



St Maria Goretti Catholic Academy

URN: 140298

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Birmingham

27–28 June 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

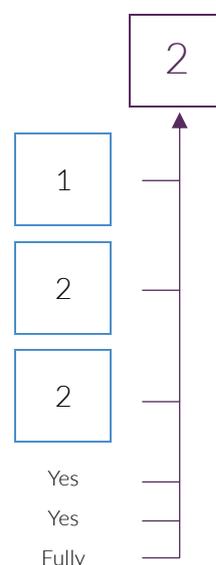
Collective worship (p.7)

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

- The mission is embraced and lived out by staff and pupils, enabling a culture of deep respect and welcome for themselves and others.
- A committed staff is at the heart of this school. They provide love and high-quality pastoral care for all pupils and the wider school community.
- Robust and well-planned training has enabled staff to deliver good religious education lessons where work is assessed accurately.
- Leaders and governors are highly ambitious and passionate, resulting in rapid improvements throughout the school in a relatively short time.
- Prayer and liturgy are central and embedded into the rhythm of school life, ensuring that pupils are confident in their knowledge, practice, and understanding of Catholic traditions.

What the school needs to improve

- Enable pupils to routinely and independently plan, deliver, and evaluate opportunities to enact the school's mission.
- Ensure staff provide religious education activities that meet all pupils' needs.
- Ensure that pupils develop their confidence in regularly evaluating 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

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

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

1



St Maria Goretti Catholic Academy has a mission that enables a culture of respect and inclusivity, resulting in pupils having a clear understanding of the distinctive Catholic identity of their school. They know they are cared for, valued, and made in God's image and likeness. They understand that the school is committed to following the teachings of Jesus. Consequently, pupils grow in virtue, accepting personal responsibility for themselves and others. One pupil told inspectors, 'This is a better Catholic school than 12 months ago', highlighting the rapid improvements that have taken place. They are actively responding to the demands of Catholic social teaching, evidenced by their engagement with Cafod and other Church-based organisations. Pupils demonstrate respect for themselves and others, which is reflected in their behaviour. They value the opportunities provided by the school's chaplaincy provision in which some pupils take leadership roles. There are missed opportunities for pupils to embrace further opportunities to develop and evaluate Catholic life and mission within the school, meaning pupils do not always have a voice in leading improvements. For example, they told inspectors they would like to be able to identify which charities they would like to support.

The mission statement is clear and known by the staff and pupils, significantly impacting school life. Staff embrace it; they enthusiastically contribute to it by, for example, supporting the work of Cafod and local food banks. The pastoral team works with many families, supporting them with school and home life issues with the utmost care and humility. As a direct result of the teachings and presence of Christ at the heart of the community and the school, staff go the extra mile for the pupils and parents; all are welcomed generously, including parents, who are welcomed into school to support them in their vocation to parenthood. Staff are exemplary role models in witnessing the school's mission. Staff provide the highest levels of pastoral care, and

there is an explicit commitment to the most vulnerable by, for example, providing breakfast and uniforms to those who need them, embodying Jesus' call to serve others. The environment reflects the school's Catholic character by promoting their social action and liturgical displays. The range of well-planned and effective opportunities for staff and pupils' spiritual and moral development enables community members to grow into persons God has called them to be.

Leaders and governors are fully committed as the caretakers of Catholic life at St Maria Goretti. They are energised, joyful, and determined to pursue this mission and inspire others with their example. The school successfully works hard to ensure a flourishing partnership with parents, parish, and diocese. Leaders and governors provide inspirational witness to the gospel and Catholic social teaching; they embody the Church's preferential option for the poor. Leaders and governors are inspirational role models to staff. Early career teachers speak passionately of how leaders go above and beyond to support them, enshrining their dignity. One staff member told inspectors, 'The Catholic ethos runs deeply through this school; I have never experienced anywhere that holds every standard and moral so high and so consistently with children and staff members alike.' Governors are highly ambitious and insistent, consistent, and persistent in their expectations. They are actively engaged in school improvement. Therefore, the school's self-evaluation is coherent and reflects an honest and self-challenging focus. Pupils are part of this process but would like further opportunities to lead on this. Training is engaging, well-planned, and effective. Leaders are deeply committed to supporting staff new to the school. The effective and focused induction programme has inspired all staff to actively participate in and contribute to the school's Catholic life.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

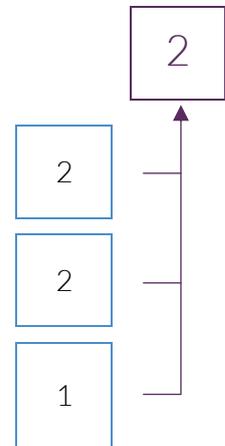
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



A well-mapped religious education curriculum means that pupils’ knowledge and understanding are secure, and they make good progress in knowing more and remembering more. Pupils’ productivity in exercise books is high, and they use religious language to reflect their understanding of what it means to be a person of God. Assessment strategies are used effectively and applied consistently as a way for pupils to understand how well they are doing. Pupils enjoy their learning, and their behaviour is excellent in lessons. Pupils answer questions enthusiastically, which they then apply and develop in their written work. Their books are well presented and comparable to their work in other core subjects. Pupils are proud of their work and show respect and enthusiasm when learning about scripture. Outcomes, including attainment, are secure due to robust training opportunities and internal monitoring, verified through multi-academy company (MAC) moderation. Pupils are generally engaged and very well-behaved in their lessons; however, in some classes, lessons are too teacher-led during the introduction, resulting in less time for pupils to complete their tasks fully and independently.

