

Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Finian's Catholic Primary School

URN: 110037

Carried out on behalf of the Right Rev. Philip Egan, Bishop of Portsmouth on:

Date: 23-24 February 2023

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....

2

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.....

2

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

- St Finian's is an extremely happy Catholic primary school, where all within the community are loved and supported to value and live out the school's mission statement.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are exemplary and they consistently display positive attributes which are rooted in their developing faith.
- Leaders, including governors, are passionate and ambitious about giving pupils' authentic experiences of prayer and liturgy as well as opportunities to support the most vulnerable.
- The school's recent drive on promoting Catholic Social Teaching (CST) has enabled both staff and pupils to appreciate and contribute to this important aspect of Catholic life. RE lessons are used well to teach pupils about CST.

- The headteacher plays a pivotal role in leading this strong Catholic school. Her energy, drive and personal faith are instrumental in ensuring the school's Catholic ethos is at the heart of St Finian's.

What the school needs to improve:

- Leaders need to embed and refine monitoring processes in Religious Education so that they can better identify and address precise development needs and support staff to address these.
- Ensure that the strong practice seen in the most effective Religious Education lessons becomes commonplace throughout the school and that pupils are challenged appropriately.
- Use the excellent practice and expertise in collective worship that some staff already demonstrate to support and develop others so that the overall standard becomes consistently strong.

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

Pupils are fully aware of what it means to be part of a distinctive Catholic community. They are glad to be part of school life and enthusiastically explain how the mission of the Catholic school impacts the way they live. Pupils are highly involved in the running of the Catholic life of the school and keen to take part in a variety of activities such as the Mini-Vinnies, prayer leaders and work around raising money for charity, including Cafod. The school works very hard to ensure that pupils' moral development is second to none and as a result they have a growing understanding of the responsibility to care for the common good. Their behaviour is outstanding and a clear indication that Gospel morals and values are implicit everywhere. Pupils have a growing understanding of Catholic Social Teaching and are able to put this into practice through, for example, their work to support the Newbury food bank and the recent community tea party for elderly people. Pupils are courteous and kind to each other and respectful of members of staff and visitors.

The school mission statement 'With Christ at the Centre', is celebrated throughout the school and implicit in the way that it operates. Staff embrace the mission statement and enthusiastically participate in school life. During the inspection, staff stated how happy they were to work in the school and those who were non-Catholic explained how they had been supported to understand the school's ethos. The quality of the relationships across the school is excellent and a strong indicator that 'Christ is at the Centre' of the entire community. The school takes particular care to ensure that pupils with a variety of needs are supported. For example, the ELSA Coordinator works daily with individual pupils in the nurture room and a recent drive on neuro-diversity has enabled pupils to have a holistic understanding and

appreciation of the differing behaviours between certain people. The school environment strongly reflects its Catholic character, particularly the central corridor which contains beautiful works of art and displays linked with the Catholic nature of the school. Pupils benefit from the strong R(S)HE curriculum which is now firmly embedded and having a positive impact on pupils' understanding of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Leaders, including governors, have an excellent understanding of the mission of the Catholic Church and the place of Catholic schools within it. Governors, the headteacher and other senior leaders are passionate about giving priority to the Catholic charism of the school. The school is actively engaged with the Diocese and other local Catholic schools and proactive in delivering Diocesan priorities and the Bishop's vision. The school is served well by the local priest and leaders and governors actively engage with the parish through, for example, the parish social media page. There are strong links with parents and questionnaires during the inspection indicated that parents were very happy with the provision. One parent summed up the general response by stating 'the Catholic ethos of the school is exceptional, and I feel this is what makes St Finian's stand out'. School leaders are highly committed to the tenants of Catholic Social Teaching and resources are directed to support the most vulnerable both within the school and externally. Recent examples of this include working with the homeless charity Loose Ends and writing Christmas cards to the residents of local care homes. Governors highly value the staff and are keen to ensure the rights and dignity of every employee. The school follows the Diocesan RE curriculum God Matters and has begun some very strong work on making reference to Catholic Social Teaching within this. Staff are supported well in their continuous professional development, which has enabled them to effectively appreciate the implications of teaching in a Catholic environment.

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

During the inspection the quality of teaching and learning observed was deemed to be good overall. Pupils are developing a secure understanding in religious education. They enjoy their learning and engage enthusiastically, making good progress across the school, including those who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs. Pupils are religiously literate and during lessons demonstrate that they understand the concepts taught and how these affect them in their own lives. Although they work well in lessons, they are not always consistently challenged across the school, meaning that some do not demonstrate their full potential in their written work. Within lessons, pupils are diligent in their learning, they concentrate effectively and apply themselves to the tasks given. During the inspection, through conversations with inspectors, they were able to recall some of the key facts that they had been taught during recent religious education topics and many demonstrated a firm understanding of these. Overall attainment in RE is at least average and in line with other core curriculum subjects.

