



# The Faber Catholic Primary School

URN: 138722

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Birmingham

22 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

#### Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

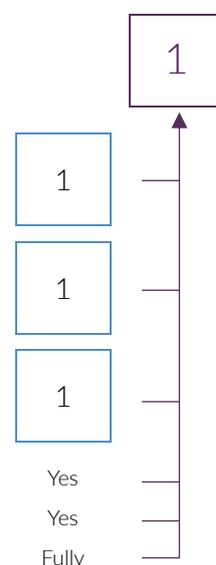
#### Collective worship (p.7)

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

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



## What the school does well

- Quality relationships that are consciously centred on the values Jesus taught have cultivated a strong and fully inclusive community where pupils are inspired and staff are proud to work.
- Leaders at all levels have a clear vision and a strong sense of direction. Rigorous and honest evaluation systems are in place, which ensure the school accurately identifies its strengths and precisely targets strategic improvement work in all areas.
- Religious education work is of the highest quality throughout the school. Teachers clearly and consistently communicate the subject's value to their pupils.
- Teachers plan exciting, thought-provoking, and engaging religious education lessons which harness pupils' enthusiasm and challenge individuals at an appropriate level and pace.

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- Pupils routinely evaluate the prayers they plan and lead, reflecting on how they could make them even better in the future, which they are given the opportunity to do.

### What the school needs to improve

- Enable pupils to confidently articulate the link between the Catholic social teaching they learn about and their social actions.
- Refine feedback systems in religious education so that pupils know what they need to do to improve and can say how they have made progress.

## 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

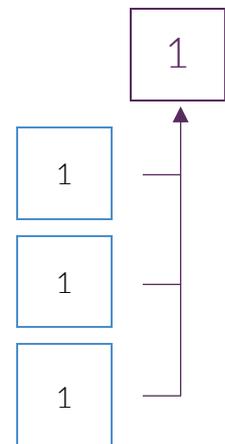
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### 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



Christ is consciously at The Faber's heart. Pupils speak confidently about how they are called to enact His moral code through the many works of mercy they undertake. For example, they say their work to provide care packages to cancer patients in the local hospital is important because 'Everyone deserves a fair share of Jesus' time and love.' Pupils are proactive in finding ways to respond to the demands of Christian discipleship; a school vegetable garden and salad bar were created in response to an older pupil canvassing the opinion of his peers regarding how to become better stewards of creation, whilst Key Stage 1 pupils asked to build a frog pond and planted new trees with the school's caretaker. Pupils speak enthusiastically about such opportunities to witness their faith in practical ways and of the Catholic social teaching themes they have learnt about but struggle to establish a link between the two. Nevertheless, social teachings are prominent in the school's daily work, and pupils subsequently know they are God's creations. They say, 'We are all linked to God in a way – we are all different and special because He made us.' They are very aware of the responsibilities this entails for their attitudes towards one another, making The Faber a happy and secure school where pupils thrive. They have a secure understanding of their school's Catholic identity and speak assuredly of the 'Faith, Achieve, Belong, Enjoy, and Respect' values and how these influence their daily experience, also linking their importance to the school's mission, which they embrace.

Staff are highly committed to the school's mission and readily implement it each day in various ways. Adults use a common language to explain it to pupils, meaning they are secure. Parents unanimously praise the staff's approachability and the warm, joyful, and supportive welcome they receive. The school makes a conscious and focused effort to promote inclusivity and respect for those from various cultures and belief traditions through carefully planned curriculum

elements, including art projects and learning about festivals and celebrations. Chaplaincy provision is fantastic. A deeply committed, expert lay chaplain leads several initiatives, including praise and worship time, co-ordinating pupil leadership opportunities within the Cafod Club and Mini Vinnies, and the Big Lent Walk. Her role within the broader multi-academy company (MAC) enables her to lead high-impact events such as the 'Cycle for St Chad's Sanctuary', in which parents were invited to cycle between all of the MAC's schools to raise money for those experiencing need; whilst cyclists were at The Faber, a rest point was created at which sanctuary volunteers were present so parents could learn more about how their fundraising would be put to use. The school provides excellent pastoral care, ensuring pupils and staff have access to a trained mental health first aider, as and when needed; the 'Chatterbox' initiative offers a universal point of confidential access to this for all pupils.

