



St Ambrose Catholic Primary School

URN: 141413

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Birmingham

03–04 July 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

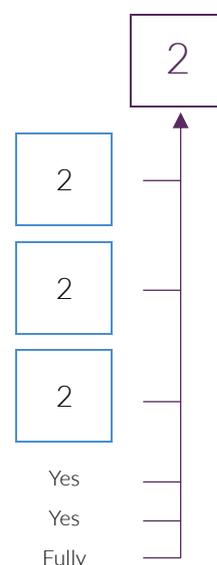
Collective worship (p.7)

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

- There is a clear sense of community at St Ambrose Catholic Primary School, where everyone is welcomed, cared for, and valued, ensuring that everyone feels part of the St Ambrose family.
- The pastoral care of staff, pupils, and families is prioritised. Staff are particularly committed to supporting pupils and their families in times of need; everyone is valued and made to feel special.
- Pupils' positive attitudes demonstrate a secure understanding of the mission and its meaning.
- Commitment to staff training and induction, including those new to the school, results in a strong sense of belonging, confidence, and well-being; staff feel supported.
- Leaders have a robust knowledge of the school because of their accurate monitoring, which positively impacts school improvement.

What the school needs to improve

- Plan for all curriculum subjects to reflect Catholic social teaching principles wherever appropriate.
- Consistently provide opportunities for pupils with higher prior attainment to progress more rapidly in religious education lessons.
- Evaluate pupils' participation in chaplaincy activities to ensure they effectively contribute to their spiritual and moral development.

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

2

Leadership

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

2

2

St Ambrose Catholic Primary School is an inclusive community where everyone is equally valued. It is rooted in and driven by the mission statement, 'We do our best by following Jesus'. This mission is known and celebrated by all pupils and staff and lived out by the whole community. Pupils enjoy participating in charity work, considering other people's needs near and far. For example, they show this in their support of Father Hudson's Care, Cafod, and Save the Turtles. The Mini Vinnies supported the parish with a bingo afternoon, raising further funds for charities and the parish. Pupils are proud to be part of their school family, and they participate fully in the opportunities given to them to celebrate their faith. Consequently, they are happy and know that they are deeply valued, cared for, and loved by God. Pupils are respectful of themselves and others and demonstrate good manners. Due to their actions, pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. Pupils understand that looking after each other and God's world are essential. Some pupil leadership roles are in place, and they participate in the opportunities provided by the school, such as the recently developed liturgical leaders and *LiveSimply* ambassadors. These opportunities have not been established long enough to maximise their impact on school life and how they serve the parish.

The sense of community is tangible, with generations of families attending the school. Staff, pupils, and governors speak about the 'St Ambrose family', where everyone cares for each other. Consequently, the school is a joyful and supportive place to work and learn. The pastoral care provided to staff, pupils, and families is always a strength, particularly in bereavement. The school knows its families well and seeks to provide for their needs in various ways, including a nurture group. Parents value the support given by the school, and one parent commented, 'St Ambrose's is a shining example of a loving, warm, and spiritually driven environment.' Staff enjoy

coming to work because they are looked after well and always have someone to go to for support. Subsequently, staff are strong role models for pupils and are committed to implementing the school's mission statement, striving to ensure that the school is Christ-centred. The school environment clearly celebrates its Catholic mission, including the mission statement's prominence on a graffiti wall in the school playground designed by an artist who worked alongside pupils. The school follows a diocesan-approved relationship and health education (RHE) scheme promoting Church teaching. A range of regular, well-planned, and effective opportunities for pupils' and staff's spiritual and moral development is not yet securely in place.

Leaders and governors are committed to the Church's mission, and Catholic life and mission development are seen as their core responsibilities. School policies clearly reflect the school's Catholic identity and mission. There are opportunities for staff training, including those provided by the archdiocese, the multi-academy company (MAC), the parish priest, and in-house. There are strong links with the local parish. The parish priest is an integral part of the school community and is highly valued by everyone. Pupils and staff have a good understanding of the different aspects of Catholic social teaching. Subsequently, staff are beginning to make connections with parts of the broader curriculum. Governors rightly recognise that this is an area for continued development, building on the school's work so far to improve the pupils' knowledge in this area. Governors play an active role in evaluating the school's Catholic life and provide well-informed challenges and support. Self-evaluation is accurate because it is based on reliable monitoring.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

