

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

URN: 104905

Carried out on behalf of the Most Rev. Malcolm McMahon, Archbishop of Liverpool on:

Date: Thursday 9th & Friday 10th November 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.....

2

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 fully to the areas for improvement from the last inspection



Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- The mission of the school, '*Success for all within a Christ centred community*,' is well known and lived out by all.
- The sense of community and the pastoral care offered to all members of the St Monica's family (staff, pupils, families, parishioners) is exemplary.
- The children are a joy – they are well mannered, polite, beautifully behaved and considerate of others.
- Throughout the school the environment is vibrant and enticing because St Monica's mission is evident from the moment you walk through the door.

What the school needs to improve:

- Systems for monitoring and evaluating impact should be reviewed so that leaders can accurately describe the work of the school.

- In religious education, leaders should equip staff with the necessary knowledge and skills ahead of the forthcoming introduction of the Religious Education Directory.
- The school should engage with the Archdiocese to ensure up to date and relevant training for key members of staff, which will improve consistency in the quality of prayer and liturgy.

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

The pupils at St Monica's are a joy; they are well behaved, polite and well mannered, showing respect for all those they encounter. Pupils are proud of their school and the wider community; they feel a valued and integral part of this. St Monica's mission, *'Success for All within a Christ Centred Community'* is understood and drives all aspects of the school's work. Christ is at the centre of the decision-making process and this, in turn, influences the school's ongoing drive to sustain a caring and collaborative community. Pupils understand and can comment on the range of work that they undertake in serving others. They are able to talk about the St Monica's mission and what it means to them. One pupil commented, *'on mission day we learnt about faith, aspiration, resilience and respect. We learnt how we can live these out because if we do, we will go far.'* They are proud of the work they have done in support of the vulnerable; this includes support of those affected by the war in Ukraine and supporting the local community through the introduction of the 'St Monica's Pantry'. Pupils enjoy learning about their faith and how this has an impact on their daily lives.

From the moment the door is opened at St Monica's, the mission is evident and staff at all levels are committed to the school. The environment is a vibrant expression of the work of the school, for example, communal areas house beautiful displays which showcase the pupils' work and exemplify the St Monica's mission. There is a tangible sense of 'family' across the school and staff are rightly proud to be an integral part of this. There is a very low turn-over of staff because all are made to feel welcome; one member of staff said, *'we stay so long because we are a family.'* Staff at all levels are well represented within the wider parish community and many continue to serve the school long after their contractual obligations have ceased. All staff are committed to providing pastoral support for the children and families in their care and do so lovingly. All members of St Monica's value their relationship with the parish priest. Every visit is anticipated with eagerness because he

is a welcome visitor to the school and well regarded by all. Staff know that there is work to be done to further enrich this provision. Relationships, sex and health education meet statutory requirements as pupils access the archdiocesan recommended programme, Journey in Love.

Governors are emphatically supportive of the work and mission at St Monica's. Following a period of uncertainty, after the retirement of the long standing and well respected headteacher, they remain unified in their commitment to supporting leaders in their pursuit of the 'common good'. They display a deep-rooted passion for ensuring *'success for all within a Christ centred community'* and this is partly due to their composition which includes past pupils and parents, parishioners, and retired staff members. The subject lead is well respected by staff, and they value her leadership, stating that she *'goes the extra mile'* in support of all members of the school community. The headteacher is integral in promoting the St Monica's mission and his work is valued by parents and families. Following his appointment in September, one parent noted, *'he is a lovely addition to the school...there is now a bigger feel of involvement and community which is great.'* Leaders and governors are ambitious for the school and would benefit from further support to ensure that the school's self-evaluation is an accurate reflection of their work now that the leadership structure across school is stable.

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.....

3

Evidenced during lesson observation, through work scrutiny and in discussion with children, pupils are developing a secure knowledge in religious education. In the best lessons observed, pupils were engaged throughout and gave detailed responses as their teachers used a range of skilful questioning to extend learning. Pupils across the early years were able to make links between their real-life experiences and the topic of baptism and they enjoyed acting out the sacrament using a range of resources. Pupils in the year 2 classes re-enacted 'shabbat' using a variety of appropriate resources to embed their learning. In some classes observed, however, the pupils were passive due to an over reliance on teacher input and not enough opportunity for them to respond meaningfully. Pupils say that they enjoy religious education, and they do all that is asked of them. They quietly engage, present their work well using a range of media and are proud of their efforts. In all classrooms, additional adult support is available. Where these adults are directed effectively, the children benefit from clear guidance, challenge and support. Pupils make better progress where the learning objectives are clear, appropriate to the learning journey and pupils know what is expected of them by the end of the lesson.