The Faber's Catholic identity is explicit in all policies and practices, meaning all leaders, including governors and directors, are energised, determined, and successful in their pursuit of providing the highest standards of Catholic education. They proactively engage with the Archdiocese of Birmingham, ensuring they are at the forefront of securing His Grace's vision for Catholic schools. Excellent regard is afforded to staff concerning their mental and physical well-being; all staff have been offered a free medical health check. The MAC has also made two additional days' provision for training each year, which staff use to secure their professional development aspirations. Rigorous, multi-layered monitoring systems inform precise, well-targeted school improvement plans. Parents particularly value the GIFT (growing in faith together) Award, which often celebrates how pupils live out the school's values.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

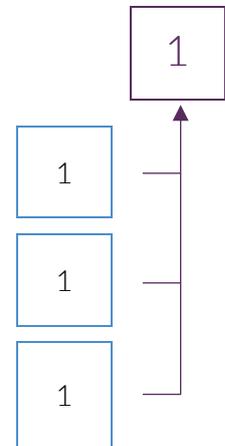
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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 make excellent progress because they routinely recall and consolidate prior learning before acquiring new knowledge, which increases their confidence. All groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), know, remember, and do more with their learning and achieve very strong outcomes. High levels of attainment have been sustained over the last two and a half years since new subject and senior leadership was appointed. Outcomes for religious education compare favourably with other core subjects. As a direct result of a sustained focus on religious literacy, pupils use technical vocabulary proficiently. Religious education's contribution to the depth of pupils' spiritual and moral development is reflected in the considered questions they ask during lessons and their ability to substantiate their responses to teachers' questions. For example, the very youngest children speak about how Jesus is kind and caring, shows love and teaches us to share; they know that they are called to do the same because they are his disciples, and know they could do this by 'helping at home'. Pupils work well independently and in small groups because teachers expertly manage each classroom's learning climate, enabling them to concentrate exceptionally well. The standard of work in pupils' exercise books is consistently exceptional. This is because the subject's value is made explicitly clear to pupils, and time and care are given to ensure all work is fully and carefully completed to the highest presentation standards.

Teachers know the requirements of the *Learning and Growing as the People of God* curriculum intricately and subsequently plan exciting, well-crafted lessons which always meet pupils' needs. This significantly contributes to pupils' progress and enjoyment of religious education lessons. Due to excellent staff training, teachers ensure every lesson contributes to pupils securing the curriculum's intended learning outcomes. Coupled with their detailed knowledge of the individual pupils in their class, teachers plan activities which ensure timely progress is always

made. Furthermore, because teachers know the direction of travel of each work unit, they readily adapt well-targeted questions and tasks to move pupils on to the next stage of learning as soon as they are ready. Teachers profoundly understand the subject's contribution to pupils' spiritual development. For example, Class 4 pupils used *Lectio Devina* when studying the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus in a lesson about the importance of almsgiving and helping those in need. Pupils know they achieve well in religious education but cannot yet confidently talk about their progress because this is not always clear to them. Teachers routinely use verbal affirmation and praise during lessons, further motivating already-conscientious pupils.

Leaders, including governors and directors, ensure religious education is prioritised in their allocation and resources. Religious education enjoys the benefits of the school's MAC membership in its subject leadership and staff training. The subject leaders, who also lead at another academy, want pupils to be passionate about religious education and to view it as 'more than just a subject'. They are highly skilled in realising this vision through well-crafted staff training which equips staff with the skills and confidence needed to deliver it consistently. Leaders have created a whole school journey map and an 'experience map' for each classroom, detailing the enrichment activities provided to enhance pupils' learning throughout the school. Monitoring and evaluation systems are well-planned; MAC direction ensures they lead to precise and effective actions, which bring about further improvements, including looking at ensuring pupils make progress in repeating topics, such as the sacraments. Pupils' views contribute to this; for example, role play and artwork are now more used in lessons because they desire an even broader range of learning activities. Multiple opportunities for standards moderation guarantee the accuracy of teachers' assessment of pupils' outcomes.

