



# St Aidan's Catholic Primary School Wallsend

URN: 148814

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle

29 February – 1 March 2024

## Summary of key findings

### Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

#### 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

Yes

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

2

## What the school does well

- Time is invested in making the relationships with families strong. Consequently, the school has a deep understanding of the social and emotional needs of all pupils, especially the most vulnerable, and gives these the highest priority.
- Pupils embrace their responsibility, as part of a universal Church, to care for others.
- Leaders prioritise links with the parish community and partner schools, and as a result, the Catholic identity of the school is strengthened.
- Over time, pupils are able to use religious vocabulary to explain beliefs and the impact this has on everyday life.
- The prayer life of the school is central, and parents greatly value the impact this has on their children.

## What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that the planned curriculum explicitly includes and embeds Catholic social teaching across the school year.
- Increase the rigour of monitoring the standards and outcomes in religious education so that lessons are aspirational and based on accurate assessment of prior learning, and to ensure incisive feedback promotes progress.
- Develop a clear strategy of progression so that pupils are independent in the planning and evaluation of celebration of the word.

## 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



Pupils feel very proud to be part of St Aidan's Catholic Primary School and know that the distinctive Catholic nature makes their school special. In response to the school mission statement, 'Come in and learn with Jesus, go out and serve with love,' pupils recognise that they each play a unique part in the life of the school. They know that they are loved and well cared for by the staff team and therefore feel confident to accept willingly the opportunities to serve others, treating everyone with dignity and respect. There is a commitment to following the teaching and example of Jesus. For example, rosary leaders spend their lunchtimes organising opportunities for the younger pupils to pray the rosary. These sessions are well attended, and pupils show love and care for each other as they gather in prayer. Pupils are respectful and kind, demonstrating practical care and concern for the most vulnerable. This is reflected in the positive response of pupils to charitable activities, such as the strong link which has been forged with Muhoroni in Kenya. Mini Vinnies also seek opportunities to help their community by organising food collections. Pupils are highly motivated to work for the good of others. They feel a lived sense of belonging because of the strong ethos of welcome, reflecting the teachings of Christ.

A powerful sense of community runs through St Aidan's. Staff are fully committed to the school's mission. They embrace the Gospel values and are excellent role models. They share examples of their own faith journey which has been strengthened whilst serving their community. The nurturing of all pupils is given the highest priority and the high level of pastoral care is widely appreciated by parents who are overwhelmingly positive about school and very supportive of its work. They describe a culture of welcome where they feel their children are authentically loved. One parent commented, 'I cannot praise the staff of St Aidan's enough for their hard work and dedication to the children and families that they serve.' Pupils and families are well supported

through high-quality programmes such as the Solihull project. The school provides a carefully maintained, engaging Catholic environment both indoors and outdoors. Displays of pupils' work communicate the message of Jesus, creating a prayerful and spiritual environment. The provision for relationships and sex education is well met, being taught in line with statutory and diocesan requirements, firmly rooted in the teachings of the Church.

Leaders are highly committed to ensuring Christ is at the heart of school life. They are dedicated to ensuring pupils experience an enriching Catholic education that provides excellent formation. They see parents as the primary educators and through a planned pastoral support programme, fully support them in their mission. Leaders maintain strong links with the parish and the priest is a welcome, frequent visitor. Governors are actively involved in evaluating the Catholic life of the school, offering challenge and support. They are highly active in school and parish life and therefore have an understanding of the lived experiences of pupils. Leaders are exemplary role models, creating a highly supportive culture where the wellbeing of staff and pupils is paramount, resulting in an ethos of mutual respect and growth. New staff are fully supported, and training is tailored so that the Catholic life and mission of school is consistently strong. All staff are treated with respect and dignity, resulting in a highly motivated and committed staff team. One staff member commented, 'I have never felt so challenged and valued as a teacher and have never been given so many opportunities to grow and learn.'

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

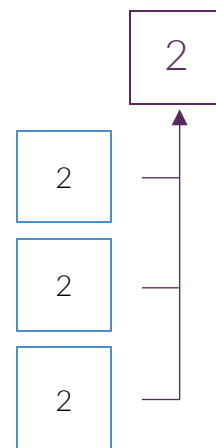
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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 enjoy religious education (RE) lessons and have positive attitudes to learning. They are eager to share their thoughts and are enthusiastic in making contributions to class discussions. Little learning time is lost as almost all pupils are able to engage in lessons. In line with the planned curriculum, they build on prior learning and most make good progress from their starting points. Their religious literacy is developed through a focus on key vocabulary, which is planned to be introduced systematically. Pupils are encouraged to make personal responses to what is taught and consequently, pupils can reflect on how scripture informs the actions of believers. One child commented, 'The words we learn bring us close to scripture. We are proud of our work, it makes us closer to God.' Pupils are given feedback in lessons, but this does not consistently help them to understand how well they are doing and how they can make further progress. Pupils are not always able to demonstrate their understanding of the learning intention as the tasks set do not always allow for this and are not always ambitious. Some pupils' responses are highly scaffolded, and therefore, there are some missed learning opportunities.

