



St Gerard's Catholic Primary School

URN: 139877

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Hallam

17–18 April 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

1

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

1

What the school does well

- There is a powerful sense of community, belonging, and commitment to the mission. The example and personal witness of the head teacher inspires this, ably supported by the recently formed senior leadership team.
- The very strong and effective partnership between the school and parish contributes exceptionally well to pupils' spiritual formation.
- Pupils demonstrate a deep sense of belonging to this welcoming, inclusive community. They behave exceptionally well, are polite and appreciate all the school offers them.
- Teachers use excellent questioning skills that deepen pupils' understanding of religious education.
- Pupil and staff participation in prayer and liturgy is exceptionally heartfelt and enthusiastic.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop the principles of Catholic Social Teaching within the full curriculum so that staff and pupils can articulate how it reflects the Church's mission to respond to people's needs locally, nationally, and globally.
- Ensure that all pupil groups are aware of how to improve their work in religious education to help maximise their progress.
- Develop a clear and comprehensive strategy for systematically building up pupils' skills of participation in prayer and liturgy as they progress through 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

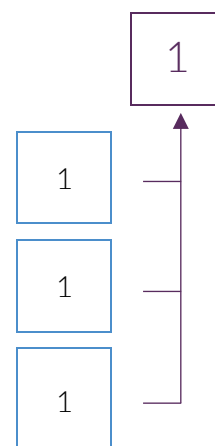
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



A strong, welcoming, and inclusive Catholic culture is truly evident within St Gerard's. The mission statement – 'With Christ as our Teacher, to enable every child to be the best that they can be' – lies at the heart of the school community and is known, lived, and experienced by the pupils and endorsed by governors, staff, and parents. At St Gerard's, pupils are encouraged to grow in, understand, and embrace the Catholic faith. The Growing in Faith Together (GIFT) team members are excellent faith ambassadors who embody the school's Catholic life and mission. Pupils are in absolutely no doubt that they are loved and valued in all of their God-given uniqueness because the staff are so committed to caring for and nurturing every single child in their care. This care for each other is extended to caring for those in the local community; charitable acts of kindness include: Operation Christmas Child, foodbank collections, and Mary's Meals runs. A member of the 'Mini Vinnies' group remarked, 'Instead of gaining, we are giving'. Pupils display an eagerness to fulfil chaplaincy roles, which is a major feature of the impact of the Catholic life and mission of this school. They are actively engaged in responding to the demands of Catholic Social Teaching; however, this is yet to be fully embedded across the full curriculum. The behaviour of pupils is exemplary in lessons and throughout the school.

Staff members make an exceptional contribution to the school's Catholic life and mission. There is a strong sense of vocation and belonging amongst staff. They wholeheartedly support leaders in nurturing a community where the teachings of Jesus are put into practical action. St Gerard's is an exceptionally welcoming community that actively includes everyone. Parents, carers, pupils, and staff are united through this welcoming culture and share a deep sense of commitment to the school's mission. Because of this, St Gerard's is a school where everyone feels a strong sense of belonging, with one parent remarking, 'This school is a beacon of hope and light'. Staff are

exemplary role models in the way they strive to show love and care for the pupils and the entire community. They put the school's mission into practical action, for example participating in 'Class 5 for Big Lent Walk'. Chaplaincy provision is a central and celebrated aspect of the life and mission of the school. The chaplaincy provided by the parish priest engages the pupils in their faith and helps to root the school in parish life and vice versa. The provision for relationships and health education is carefully planned and meets both statutory and diocesan requirements.

Leaders and governors prioritise Catholic life and mission. All staff are treated with respect and dignity, resulting in a highly motivated, passionate, and committed team. They feel valued and supported by the school, with one commenting, 'The essence of St Gerard's Catholic Primary School stands out as very special with a true feeling of family and belonging'. The headteacher is an inspirational leader; her vision, commitment and dedication to the school are real strengths. St Gerard's has a strong team spirit permeating the school, with staff receiving an excellent level of care and support, which they subsequently cascade to their pupils. Leaders and governors are dedicated to ensuring staff receive high-quality training and induction so that the mission is deeply embedded. Clear school policies and procedures, rooted in the school's Catholic mission, ensure that strategic priorities underly all areas of school development. Parents fully support St Gerard's faith-filled and nurturing environment, which enables them to explore and strengthen their relationship with God. One parent shared, 'The school is fantastic in helping support and grow our child's faith which is great comfort to us as parents'. An informative website and social media platform provide regular updates on the Catholic life and mission of the school.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

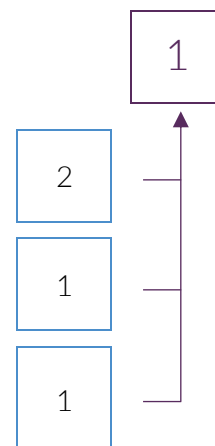
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Pupils are engaged in their religious education learning and are religiously literate; this is evident in the language used throughout the school. When most pupils talk about their learning, they confidently demonstrate a strong understanding of key terminology and use it accurately. They can easily recall prior learning and make connections to it when starting a new topic. Pupils enjoy their learning and approach lessons with great interest and enthusiasm. They speak about the passion they have for religious education, with one pupil saying, 'We love learning and Miss makes it fun'. Pupils' behaviours for learning are excellent. For example, when pupils are asked to talk to their partners, they remain engaged and on-task. They demonstrate a desire to improve their understanding and knowledge in lessons. Pupils speak confidently about what they have learned, show an awareness of key concepts, and use subject-specific vocabulary. Behaviour in all lessons is exemplary. Pupils are fully engaged in their learning and concentrate for sustained periods. Consequently, they produce work of a high standard, which is well presented and is beginning to show signs of creativity. Although some pupils can talk about how to improve their work, this is not yet consistent for all pupil groupings. Attainment on the whole shows an increase in the percentage of pupils achieving the expected standards.