Teachers have appropriate subject knowledge and can teach religious education effectively. They value the subject and communicate this appreciation to the pupils. During lessons, teachers use a range of questions in order to probe what the pupils' have learned, give them opportunities to articulate this and secure their understanding. As such, pupils are able to explain key ideas and concepts in religious education, so that they are able to remember the most important aspects of the curriculum. Teachers periodically provide written feedback to pupils which helps them move on in their learning. This is differentiated according to pupil ability, however, teachers do not yet consistently use the same principles when planning whole lessons. This results in some pupils not having enough opportunities to demonstrate their

potential. Space is given within religious education lessons for appropriate use of prayer which helps pupils to make links between what they have learnt and their spiritual lives. The school employs a wide variety of different resources to enhance religious education teaching, including big books. Additional adults support pupils effectively, particularly those who are more vulnerable and require additional help.

Leaders and governors ensure that religious education is given prominence within the school and provision matches that of other core subjects. As well as using the Diocesan RE scheme God Matters, the school is also making good progress on work designed to facilitate the new national RE Directory. Professional development in RE is valued and prioritised and staff at all levels are given the opportunity to enhance their knowledge. For example; the headteacher has benefitted from the National Formation Programme for Catholic leaders which has helped her to shape provision across the school. Similarly, staff training days and staff meetings are used to enable teachers to develop their own practice and ask questions about areas that they need help with. The relatively new RE leader has already initiated some useful exercises in terms of monitoring but these now need to be embedded and refined in order to secure, consistently effective teaching. Other leaders, including governors, periodically carry out checking exercises to determine standards in religious education. However, all of these monitoring activities are not always precise enough to fully understand the exact development points needed to further improve RE teaching and learning. Enrichment opportunities in RE are used well and have included visits from the St. Vincent de Paul society, work with Douai Abbey and links with the Sisters of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary.

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

1

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 conduct, behaviour and attitudes during prayer and liturgy are exemplary. They have a strong awareness of the significance of prayer in their lives and respond to this joyfully. During the inspection, pupils were able to confidently and enthusiastically talk about the liturgical year and the different ways of praying associated with it. The school has made excellent progress on enabling pupils to plan, lead and evaluate prayer and liturgy. The prayer leaders were observed during the inspection and the standard of liturgy that they designed and led was outstanding. As a result, the other pupils who took part in the liturgy did so with a strong sense of purpose and appreciation. Pupils are also supported to evaluate the effectiveness of such activities, which helps them to make further improvements. Pupils are confidently able to explain why they pray as they do, and make connections between good causes and reasons for prayer. The opportunities and experiences of prayer and the way pupils react to these across the school are superb.

Prayer and liturgy are central to life within the school and an obvious priority. A variety of different prayer and liturgy opportunities are planned and joyfully celebrated by everyone in the community. These are creative in nature and reflect the breadth of Catholic tradition. Scripture and links with the Bible are carefully chosen and appropriately used at key points. Scripture is often presented imaginatively through, for example, the use of drama, which further engages and inspires the pupils. Senior leaders in particular offer a very strong example of prayer to others and all staff are committed to the prayer life of the school. Some less experienced staff require further support so that the standard of prayer and liturgy overall can be consistently high. During collective worship, staff use a range of artefacts and resources to create a prayerful atmosphere which enhances the experience for those present. Care is

taken over the spaces within the school that are dedicated to prayer and the hall is used well for the celebration of Mass. During the inspection, Mass was celebrated and parents and governors were present and made to feel welcome.

The school has a well laid out policy for prayer and liturgy within the school. The policy clearly explains the requirements needed for different stakeholders to understand how prayer and liturgy are conducted. Leaders have carefully developed an appropriate annual plan to ensure that Masses and various other liturgies are celebrated at key points in the liturgical year. Leaders meticulously ensure that during holy days of obligation members of the school community have the opportunity to celebrate Mass. There are also other opportunities linked with the liturgical year for pupils to come together to pray, including Stations of the Cross in Lent and the sacrament of Reconciliation during Advent and Lent. There are good opportunities for staff, including those who are non-Catholic, to develop their understanding of the prayer life of the school. In particular staff have recently benefited from a retreat at Douai Abbey entitled 'How to Pray' which was very positively received. All leaders have a clear understanding of Catholic traditions surrounding prayer which informs the way they plan their approach. However, this understanding is inconsistent amongst some staff, who require further support to help them to plan and deliver collective worship in a consistently effective way. Leaders and governors do not regularly, formally monitor the standard of prayer and liturgy within the school, which also contributes to some inconsistencies in approach. However, they do ensure that appropriate resources are provided for staff, which help to ensure that liturgies are meaningful, atmospheric and reflective for those participating.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Finian's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	110037
Full postal address of the school	The Ridge, Cold Ash, Thatcham RG18 9HU
School phone number	01635 865925
Name of head teacher or principal	Anna Jarratt
Chair of governing board	Phil Roberts
School Website	www.stfiniansprimary.co.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	n/a
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	4 - 11
Trustees	Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	3 April 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The inspection team

Jamie Carroll	Lead Inspector
Jeff Sendall	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