Teaching across the school is generally secure because teachers have good subject knowledge and consistently consolidate pupils’ prior learning. Teachers who are relatively new in their careers are very well supported through their induction years because of the robust and bespoke training delivered by the school and academy. This results in teachers feeling very well supported in delivering high-quality lessons. Teachers recognise religious education’s impact on pupils’ moral and spiritual development. Lessons are planned and sequential so that teachers share their good subject knowledge, which is imparted appropriately. Planning provides opportunities for pupils to express their learning in various forms, and teachers’ feedback and marking are consistent; pupils know what they need to do to improve their work. Teachers use various questioning techniques to identify where pupils are in their understanding. However, in

some lessons, questions are closed and narrow, resulting in missed opportunities for maximising active, deep learning to enable all learners to progress rapidly. Staff have high expectations of pupils, and they, in turn, meet them consistently. However, this is not consistently applied across the school, resulting in planning and activities not always closely aligned with all pupils' needs.

Leaders and governors ensure the school's provision fully complies with the archbishop's requirements. Consequently, religious education has equal status to other core subjects. Self-evaluation is forensically monitored, and the challenge levied against the subject is effective at all levels of leadership. This has inspired rapid improvements. Development and improvement plans are well thought out, strategic, and shared with all stakeholders, resulting in everyone having a clear vision and common goal. Staff training is frequent, adaptive, and delivered by an expert subject leader and executive head teacher who share a secure vision. The school has effective partnerships and utilises broader support from the diocese and MAC to benefit the pupils. The modelling of excellent teaching and learning means that staff feel confident and supported in delivering quality religious education lessons. All staff members, especially those who are not Catholic, welcome support because leaders are trusted, skilled and very caring. Staff embrace receiving leaders' evaluation from monitoring and feedback to improve their practice further because they want to improve for pupils. Leaders present comprehensive reports for governors' meetings, enabling highly effective governance. The subject's link governor is committed, along with other MAC representatives, to providing effective support to the school, assisting them in the accountability and monitoring of standards.

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 engage well in prayer and liturgy and show active participation and reverence. They can reflect in silence to enable them to grow closer to God. In some classrooms, music effectively creates a calm and prayerful environment. There are some opportunities for singing across the school, and pupils sing with joy and enthusiasm when invited; however, there are missed opportunities for routinely singing when praying. Pupils demonstrate competence in praying in various ways, including meditation and opportunities for reflection. Pupils can make links between what they pray about at home and the wider community. Pupils can often take an object home to take prayer back to their homes. For example, in one phase, which explored the story of Saints Peter and Paul, pupils took a rock home to demonstrate Peter being the 'rock upon which Jesus built the Church'. Pupils have a very good understanding of the liturgical year and could explain key themes, including the weekly themes of Advent, represented by the four candles on the wreath. Pupil 'spiritual leaders' are a real asset to the school and support their peers in the delivery of prayer. Consequently, pupils are still developing their independence in delivering liturgies. In some classes, there are opportunities for spiritual growth, and the pupils are confident. However, this is inconsistent, and pupils do not yet routinely and independently deliver and evaluate opportunities to enact opportunities which allow prayer to inspire them into social action.

Prayer is central to school life and is evident through various approaches. Daily patterns of prayer, Gospel mission, Wednesday Word, and celebration assemblies reflect the rhythm of prayer across the school, rooted in the teachings of Jesus Christ. Traditional prayers are taught systematically across the school; for example, pupils independently say aloud the prayer they are learning at the start of each lesson. Progression of prayer knowledge is secure, and pupils articulate this with confidence. Using scripture is a strength, especially where links are made

between the classroom, home life, local community, and the wider world. Most staff and pupils follow a clear structure when delivering their prayer and liturgies, though this is only sometimes explicit in all classrooms. Prayer spaces are of a high standard and are liturgically correct, with time and attention to detail given to the sacred spaces. Staff are good role models of prayer and foster this love of their faith in others. Through effective training, staff develop skills in supporting pupils in leading prayer and liturgies. Pupils are beginning to use a range of creative forms; this needs further development to choose a wider variety of art forms, including music.

Leaders and governors ensure the school's prayer and liturgy policy is accessible and used by staff. Therefore, there is a clear progression of expectations across the school. Leaders and governors ensure there is a plan of events throughout the liturgical year to support each pupil's faith formation. They are aware of holy and saints' days, prioritised in the calendar, ensuring school events are linked to the Church's liturgical year. Training for all staff is a priority and supports the high number of early career teachers in school. Consequently, all staff understand the centrality of prayer, and leaders ensure that all staff members are well supported in leading this, including using a range of effective resources. The monitoring and review cycle by leaders and governors is given the highest priority. It demonstrates that all stakeholders have an integral and valued part in the school's evaluation of prayer and liturgy. This is achieved through frequent visits, observations and audits; consequently, they accurately know the schools' strengths and areas for development.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Maria Goretti Catholic Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	140298
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	861 3416
Full postal address of the school	Aylesbury Road, Bucknall, Stoke-on-Trent, ST2 0LY
School phone number	01782 254834
Headteacher	Karyn Oakley
Chair of governing board	Anne Middleton-Hill
School Website	www.stmariagoretti.org.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	All Saints Catholic Collegiate
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	December 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Paul Madia

Luke Salkeld

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