Teachers recognise the impact RE has on the academic and spiritual development of pupils and therefore these lessons are a priority. They have secure subject knowledge and so plan progressive lessons in line with the expectations of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. Teachers encourage pupils to deepen their understanding by asking incisive questions and adapting lessons to allow all pupils, including those with additional needs, to make progress. Their authentic praise is motivational. Additional adults support pupils effectively so that they remain motivated and engaged. Lessons are resourced creatively to provoke interest and to help pupils to remember more. Expectations are consistent with other subjects, although presentation in books is not always of the highest quality. Tasks are varied so pupils are able to respond in different ways. However, the tasks do not always allow pupils to clearly demonstrate

the learning intention of the lesson. Feedback does not always fully comply with the school policy, so there are missed opportunities to assess accurately and move learning on. Parents recognise the deep commitment of staff, but some reported that they do not share sufficient information about how well their child is doing in RE and what they need to do to improve.

Leaders ensure that the planned RE curriculum is well resourced and staffed appropriately. They ensure that sufficient curriculum time is dedicated to RE and so pupils are able to explore a range of sources and to reflect on how beliefs affect the actions of believers. However, leaders have not consistently ensured that the planned curriculum explicitly includes Catholic social teaching and so pupils are not fully able to articulate the link between Church principles and the common good. The RE link governor has a planned programme of visits alongside the subject lead so that governors remain aware of the provision. Leaders invest in quality induction and professional development to ensure that staff have the subject knowledge and confidence to deliver effective lessons. Best practice is shared amongst staff as leaders have secured a supportive culture where teachers observe one another and plan together. Leaders, including governors, share their passion for RE, although monitoring processes are not rigorous enough to make a swift response when learning is slowed. Action plans reflect the priorities for the school, but the impact of actions is not fully analysed, and consequently, the quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent.

## 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

2

#### 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 actively participate in prayer and liturgy. They are reverent and are able to create a sacred space. They engage enthusiastically in traditional prayer, personal prayers and in singing. Spontaneous prayers are evidence of the centrality of prayer in the life of the school. Pupils understand the phases of the liturgical year and can articulate how celebrations reflect this. Daily patterns of prayer are embedded. Older pupils can confidently plan and lead prayer but this is inconsistent across the school. Pupils are not yet fully able to evaluate and improve their celebration of the word. Some pupils can explain their choice of scripture, artefacts and music when planning celebration of the word, although these are not always thematically linked. Pupils are able to reflect on the messages of scripture and apply them to their lives. They can explain and use the *Statements to Live By* for the week, reflecting on how these influence their actions. Pupils speak confidently about how prayer makes them feel and welcome opportunities to join the parish community for Mass.

Staff support pupils to lead celebrations of the word, as appropriate to their age. They have developed a clear plan for prayer and worship to ensure that this is central to the life of the school and is observed reverently and respectfully. Parents are warmly welcomed. Adults model good practice in leading celebrations and are considerate in providing an environment which is conducive to prayer. They use spaces, including the chapel, to promote a sense of reverence where both adults and pupils are able to make personal responses. Every classroom has a prayer space which reflects the liturgical season and is incorporated into acts of worship. Consequently, the spirituality of all is enhanced. Staff make every effort to link with the parish and use the parish prayer garden. The parish priest regularly leads prayer and liturgy. Year 3 pupils were greatly enthused by praying the stations of the cross, guided by him. Staff carefully choose scripture and music to reflect the liturgical season and the theme of worship, ensuring a clear

understanding by all involved. They introduce pupils to a variety of creative ways of praying which reflect the Catholic tradition of the school and enrich prayer and liturgy. As a consequence, pupils say that prayer in school makes them feel, 'calm and special and good inside'.

Because leaders, including governors, have developed an effective policy which places prayer and worship at the heart of the school, pupils are enriched in their spiritual development. Leaders ensure that the school community is rooted in prayer, and they work hard to maintain a strong relationship with the parish community. The parish priest and parishioners are regular visitors and enhance the prayer life of the school. Leaders ensure that clear plans are in place to prioritise prayer and worship at key times in the liturgical year. Pupils recognise that prayer is powerful at significant moments. Leaders are committed to the professional development of staff so that they are well equipped to create times of prayer that are meaningful, engaging and rooted in the teachings and norms of the Church. Leaders ensure that the provision for prayer is well resourced through careful budget setting and allocated resources. Therefore, high quality prayer experiences which reflect the Catholic traditions and mission of the church, are engaging and enriching for the whole community. Leaders, including governors, evaluate the impact of prayer and liturgy by consulting with pupils, as part of the strategic self-evaluation cycle. They monitor the impact of their actions to ensure that prayer is the foundation that underpins the school community.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Aidan's Catholic Primary School, Wallsend
School unique reference number (URN)	148814
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3923318
Full postal address of the school	St Aidan's Catholic Primary School, Coniston Road, Wallsend, NE28 0EP
School phone number	01917160585
Headteacher	Andrew James
Chair of Local Governing Body	Ruth Patterson
School Website	<a href="http://www.staidans.school">www.staidans.school</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	N/A
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	October 2015
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

## The inspection team

Barbara Reilly-O'Donnell  
Louise Maitland

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