## 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

1

**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 are consciously active and deeply reverent during prayer and liturgy at The Faber. This is because of the school's outstanding quality of provision and the consistent modelling of exceptionally high standards by all staff. Singing is particularly joyful and significantly helps lift the prayer experience to another level. Pupils relish working with the lay chaplain to provide musical accompaniment to hymns and liturgical music. Following a focus on developing pupils' knowledge of the liturgical year, pupils recognise the names, liturgical colours, and practices associated with the Church's significant seasons. Older pupils have a particularly detailed knowledge of how prayers change at various times. All pupils experience a tremendous variety of prayer styles, including multiple Masses and other liturgies, Baminelli prayer services during Advent, a Marian procession in May, and an extraordinary Stations of the Cross service each Lent, during which pupils carry a wooden cross through the countryside to Alton Castle, along their own 'Via Dolorosa'; a powerful public witness to the school's Catholic faith. Pupils are also very confident and comfortable in praying silently. They have extensive opportunities to collaborate in various groups to plan and lead prayer. After such times, they routinely evaluate what went well and what could be even better: reflections they incorporate into their planning of subsequent prayer times. Prayer inspires pupils to reflect on their attitudes and behaviours, which is captured in the personal reflections they write in their 'Catholic life books'.

Prayer is deeply embedded into The Faber's daily routines, a natural, core part of the school day. All school gatherings, meetings, and relevant times throughout the day are marked in prayer, often structured but with frequent opportunities for spontaneous prayer. The Bible is at the centre of worship and is always treated with the utmost reverence. Staff take great care to make it accessible and engaging to pupils through age and development stage-appropriate texts, well-selected artwork, multimedia, and exciting graphics, which stimulate pupils' curiosity; this

enables all pupils to engage fully with prayer. All staff are exemplary models of prayer, who join in with all responses and gestures. Everything the school does provides an authentic prayer life for pupils to participate confidently. Excellent staff training, both within the school and with the MAC's lay chaplain and as part of the induction process, ensures staff are highly skilled in supporting pupils to plan well-crafted prayer experiences that follow the norms of the Catholic Church. Parents are thoughtfully invited to join their children in prayer at school and respond positively to such opportunities, saying, 'It is wonderful that we get invited to school assemblies and Masses, where we can see how much the children enjoy them.' Parishioners value the monthly Family Mass and are keen to continue to nurture their involvement in the school's prayer life.

The MAC has developed a new prayer and liturgy policy, which is well-formulated because it sets out the expectations regarding variety, structure, and format for worship within the school. All staff use it consistently, resulting in a common prayer experience for all pupils. Leaders have developed a system for sequentially upskilling pupils to design and lead prayer services, evident in their competent practice. The parish priest generously gives his time to celebrate Mass in school regularly, amongst other things. He provides formation to staff to ensure they are well-equipped to lead prayer and develop pupils' understanding of the liturgy. For example, he recently led an instruction Mass for staff, followed up with a question-and-answer session so they could build their knowledge and appreciation of the rite. The executive principal is an inspirational role model of prayer for staff and pupils.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	The Faber Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	138722
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8603300
Full postal address of the school	Cotton Lane, Cotton, Stoke-on-Trent, ST10 3DN
School phone number	01538 702324
Headteacher	Sarah Baxter
Chair of governing board	Kenneth Wilson
School Website	<a href="http://www.faber.staffs.sch.uk">www.faber.staffs.sch.uk</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	The Painsley Catholic Academy
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	April 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

## The inspection team

Ben McArdle

Rachael Batson

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