



St Nicholas Catholic Primary School

URN: 140529

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Birmingham

19–20 March 2025

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

1

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

Compliance statement

- This school fully complies with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- This school is fully compliant with the additional requirements of His Grace.
- This school has fully addressed all previous areas for improvement.

What the school does well

- Teachers provide a range of opportunities for pupils to develop their religious vocabulary by reflecting spiritually and thinking theologically in religious education lessons.
- Prayer is central to school life, and families value the opportunities to support and grow alongside their children through various experiences.
- Pupils understand and readily use Catholic social teaching and virtues. They apply these to their everyday lives.
- Leaders are inspirational and work highly effectively as a team to drive their vision forward and ensure that the highest priority is given to all aspects of religious education.

What the school needs to improve

- Routinely provide opportunities for pupils to evaluate the quality of prayer and liturgy to identify how to improve.
- Identify the core learning in each class's religious education provision and use this to plan effective progression for all pupils.

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

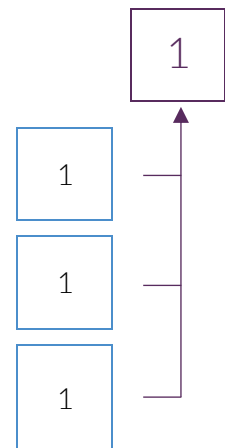
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



'Together with Christ we love, live and learn' is the school's mission, and the pupils articulate their active participation in how they respond to it from Reception to Year 6. Pupils stated, 'We work together as a family to build a better place in our world and community.' They talk confidently about their response to local, national, and global needs and value their leadership roles in school that allow them to contribute to positive change, such as by becoming Mini Vinnies, Cafod ambassadors, and 'LiveSimply' ambassadors. These opportunities for outward-facing chaplaincy work are seized by pupils, who view them as pivotal to their moral development because they help them flourish as disciples of Christ. Pupils give clear examples of their proactive participation in the mission, such as by visiting care homes and fundraising for Birmingham and St Giles' hospices, and they recognise the importance of these actions in significantly enhancing the school's mission and Pope Francis' call to fraternity. Christ is at the heart of St Nicholas' with a strong focus on pupils' securely understanding Catholic social teaching and living out gospel virtues, which helps them to understand the importance and value of all people as God's creations and makes them extremely happy at school.

The school celebrates various cultures and belief traditions through visits and visitors to the school. Everyone is welcome in this inclusive school. Staff are excellent role models and embed an all-encompassing ethos through their love and care. Parents say, 'School is a wonderful, inclusive community where Gospel values are lived out, and social action is encouraged.' The staff supports the most vulnerable through counselling, mentoring, and, most importantly, love, ensuring all pupils can fully access and participate in the school's mission. Pupils with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) are consciously nurtured to achieve their absolute best. The school is committed to developing the whole person through their community outreach, and

staff shared its impact on those in the care home. Staff are exemplary role models for pupils; they witness the school's mission in various ways, such as using their talents to bring the Liturgy to life and promoting prayer through music. Staff provide a very high level of pastoral care for pupils, offering counselling, mentoring pupil premium pupils and showing love, care and support.

Leaders and governors have a strong vision and are a source of inspiration for the community. Leaders successfully engage with parents to develop their understanding of the school's mission. Parents say, 'Catholic life is at the forefront of life at St Nicholas' and 'School actively works hard to empower children in their faith and allows families to be part of that too.' Teachers work closely with parents, offering opportunities to stay and pray and further develop their role as first educators. Commitment to Catholic Social Teaching has been a priority for leaders and governors. They embody the Church's preferential option for the poor by ensuring that they support those experiencing the greatest need. Catholic Social Teaching is interwoven throughout the whole curriculum, offering pupils opportunities to reflect and apply their knowledge and understanding through deeper questioning; for example, in history, pupils reflect on the impact of the suffering of refugees when learning about World War 2. Leaders and governors give the highest level of pastoral care for the staff. Everyone is part of the school family. Parents openly thank staff and senior leaders for their commitment and dedication to forming their children in God's love.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

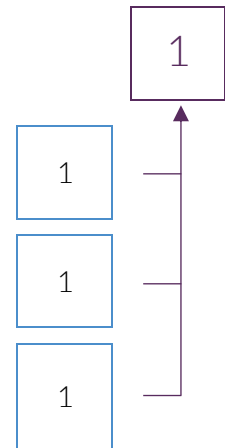
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 religiously literate and engaged young people. They are actively engaged in the lessons, starting promptly with a 'do it now' activity that may link to religious art, evoking a feeling or an emotion to ensure all pupils can access complex issues readily. With 'flashbacks', current learning is related to prior knowledge and sharply focussed on pupils' progress. Pupils love religious education and speak confidently about how scripture informs Catholic social teaching principles and gospel virtues and how this informs their actions. Correctly using technical vocabulary is a key aspect of learning and essential to the school's religious education curriculum. High-level oracy skills encourage pupils to ask insightful questions and reflect upon their learning. Pupils concentrate well because they are curious to learn about God and enjoy the challenge of their fast-paced lessons. Pupils with SEND are well supported by teaching assistants, teachers, and their peers through scaffolded tasks, questioning and uplevelling of vocabulary to ensure they achieve the best possible outcomes.

