

# St Ambrose Catholic Primary School

URN: 106115

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Shrewsbury

08–09 February 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

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

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

- St Ambrose's school has a strong culture of welcome. This means everyone feels valued and supported, and this is clearly witnessed by the caring relationships throughout the school community.
- Inclusivity is a key feature of St Ambrose's school, therefore pupils and families of all faiths and cultures are respected. This leads to a calm and happy atmosphere for all.
- A recent review of the Catholic life and mission of the school involved all stakeholders, and because of this, leaders, staff, and governors are energised to ensure Gospel values underpin daily life.
- Pupil behaviour and engagement in lessons is excellent, which means progress from their starting points to the end of Key Stage 2 is particularly good.

- Celebrations of the word are central to the life of the school community. Pupils and staff have Christ at the centre of all they do.

### What the school needs to improve

- Develop a robust programme of professional development for all staff, so that all pupils of all abilities are effectively challenged and supported to deepen their knowledge and understanding of religious education.
- Develop a programme for Catholic social teaching that is deeply rooted in scripture and is integrated across the curriculum.
- Provide a structured programme of training to increase staff confidence and creativity so that pupils' experience of celebrations of the word is developmental and consistent across the school.

## 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

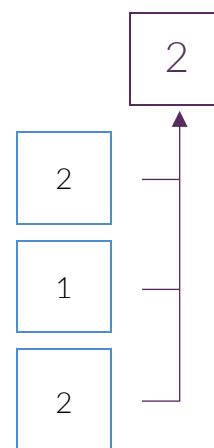
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### 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



St Ambrose's school is a place where everyone is welcomed. Pupils know they are respected as unique individuals and loved by God. Because of this, they understand that the values they uphold are founded on the teaching of Jesus. Pupils have a keen sense of belonging to a caring community where everyone's cultures and beliefs are valued. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils confidently express their views saying, 'We are respectful and resilient' and 'We will take Jesus to our next school'. Pupils understand they have a responsibility to look after others in the local community and are finding ways to support those who need their help. For example, the Mini Vinnies organise events such as Harvest food collection, Christmas jumper day and support for the people of Ukraine. Some pupils also visit other communities to sing carols at Christmas. Pupils understand they can help those less fortunate than themselves, however they do not readily link this to the principles of Catholic social teaching. Pupils of all ages know they can talk to adults who will listen to them if they need help, so they feel safe and happy. They behave well, which results in a calm atmosphere during the school day. Pupils respond with enthusiasm to all that is offered to them.

The recent review of the Catholic mission of the school by the whole community means pupils, staff and governors are re-energised and fully embrace the Gospel message: 'Love one another as I have loved you' John 13.34. Staff understand that every part of the school curriculum is based on this, therefore there is a nurturing relationship among staff, pupils, and parents. Discussions with parents and their responses to the survey overwhelmingly indicate that they feel supported by each member of staff, knowing that they can speak to them in confidence. They also value the opportunity to speak to a trained member of staff if they have personal worries, or concerns about their child. Inclusivity is a prominent feature of St Ambrose's so staff from other faiths

have space to pray according to their own traditions, and staff provide time for children to write and share prayers in their own language. Pupils from all cultures and backgrounds are encouraged to take leadership roles. Staff are exemplary role models for pupils as evidenced by one parent's comment that teachers are incredible and have helped so much to improve her child's confidence and capabilities.

Senior leaders and governors clearly understand their responsibilities to ensure that daily life at St Ambrose's school is based on Gospel values. Parents are supportive of the school's mission and appreciate the range of effective strategies in place to support them and their children. The recent transition to new leadership has gone smoothly and parents believe the head teacher is passionate about the faith and happiness of their children. Staff responses to the survey show that they fully support the new leadership team and governors recognise the positive impact that the team is making. Leaders and governors are committed to the well being of all staff and ensure that policies and procedures enable them to support the school's mission through their daily activities. Governors are committed to supporting the Catholic life of the school, however until recently they have not been involved in regular self-evaluation of this area. This needs to be planned more effectively to ensure that governors have a clear understanding of the continued commitment of leaders to develop and enhance the mission of the school.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

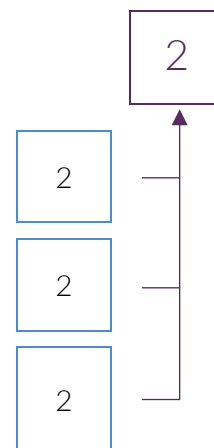
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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



From their starting points in the Early Years to the end of Key Stage 2, pupils make substantial progress in their knowledge and understanding of the religious education curriculum. Children in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 recall miracles and parables, and by Upper Key Stage 2 pupils can explain the relevance of the Gospel message in their lives. Written responses, such as 'When we show values of love, peace and hope, the Kingdom of God will grow across the world like a mustard seed', indicate that pupils understand 'even the little things we do make a difference'. In lessons pupils' excellent behaviour means they have meaningful discussions with partners and confidently share their views with the whole class. However, independent learning and creativity are inconsistent and pupils in Key Stage 1 do not always record sufficient responses to demonstrate their understanding of the topic. Pupils do enjoy their religious education lessons and are proud of the work they produce. They have opportunities to assess how well they are doing through oral and written feedback and, although progress is good, more challenge and targeted support would raise attainment for pupils of all abilities.