Teaching across the school is good overall. Teaching staff are committed to religious education. They recognise its value with reference to the moral development of the pupils and most teachers can confidently demonstrate good subject knowledge. The work observed on Judaism during the inspection supports this. In the best lessons observed, teachers are succinct, focused on pupil engagement and participation and use skilful questioning to ensure the learning is deepened. They scaffold learning by providing clearly focused and appropriate learning objectives so that pupils can measure their progress. In an observation of a year 2 lesson on Judaism, the teacher skilfully checked the pupils' understanding through targeted and appropriate questions. When teaching is exciting and offers a range of resources to support the learning, children at St Monica's thrive.

During discussion, pupils shared how their learning has an impact on the way in which they live, '*our lessons help us to be kind, respectful and loyal - they help us to be better people.*' Children are praised during lesson time and in books but precise and analytical feedback by teachers and support staff is not used consistently.

Leaders and governors ensure that the Come and See programme is used across the school; as a result, the curriculum accurately reflects the requirements of the current Religious Education Directory. The impact of recent significant changes in leadership has been partly rectified with the positive appointment of the headteacher and establishment of a new leadership team. The subject leader has offered bespoke support to staff (including *early career teachers*) so that the quality of teaching and staff confidence improves over time. Staff are complimentary of and whole-heartedly value this support. Staff, governors, pupils and parents value the Headteacher saying '*we are blessed to have him.*' Over time, there has been an over-reliance on the subject leader to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning and raise the profile of staff development opportunities. As a result, staff have missed out on training provided by the archdiocesan education team. While the new leadership team and headteacher are clearly committed to religious education, the self-evaluation lacks accuracy. This could be better informed by accessing support and reviewing the systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work so that it is forensically focused on impact.

Collective worship

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

Religious education 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

3

Pupils at St Monica's enjoy the opportunity to worship together, reflecting both in silence and in prayer. Across the school, music is used well to set the tone and a peaceful atmosphere permeates the space during times of worship. Pupils' participation across the school varies and, in the best examples, the children were observed responding actively, reflectively and with enthusiasm. When given the opportunity to do so, they enjoy singing as a way of giving thanks and praise; during the inspection, the youngest pupils were observed singing joyfully in response to their focus on 'children of God.' Further work on engaging pupils through song would ensure that all pupils are able to actively participate in this aspect of worship in line with the liturgical year. The religious education ambassadors are in place and, alongside many of the older pupils in school, they are keen to prepare for and lead acts of prayer and worship but the opportunity for them to do so is currently limited. Pupils would benefit from further planned opportunities to undertake liturgical ministries across the school and as part of the wider parish. This would ensure that they are exposed to traditional prayer and develop their understanding of the pattern and rhythm of the Church.

As soon as pupils start the nursery, they are taught how to participate in prayer. As a result, pupils enjoy prayer and worship. The subject lead has appropriately planned themes to support the delivery of prayer and liturgy across the school and ensure that this is central to school life. Scripture is used as a focus of worship. Staff are complimentary of the support received from the subject lead. She has supported them in developing good practice. In one class, year 2 prayer monitors ably set up the worship table. In another class, reception pupils sang angelically to reflect on the scripture used for prayer. In their classroom, year 6 pupils read confidently as their peers listened with intent and reverence. Most pupils were able to demonstrate fluency when

reciting school prayers. However, they were not able to readily identify traditional prayer and would benefit from extending their repertoire to systematically address this across the school. All staff, including leaders, use music as a means of creating a calm and quiet atmosphere and the pupils respond beautifully, in the St Monica's way. Further work to enhance the range of music used would ensure that pupils are exposed to and become familiar with the richness of the Church's tradition.

The headteacher, subject lead and other key staff (including governors) are committed role models. Through their attendance at weekly Mass and other parish events, they actively promote the prayer life of pupils. Leaders and governors have a policy that is relevant and fit for purpose. The subject lead has worked hard to plan an appropriate calendar in line with the liturgical year. Following a recent update, planned events now include opportunities for the children to attend masses and services in school alongside appropriate celebratory events in church. The impact of this plan on pupil participation needs monitoring closely so that leaders understand, and can evaluate with confidence, the impact of their actions. Links with the parish priest are well established and, despite time limitations, he is a regular visitor to school and is supportive of the work of school leaders. Leaders and governors have appropriately identified the need for further training in all aspects of prayer and liturgy in conjunction with the archdiocese education team so that they are well equipped to evaluate the work of the school.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Monica's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	104905
Full postal address of the school	Kelly Drive, Bootle, Liverpool, L20 9EB
School phone number	0151 525 1245
Name of head teacher or principal	Mr James Gouldbourne
Chair of governing board	Mr Michael Powell
School Website	https://www.stmonicascatholicprimaryschool.co.uk/
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Not applicable
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	3-11 years
Trustees	Archdiocese of Liverpool
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	26 th September 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

Mrs Rachael Tyler	Lead
Mrs Clare Dwerryhouse	Team
Mrs Fiona Robinson	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