

Pope Paul Catholic Primary School

Baker Street, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire, EN6 2ES

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 11 December 2019



Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education is outstanding

- The content of the curriculum fully meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory. The curriculum in religious education ensures a creative approach to teaching and learning.
- Pupil attainment and progress in religious education are outstanding and in line with other core subjects.
- Pupils enjoy their RE lessons and are encouraged to reflect on its importance in their lives. Pupils get a good start to their learning in a rich and creative environment.
- Overall, teaching is good and often outstanding ensuring all pupils get the best quality lessons. Creativity in learning is enhanced by the outstanding outdoor learning environment.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils and behaviour for learning is outstanding across the school. The work in pupils' books is well presented and of a high standard.
- Support staff are very well deployed to support pupils with additional needs and have a positive impact on the learning of all pupils.
- Pupils are provided with excellent opportunities to study other world faiths and visit places of worship.
- The religious education subject leaders have a strong understanding and appreciation of the centrality of religious education in the mission of the Church and its importance in the daily life of the school. Governors are outstanding in their support and commitment to school improvement and Catholic education.

B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- School leaders are fully committed to the Catholic mission of the Church, which underpins every aspect of school life.
- The school mission statement, 'Learning in the Light of Christ' is actively lived by all members of the school community.
- Religious education is at the heart of the school and permeates all that they do. The school devotes at least 10% of classroom time to religious education in accordance with the expectations of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.
- The liturgical year is the foundation for the religious experiences throughout the school year. Pupils and staff are given many opportunities to pray in a variety of ways throughout the school day and the liturgical year.
- Pupils have a very strong understanding of the call to human flourishing and are proud of the work they do to serve others. Respect for each other and the world around them is embedded across the school.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive in their appreciation of the nurturing in the Catholic faith that the school provides. Partnership between home, school and parish and between the school, the deanery and diocese are strong.
- The very supportive parish priest is a welcome and regular visitor to the school.
- Leadership and management at all levels are outstanding in promoting the Catholic life of the school. Governors are knowledgeable, regular visitors who support and challenge school leaders.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

All areas from the previous inspection have been addressed and the school staff continue to share good practice to support each other in the teaching of religious education (RE). Deanery moderation has been developed and has led to increased staff confidence in teaching of religious education.

The content of classroom religious education is outstanding

The content of classroom religious education throughout all key stages meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD). The four areas of study outlined in the RECD are embedded in the RE support materials that are used by the school. The RE curriculum allows numerous opportunities for pupils to develop religious literacy. A good range of excellent resources are used to enhance the delivery of religious education. This is evident in well-presented pupil workbooks, in discussions and during lessons. Religious education programmes are used creatively; they supplement and enhance the delivery of the RECD resulting in a progressive programme for each key stage. Staff employ a range of creative approaches to implementing the RECD and excellent use is made of the extensive school grounds to support the delivery of the curriculum including the international garden, peace garden, allotments, and themed garden beds. The senior leadership team provides excellent support for all staff.

Pupil achievement in religious education is outstanding

Attainment in RE is generally as good as in other core subjects. The school's tracking systems show evidence of all groups of pupils making excellent progress in religious education. The school has begun using Diocese of Westminster Age Related Standards to make assessments and should now ensure that these are embedded. Moderation takes place within the school, as well as at deanery and diocesan levels to ensure accuracy. The pupils are keen to learn and excel through high teacher expectations. Most pupils are engaged in their learning and participate enthusiastically in RE lessons and assemblies. Pupils are confident and articulate in their use of religious language and understanding. In the very best lessons pupils know and understand what they should do to improve their work. In class, pupils' responses and work demonstrates the range of progress in religious education, across the school, from their starting points. Pupils learn about other faiths, in particular Judaism and have visitors from other faiths and visit places of worship each year. Pupils enjoy their lessons and see religious education as important in their lives. They are eager to share their knowledge and faith with others. There are a number of displays throughout the school demonstrating the liturgical year and topics covered. Pupils across the school are enthusiastic learners and this has a positive effect on their progress. They are confident and articulate in their use of religious vocabulary and confident to share their learning and progress.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