Teachers are confident in deploying their secure subject knowledge because of the excellent training they engage with from within the school and beyond. It is evident throughout the school that teachers have a deep commitment to and high expectations for religious education, which is communicated clearly to pupils, parents, and the wider community. Teachers mostly plan well-constructed lessons that build upon prior learning and identify gaps in pupils' learning through expert questioning, though this practice sometimes varies throughout the school. Teachers competently adapt their teaching based on pupils' answers to ensure that gaps in knowledge and skills are swiftly closed. Consequently, most pupils make excellent progress in religious education. However, in some classrooms, teachers have not identified the core knowledge they want pupils to learn in each lesson, meaning their pupils are not always supported to make rapid progress. Teachers regularly celebrate pupils' work by sharing examples with the head of school

and on social media. Consequently, pupils are keen to receive a 'remarkable RE' sticker, which celebrates their fantastic work, and are proud when they do so. A wide range of recording styles have been used in lessons to ensure that adults have optimised learning for all pupils and that teachers can accurately assess pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject.

The head of school prioritises religious education, giving it full parity with other core subjects. The importance of this subject is seen through the time given to staff training, the resources allocated to the subject, and the time allocated to leadership and monitoring, which reinforces the Catholic identity, charisma and mission of the school. She has made sure that teaching assistant support is available for SEND pupils during lessons and that a succession plan is in place for religious education leadership to help ensure standards remain high. The religious education team are inspirational; the new subject leader is passionate and, under the guidance and support of the head of school, has already further improved standards. Training for all practitioners is a priority and continues to be essential for attaining high standards, including for governors. The leadership team is astute and knows where support is required and what subsequent steps are needed to develop the subject. The head of school has an inspiring vision of outstanding teaching and learning and effectively leads a dynamic team which responds to the school's needs. The school offers excellent enrichment activities to promote pupils' learning and engagement with religious education, including spiritual development opportunities from external and diocesan providers. Governors are passionate about religious education at St Nicolas' and regularly challenge the head of school seeking evidence to support her evaluations. Ultimately, this means they can be confident in leaders' evaluations because they know their school well.

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 experience various ways to engage in prayer and liturgy, including meditation, silence, spontaneous prayer, scripture, traditional prayers, and communal singing. All pupils engage deeply in prayer and securely understand the effect the Church's liturgical year has on it. For example, pupils know that November is a time to pray for those who have died, and one way they might do this is to use the Eternal Rest prayer. During Advent, pupils prayed for refugees in preparation for welcoming Jesus into the world, inspired by the Holy Family's experience as refugees themselves. Pupils show great reverence and participation in the liturgy and want to share this with their peers by delivering their own prayer experiences. Pupils use a standard planning structure to plan prayer creatively and are effectively supported by staff or peers appropriate to their stage of development. Pupils value these opportunities and enjoy the collaborative approach to building skills to plan independently by the time they get to Year 6. Whilst pupils undertake this responsibility confidently, their capacity to evaluate the experiences of prayer and liturgy they have created is limited; as such, they do not always have secure ideas for how to improve them in the future. As evident throughout other areas of the school's Catholic education provision, pupils are confident in speaking about how prayer inspires within them a call to action to be mission-focused disciples of Christ.

Parents are delighted with the way that St Nicholas' carefully prepares prayer so that it has a profound impact on their children's spiritual and moral development. It is a central part of school life, and there is a wide variety of routine and innovative times for prayer. Prayer and liturgy offer participants, including pupils, parents, and staff, engaging and creative forms of worship, which include spontaneous prayer and knowledge of the Catholic Church's traditional prayers. Liturgies offer poignant moments to reflect on scripture and go forth and live out the mission through creative tasks for pupils to reflect on later in the day. For example, a reflection on the Lenten

mission and a shamrock used as a symbol to write about how we can live our lives with the same values St Patrick did. Scripture is carefully chosen for whole school prayer and explored with the pupils and staff so that they can understand the message and apply it to their lives. Senior staff model excellent practice for the whole community so that they, in turn, prepare the highest quality prayer experiences for one another. Individual gifts are nurtured and shared with the entire school, primarily through liturgical music, whereby guitars make an invaluable contribution to the school's Passion Play. The school and families have a flourishing partnership regarding prayer and liturgy. For example, 'stay and pray' sessions and prayer bags sent home facilitate 'a lovely opportunity to pray together.'

A clear progression pathway for prayer participation has been created and is used by all staff to develop all pupils' knowledge, understanding, and skills. Consequently, pupils' confidence in independently preparing prayer develops as they grow older. The head of school has created a plan of provision, within which regular opportunities to celebrate the Eucharist and the Word of God feature. The school works hard to build a relationship with the parish and offers opportunities to pray and share their faith in school and Church. Leaders share their faith through assemblies and liturgies, guiding pupils to reflect and apply scripture learning to their lives in various styles. The leadership team is committed to active engagement by all pupils in prayer and liturgy. The head of school is currently developing the pupils' skills to monitor and evaluate prayer and liturgy throughout the school, as it has accurately been identified as an area needing development. The governors continue to challenge and drive this to improve standards concerning prayer and liturgy for all.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Nicholas Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	140529
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	330 3403
Full postal address of the school	Jockey Road, Sutton Coldfield, B73 5US
School phone number	0121 355 2649
Headteacher	Neil Porter (executive principal)
Chair of governing board	Maria Stirrop
School Website	www.stnicholassutton.org.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St John Paul II Multi Academy
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	March 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Veronica Gosling
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