Teachers are conscientious and plan their lessons well, however it is not clear if all staff can confidently deepen and challenge pupils' thinking and understanding. Planning is linked carefully to *The Way, The Truth and The Life*, and the recent introduction of knowledge organisers clearly identifies key vocabulary and expectations for year groups. The positive impact of this is seen in lessons and written work. Teachers use the school policy for assessing pupils' starting points in each topic and again at the end of the topic, however this is not consistently used in all classes. All teachers ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of what they are learning, and adult support is used effectively in most classes. Staff clearly value the time they dedicate to teaching religious education and successfully make these lessons feel special for all pupils. Scripture is a key feature in lessons, and pupils use Bibles appropriately for their age. In most classes teachers

provide time for pupils to think further about wider questions related to the topic and interactive displays in each classroom are a positive way for pupils to record their ideas.

Leaders and governors are committed to the teaching of religious education, and they are proud of their dedicated staff. They realise the positive impact this subject has on the daily lives of pupils. Since the beginning of this academic year, relevant staff and governors have attended the diocesan briefing meetings. They recognise that religious education is central to the whole curriculum and therefore timetabling and resourcing are prioritised in the school development plan. Leaders also provide training in school so that staff are kept informed of diocesan developments. However, the leadership team also understands the importance of attending diocesan training and moderating standards with their local cluster group of schools. Staff who recently visited Catholic schools to see outstanding teaching share their experiences with staff to further improve teaching and learning. Staff know that the subject leaders are available to support and offer advice. There is a formal programme of monitoring lessons and written work, and feedback is shared at pupil progress meetings. Leaders also value pupils' positive feedback about how much they enjoy their religious education lessons. Governors engage in evaluating religious education as they conduct learning walks and look at pupil books. One governor also ensures that the relationship and sex education programme complies with the diocesan policy.

## 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

2

#### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

2

2

Pupils in all classes respond well to opportunities for prayer. They listen with respect and think carefully about the scripture readings and reflections that their prayer leaders prepare. Pupils understand the Church's liturgical year and in preparation for Lent they change the colour of their cloths on the prayer focus to purple. Celebrations of prayer in classrooms are planned so that pupils of all ages, faiths and cultures gradually develop their understanding of the reverence with which Catholics hold the Bible. Some class celebrations of the word and whole-school assemblies include silent time for reflection, traditional prayers, music, and hymns. On alternate weeks, prayer leaders confidently prepare the whole-school assembly with support from the subject leader, and parents appreciate the invitation to join in their child's class assemblies. The parish priest, governors, and parishioners comment on how well the pupils of all faiths and none join in with prayers and hymns when they attend Masses in church. Pupils can talk about how prayer and liturgy influence their daily lives, for example 'We can learn how to trust God' and it 'helps us to think about how we can help others'. However, in some classes, quality time for reflection is lost as the activity becomes more appropriate to a lesson activity.

Prayer is central to the daily life at St Ambrose's school. As well as the daily pattern of prayer, significant times are celebrated, including the feasts of All Saints and St Ambrose, Lent, Easter, and Advent. Other world events such as November remembrance, wars and natural disasters are also remembered in prayer. At these times pupils have opportunities to write their own prayers as well as learning traditional prayers such as the rosary in May and October. Parents enjoy the themed bags that go home at various times in the year, which help them to feel part of the community and part of their child's experiences of prayer. To develop pupils' understanding of the liturgical year, Monday Gospel assemblies and Friday celebrations of the word are linked to the weekly Gospel. Parents comment about how much their children enjoy

coming to school, saying prayers, and singing hymns at home. The parish priest offers opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Lent and Advent. When teachers make creative use of the space in their classrooms for prayer, pupils can engage in the celebrations of the word in a way that is significantly different from lesson time. This enables them to think about their personal mission for the week in a more meaningful way.

Leaders and governors plan the school calendar to ensure that ample time is given to celebrate key feasts and significant times in the liturgical year. School leaders are also committed to providing quality preparation for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. The parish priest, leadership team, and governors are keen to provide many opportunities for pupils and families to attend Mass in church. Parents of all faiths comment that they value this and know their children enjoy these experiences. The new prayer and liturgy policy is helping staff provide more meaningful experiences of prayer and reflection. This policy gives detail about formal prayers and the progression of skills that lead to greater independence when pupils plan and lead celebrations of the word. All staff are now using the diocesan planning sheets, which is having a positive impact on staff confidence. However regular and focused monitoring of prayer will highlight areas that require further guidance to ensure all staff use correct terminology, as well as exploring how to make celebrations of the word more creative.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Ambrose Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	106115
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3563507
Full postal address of the school	St Ambrose Catholic Primary School, Rostrevor Road, Adswood, Stockport, SK3 8LQ
School phone number	01614808466
Headteacher	Michael Glynn
Chair of Governors	Jane Roberts
School Website	<a href="http://www.st-ambrose.stockport.sch.uk/">www.st-ambrose.stockport.sch.uk/</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	5 April 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

## The inspection team

Susan Lyonette  
Louise Conlon

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