the resources used restrict the depth of outcomes pupils can produce. Pupils enjoy lessons because they are made relevant to their lived experiences. Consequently, they behave exceptionally well and engage productively with adults. Pupils do not yet routinely reflect on the skills they use in religious education to become competent learners, as they often reflect on deepening subject knowledge.

Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge because they understand it fully before they impart it. This enables them to confidently respond to pupils' questions, even if they are unexpected, and to make explicit links between different topics. Staff are keenly aware that religious education is not solely academic but also provides a moral compass for pupils' lives. Most pupils learn well because they are supported to access the curriculum efficiently. Teachers adapt material particularly well for pupils with lower and average prior attainment; however, progress is usually too slow or not planned for at all for those with higher prior attainment. Questioning is mainly used to good effect because teachers elicit understanding frequently and adapt their explanations considering pupils' responses. In a few instances, questions are not sufficiently focused on extending pupils' learning. Teachers routinely praise pupils for their contributions to lessons, which

positively impacts their motivation. Written feedback identifies successes and improvement points to pupils, who always respond to them. This contributes to teachers' assessment of their achievements, especially during formal assessment. However, feedback is not used consistently to enable pupils to demonstrate a higher level of attainment.

Leaders and governors ensure that religious education receives its full allocation of curriculum time and fully complies with the bishops' requirements. Because religious education is a priority for leaders, a lot of good training opportunities are provided for staff. A specific religious education policy ensures a consistent approach is adopted to its teaching throughout the school. The subject is spearheaded by senior leaders who understand how to lead it and are passionate about their drive to undertake it. However, they do not have sufficient physical capacity to discharge their full responsibilities with adequate regard for their well-being. The curriculum is designed to meet the needs of most pupils, though explicit attention to planning for the rapid progress of pupils with higher prior attainment is not yet present. Evaluation is well informed by monitoring, which feeds into improvement plans. However, the link between strategic development points and routine monitoring activities is not always clear, contributing to governors' reliance on the head teacher to support them.

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

Pupils at St Martin's are incredibly respectful and participate well in prayer. This is because it is always made relevant and engaging to them. All prayer is made accessible through the provision of words and images, which inspire heartfelt responses. Pupils understand the liturgical year well; even the very youngest pupils speak about the key themes of the Church's seasons and feasts confidently. Older pupils progress to talk about how prayer changes at certain times of the year, often revealing deep insight. For example, one pupil said, 'We pray for forgiveness during Lent because it leads to Good Friday. This is the day Jesus sacrificed himself for us, so we must forgive others to thank God for this'. Pupils are becoming more confident in leading prayer. Whilst this continues to develop, they use a structure which gives them confidence in creating their prayer services, which they enjoy. Whilst pupils provide leaders with feedback about prayer, this is not focused on enabling pupils to reflect on how they would like to improve their prayers in the future. Prayer features in some curriculum areas; for example, in French, they pray using the French language.

Pupils and staff confidently use an established daily programme of prayer. Prayer is often traditional, though a growing range of more contemporary styles is being used with pupils, such as water prayers and meditations. A corridor prayer wall enables pupils to offer their intentions to God whenever they want and is modelled on the Western Wall in Jerusalem. This demonstrates that spiritual and moral development occurs through the school's prayer provision. God's word is at the centre of school life; messages are always seasonally relevant and are shared in ways that further engage pupils. Staff are committed to offering good provision because it is modelled strongly to them by leaders. Staff confidence in leading prayer is increasing because of the training provided to them, though leaders have accurately identified this as an area for development. Each classroom features a well-maintained prayer focus area that is seasonally relevant and composes scripture,

religious artefacts, and prayer aids. The school has excellent consistency in how these spaces are maintained and used.

Leaders and governors always ensure that sacramental and liturgical celebrations are prioritised in their planning. This means that all pupils are frequently drawn to God's grace, with the invaluable support of the parish priest. Governors are robustly supportive in their allocation of resources for prayer. The school's prayer policy is fit for purpose because it details leaders' expectations on the range of prayers to be offered and the frequency with which they are. Staff use this well, contributing to consistency throughout the school. Leaders have recently been working on developing pupil-led prayer, which is progressing. For example, pupils enable each other to individually reflect on and engage with the themes chosen for prayer without interrupting periods of silence by asking questions. Whilst training is good, it lacks spiritual formation for staff, meaning some lack confidence in leading prayer themselves or helping others to do so. Leaders are good models of prayer leadership and are supported well by the parish priest. Self-evaluation is accurate because all stakeholders' views are considered and verified through first-hand experiences by leaders and governors. These are subsequently used to determine how well the school achieves its strategic development targets and identify next steps.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Martin's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	110038
Full postal address of the school	Pendennis Avenue. Caversham Park Village, Reading, RG4 6SS
School phone number	01189 375544
Name of head teacher or principal	Katherine Tilling
Chair of governing board	Yasmin Sanchez-Pearson
School Website	www.stmartinscaversham.co.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	4 to 11
Trustees	Archdiocese of Birmingham
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	May 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Ben McArdle

Lead inspector

Jai El'Habid

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