In lessons, teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge, and learning in lessons is supported by the highly effective deployment of teaching assistants. Teachers demonstrate a deep commitment and high expectations for religious education and they communicate this to their pupils. Teachers use questioning skilfully during lessons to identify precisely where pupils are in their understanding. As a result, the range of open questions enables pupils to explore ideas together and make links in their learning. They are particularly accomplished in linking the current topic to previous learning and daily life. Pupils' needs are met through highly competent and adapted teaching, an example of which was when visual symbols were used within a lesson

to support those pupils with special educational needs. Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent, resulting in high standards and exemplary behaviour. Celebration of effort is clearly evident, with merits awarded to celebrate children's effort and achievement, leading to high levels of motivation from pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants ensure that pupils are provided with a vast and exciting array of opportunities to access, and present their learning in religious education through drama, discussion, dance, artwork, and outdoor learning as part of the school's 'Forest School' initiative.

Leaders and governors maintain religious education at the curriculum's heart, ensuring that it meets all requirements of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory (2012)*. The curriculum is carefully considered and sequenced to build on previous learning and is supported by the use of high-quality resources. Leaders ensure that religious education is imaginatively and thoughtfully planned to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. Each key stage and phase is creatively structured to build on and enhance prior learning through, for example, the effective implementation of Knowledge Organisers across all classes. The recently appointed religious education subject leader has the passion and drive to further enhance teaching and learning across the school. She works closely alongside the headteacher, providing staff with a high level of continuing professional development and bespoke support, ensuring that standards in religious education are further improved. She has also introduced a range of resources and initiatives which have served to further enrich pupils' learning and engagement within religious education, including the 'Forest School' initiative, and 'Godly Play'. Other staff new to the school, including teachers in the early stages of their career, are provided with a well-planned programme of quality training. Leaders and governors understand the importance of forensic monitoring, searching analysis and self-challenge. This has resulted in strategic action and well-targeted planning, which has led to many outstanding 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 fully engaged in all forms of prayer and liturgy throughout the school day, be it class prayer, the weekly Mass, or weekly whole school worship. They value and recognise prayer as a central part of every day at St Gerard's, and know the traditional prayers of the Church and join in with confidence and determination. They grow in understanding about prayer, for example the school recently participated in the 'One Million Children Praying the Rosary' event. They are able to read fluently from scripture in front of their peers, to lead and initiate prayer, and to create their own liturgies skilfully in groups, both in a class and whole school setting, for example through the 'Mark 10 Mission' weekly gospels. Pupils work collaboratively with others to prepare creative and well-constructed experiences of prayer and liturgy, including liturgical dances. They have developed capacity for evaluating the quality of prayer and liturgy they have planned, identifying how to improve next time. Where prayer is matched with, or supplemented by, music, pupils sing truly joyfully as a community, often with movements and actions. Pupils' wholehearted respect for prayer and participation forms a firm basis to their lives in school and beyond. They regard the adjacent church building as their own, enter reverently, and remain respectful.

Throughout the school there is a naturally embedded daily pattern of prayer, that faithfully reflects the rhythm of the prayer life of the Church. Relevant scripture passages are chosen well by the staff, who are highly skilled at assisting pupils interpret these, ensuring that all present can fully and actively participate. Leaders are strong role models to everyone in the community and confidently lead inspirational prayer and liturgy for pupils. There is regular staff prayer and liturgy, and all teaching staff are Growing in Faith Together (GIFT) team members, which entails a responsibility for leading prayer throughout school. All of these opportunities combine to embed prayer and liturgy deeply in the daily life of the school, with a profound impact on the

entire community. Teachers and teaching assistants are skilled at enabling pupils to be able to plan, organise and lead their own acts of prayer and liturgy. Pupils thoroughly enjoy these opportunities, though they could be even more strategically planned for and monitored to ensure consistent progression throughout the school. A wide range of high-quality music and other art forms are, when appropriate, integrated into prayer and liturgy in a way that significantly enhances these experiences for participants. Staff at all levels play an active part in ensuring that prayer and liturgy at St Gerard's is of a very high standard and everyone's talents, skills and unique contributions are valued.

The policy for prayer and liturgy is highly practical, and carefully formulated to assist, and support staff. The school calendar and timetable are planned around the liturgical year, and the entire school community attends the weekly Mass. Mass themes follow the liturgical calendar and are planned alongside the parish priest. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered in school at key times in the liturgical year, such as Lent and Easter. Leaders have ensured continuous improvement in prayer and liturgy through appropriate training and support for staff. Leaders use high-quality published resources, diocesan training, external partnerships, and in-house training and support. Staff feel exceptionally well supported as both leaders of, and participants in, prayer and liturgy. Leaders understand many ways of praying and are deeply familiar with the lectionary, missal, and liturgical calendar. They impart this knowledge to all staff very effectively and pay particular attention to inducting new staff. Leaders and governors ensure prayer and liturgy are prioritised in terms of resources. They also place the highest priority on the evaluation of the quality and impact of prayer and liturgy, ensuring that it is embedded in the school's cycle of self-evaluation and planned improvements.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Gerard's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	139877
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3723336
Full postal address of the school	Park Nook, Doncaster Road, Thrybergh, Rotherham, S65 4AE
School phone number	01709850568
Headteacher	Bernadette Baxter
Chair of Governors/Trustees	Cristian Gurran
School Website	www.stgerardsprimary.org/
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Francis Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	N/A
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	30 November 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	1 - Outstanding

The inspection team

David Quinn

Lead

Alex Downing

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