Teaching is creative and actively engages pupils in their learning. Teachers use a variety of well-judged teaching strategies to match pupils' learning needs. The RE leaders ensure there are regular phase group planning sessions for staff to embed support materials and differentiation of tasks. Teachers have high expectations; they plan and teach lessons that deepen pupils' religious literacy. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and teaching assistants are well deployed to support pupils in lessons. Pupils take a pride in their learning and were eager to respond to questioning and in lessons. Most pupils said they enjoyed RE and a Year 6 pupil said 'I enjoy learning about my faith and how it helps me to live a better life'. Teaching and marking is monitored by the RE leaders, although the school now needs to ensure that their systems and structures are fully formalised. In the best lessons, feedback to pupils was understood, responded to and ensured pupils knew how to move

their learning on. Leaders now need to ensure that feedback to pupils is fully consistent across the school and in line with the school policy. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is outstanding and pupils are welcoming, well mannered and confident. Regular home learning opportunities are provided to extend religious education learning. These can be creative, of a practical nature or research based. Recent examples included making an Easter garden, researching St Paul, presenting the findings in an artistic way, and creating a prayer to mark the anniversary of the canonisation of St Pope Paul VI.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education **is outstanding**

The quality of leadership and management of religious education is outstanding. The senior leadership team and RE leaders work hard to ensure the Catholic mission and religious education is at the heart of all that the school does on a daily basis. The RE leaders support staff well and ensure that professional training is linked to staff needs. Leaders demonstrate a commitment to continued school improvement and to ensuring that the strong Catholic ethos of the school permeates all areas of school life. Self-evaluation is accurate and evidence based. As a result of the continued focus on school improvement, there is a very good understanding of the strengths and areas for development in religious education. Teachers are well supported through shared resources, mentoring, monitoring and professional development. The headteacher has a clear commitment to encouraging staff to develop by securing the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies. There is a creative approach to religious education, which results in committed teaching and learning, and sustained progress being made across the key stages. Teaching is regularly monitored, although effective systems and structures need to be formalised in order for leaders to have a better overview available to scrutinise results of their monitoring. The RE action plan clearly identifies issues for action and evaluates current provision effectively.

What should the school do to develop further in classroom religious education?

- Formalise systems and structures for monitoring across the school.
- Continue to embed the use of Age Related Standards
- Ensure consistency of feedback to pupils in line with the school marking policy.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

The areas from last inspection have been addressed. Parents are now overwhelmingly positive about the school and the partnership has been strengthened significantly. Pupils now regularly prepare and lead acts of worship. The 'Liturgy Group' has flourished in their responsibility and this was evident during the inspection when they led the rosary at lunchtime.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

is outstanding

RE is central to the life of the school. It permeates all aspects of school life from relationships within the whole community to the creative outdoor learning environment. 10% of curriculum time is timetabled for RE to comply with the Bishops' requirement; this is evident in pupils' work, displays and the discussions with pupils during the inspection. A good budget is allocated to RE; the school ensures that money is well spent and that RE is well resourced. Leaders have ensured that the provision for RE and the Catholic life of the school is commensurate with other core curriculum areas. They have successfully encouraged members of staff to undertake the Catholic Certificate of Religious Education (CCRS) and one member recently completed a Masters in Catholic Education.

The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community

is outstanding

Prayer, worship and Adoration are central to the life of the school. There are ample opportunities throughout the school day and the year to ensure that pupils experience a wealth of Catholic tradition. Pupils' spirituality is developed throughout their time at Pope Paul. An annual 'Spirituality Week' is embedded into the school year providing opportunities for quiet, reflection, sharing and discussion. The liturgical year is the focus for the key events throughout the year and ensures that staff, pupils and parents have access to the many celebrations on offer. The school were privileged to witness the canonisation of their patron, Pope Paul VI, with members of staff travelling to Rome for the event and supporting the school in celebrating the very special occasion. The school embraced 'Our Eucharistic Journey' and includes regular opportunities for Adoration both in school and church. Pupils are confident in planning and leading prayer and worship. The Year 6 Liturgy Group take a leading role in delivering acts of worship to younger pupils. Examples include the Travelling nativity, leading the rosary in May and October and a weekly lunchtime act of worship using the Wednesday Word. They have produced termly newsletters to be sent to families. A recent initiative is pupil liturgy groups from local schools meeting to share ideas. Pupils support the local parish at Sunday Mass once a month and this is highly regarded by parents and parishioners. Children experience other world faiths and have opportunities to see how other faiths pray and worship with regular visits to places of worship and listening to guest speakers. The parish priest is a regular and welcome visitor to the school offering his support when needed.

The contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice –

is outstanding

Through the school's mission statement; 'Learning in the Light of Christ', valuing others is embedded in the school's ethos and through the pupils' spiritual, moral, social, emotional and cultural development. Pupils have a strong awareness of the call to justice and service at a local, national and international level through the many charities they support such as Cafod, Mary's Meals, The Catholic Children's Society, Great Ormond Street Hospital, the NSPCC, Missio and the Poppy Appeal. Pupils recently chose to support the Aplastic Anemia Trust in memory of pupil who recently

passed away. The school provides a range of opportunities for pupils to support both church and secular charities. Most recently this has been by linking Caritas Westminster and Mitzvah Day to support Mary's Meals in partnership with several Jewish schools. Pope Paul School received Fairtrade accreditation in 2010 and through the work they do, pupils are very aware of issues of justice and fairness both in their own community and worldwide. Pupils have studied Pope Francis' letter 'Laudato Si' and clearly understand their role as 'Stewards of the Creation'. A pupil explained that, 'We are called to look after each other as Jesus said we should love one another as I have loved you.' Pupils study their house saints as people who were servants of others and have embraced St Paul VI and Oscar Romero's call to work for justice. The school joins the parish annually to celebrate the legacy of St Vincent de Paul. Pupils have many leadership opportunities in role such as; House Captains, School Parliamentarians, Fairtrade and liturgy representatives.

The partnership with parents, school and parish, and collaboration as an integral part of the diocese through its relationship with the diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf

is outstanding

The school demonstrates outstanding and creative ways of working in its key relationships with parents and carers, the parish and other Catholic schools in the diocese. Parents are very complimentary and appreciative of the school's work as demonstrated by the response to the survey and by conversations with inspectors during the inspection; comments were overwhelmingly positive. A parent wrote, 'We feel privileged that our children belong to this strong Catholic school and are part of a welcoming community where the doors are always open to us.' Another commented, 'We feel the school involves us as parents heavily in religious education through explanations in blogs, assemblies, Masses etc.' Another parent said, 'Pope Paul is a friendly, loving community, an extension of both a Catholic home and parish.' Newsletters and communication to home regarding religious education and the Catholic life of the school are frequent and parents are kept well informed through an up-to-date website. The school recognises the centrality of its partnership with both the deanery and the diocese: engaging in regular opportunities for training, moderation and professional development. The excellent relationship with the parish, additionally supported by many of the staff and parents, ensures that pupils have outstanding and effective links between school and parish.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school

is outstanding

The senior leadership team with governors have ensured that RE is at the centre of the school's life and work. The school mission prayer clearly expresses its understanding of itself as a Catholic school. The RE leaders are the driving force in the school's commitment to the education of young people with a vision of discipleship for life. Leaders strive to maintain a focus on improvement and to providing high quality experiences that will enable pupils to develop fully, spiritually and religiously. Every opportunity is taken to express the school's Catholic identity through newsletters, reports to governors and school and class blogs. Support is provided through coaching and mentoring, especially for non-Catholic colleagues and those new to teaching or new to working in a Catholic school. Governors know the school very well and are committed to seeing it improve and succeed. They have a clear understanding of their strategic role providing a balance of challenge and support. They are regular visitors and see the school in action to gain valuable knowledge about the school. They understand the school's strengths and areas for improvement exceptionally well.

What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?

- Continue to develop middle leadership to enable RE succession planning.

Information about this school

- The school is a one-form entry Catholic primary school in the locality of Hertsmere.
- The school serves the parish of Our Lady and St Vincent, Potters Bar.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 80%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 11% and from other faiths is 4.3%. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 82%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 4.
- There are 8% of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 1 has a statement of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is above average.
- There is a well below average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 4.8% pupils receive the Pupil Premium (10).

Department for Education Number	9193975
Unique Reference Number	117496
Local Authority	Hertfordshire

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	4 -11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	210
The appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Michael Kelly
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Heymoz
Telephone number	01707 659755
Website	www.popepaul.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@popepaul.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 May 2015
Classroom religious education	Good
The Catholic life of the school	Outstanding

Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out (i) under the requirements of the Canon 806 and (ii) in accordance with the Framework for Diocesan Inspections 2015 approved by the Archbishop of Westminster and (iii) under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

- The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection.
- During the inspection 7 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended 1 Nativity play and a number of acts of worship.
- Meetings were held with school staff, pupils and governors.
- Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

Mrs Ann Staunton

Ms Carol Maguire

Mrs Mary Ainger

Mrs Caroline McGivern

Lead Inspector

Associate Inspector

Associate Inspector

Shadow Inspector

Information about inspection

The purpose of Diocesan inspection is to report to and advise the Archbishop on the quality of classroom religious education and the Catholic life of the school. The inspection report is also used to inform parents and carers, and the wider Catholic community. Inspection provides an opportunity to support, challenge, evaluate and promote the work of Catholic schools. It also assists schools in the work of self-evaluation and improvement, and enables the Diocese to celebrate with schools their sense of identity and their strengths as Catholic schools.

Inspection Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

This report is published by the Diocese of Westminster and is available at:

<http://rcdow.org.uk/education/schools>

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