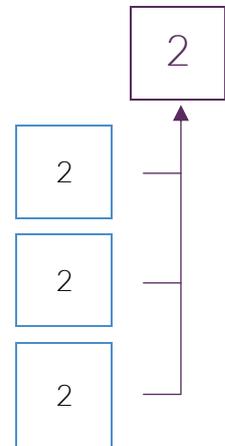
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 developing secure knowledge, understanding and skills in religious education because lessons are well-planned and build on prior learning. Pupils enjoy religious education lessons and are engaged and enthusiastic learners as teachers plan various activities, such as using religious artwork and thinking skills; for example, Year 6 pupils explore different images of Mary. Consequently, behaviour in lessons is good. The pace in some lessons is good with strategies such as collaborative work, which helps pupils make strong connections between what they learn from Jesus and their daily lives. Pupils of all ages can explain how they follow the example of Jesus. Pupils take pride in their work, and their books are well-presented. The children get off to a strong start due to Early Years' high-quality provision. Focusing on religious vocabulary and children's opportunities to improve their speaking and listening skills in lessons enables them to discuss their learning confidently. When talking about their work in religious education, pupils can speak about what they have learned using some subject-specific vocabulary. Still, pupils do not always have enough opportunities to deepen their knowledge and understanding; this particularly impacts those with higher prior attainment. Pupils clearly understand how well they are doing in religious education because teachers provide regular feedback, suggestions, and support; pupils find this useful. Attainment in religious education is at least in line with other core subjects.

Teachers are enthusiastic and committed to religious education's value, which is evident in lessons and the respect pupils show towards the subject. Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge, and there is a supportive culture of staff training to enhance this knowledge when necessary. The religious education leader and wider MAC-based opportunities provide this support. The parish priest is a frequent visitor to the school and is very supportive of leaders and staff, providing opportunities to enhance staff subject knowledge. His contribution to lessons

and training further supports all becoming the people God calls them to be. Pupils are well-supported by adults in lessons, and adaptations to activities ensure pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) achieve well in lessons. Teachers frequently check pupils' understanding of lessons to ensure progress. In some lessons, there are missed opportunities for deeper thinking; consequently, pupils' responses occasionally lack depth. The school engages with parents to support their children's learning about the Catholic faith. One parent commented, 'The school involves families. I find this incredibly special, and it has helped to educate us [parents] too.'

Leaders ensure the diocesan curriculum is fully delivered. Leaders and governors, together with the MAC, ensure that religious education is an absolute priority and that it is given full parity with other core subjects, resulting in provisions that meet the requirements of the bishops. The faith-filled subject leader is highly influential and well-regarded by all staff for her support in raising standards. Her support of several staff has enabled standards in religious education to be maintained. She demonstrates a real commitment to ongoing staff development across the school, and staff comment that her door is always open when they need support and they value her generosity with her time. This results in increased staff confidence, especially for those not Catholic. Leaders monitor; their findings are shared with governors, enabling them to be clear on the strengths and areas of development in religious education. However, greater detail in leaders' analysis of their findings from monitoring is needed to ensure searching analysis and self-challenge.

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

Prayer is at the heart of St Ambrose. A daily pattern of prayer and weekly liturgy is effectively planned, and relevant and appropriate scripture is used to support it. Many Catholic traditions enrich the prayer life for pupils. There are opportunities for pupils to experience different types of prayer, including singing, music, reflecting, and silent meditation. Pupils participate fully by joining in with prayer respectfully and singing hymns joyfully. Prayer reflects the Church's seasons, so pupils have a good understanding of the liturgical year. There is a progression in the traditional prayers used. Consequently, pupils have some knowledge of traditional prayers appropriate to their year groups; however, they need to further build their knowledge of these. During Mass, pupils join in responses remarkably confidently. Its celebration is central to school life and allows pupils the opportunity to reflect and develop their faith. Pupils are actively engaged in the Mass through ministries such as reading, which is encouraged by the parish priest and staff, who are good role models in demonstrating how to pray. Reverence and respect towards scripture are evident in all prayer and liturgy across the school. Pupils from the youngest age have a good knowledge of the structure of prayer and liturgy. They can clearly describe the components of gathering, listening, responding, and going forth because all sections are modelled and planned well. Pupils are developing their skills in planning and preparing their own prayer and liturgy relevant to their age. They do so with increasing confidence and are well supported by adults. Pupils do evaluate the prayer and liturgy they have planned; however, because provision is often question-answer based, they are only sometimes clear about improving their spiritual worship in tangible ways.

Catholic social teaching is explored through prayer and liturgy; pupils can connect praying for the vulnerable with their actions, such as in Key Stage 1, where *My Name is Not Refugee* is used to explore Catholic social teaching with pupils. Adults in school are good models for faith and

practice at all levels. Pupils follow the example set by these leaders in school, responding reverently and thoughtfully, welcoming the challenge of a 'go forth' task to live the gospels' messages actively. Scripture is always prioritised during prayer. Prayer often has a clear message and purpose. Throughout the school, there are several attractive spaces to pray and reflect. Parents are encouraged to attend school Masses and school events. Parents join in with sacramental preparation sessions; stay-and-pray sessions offer occasions for parents to worship with their children in the classroom.

Leaders and governors have ensured a prayer and liturgy policy is in place, which defines a route for pupils' clear progression for developing their participation skills in each year group. However, because it is a relatively new document, it is too soon to reliably determine its effectiveness in achieving its aims. Leaders ensure there is a clear timetable to ensure that key times of the Church's year are celebrated appropriately, including holy days of obligation, feast days, and other significant days, such as the May Procession and the Blessing of the Animals Service on the feast day of St Francis of Assisi. Leaders have a strong knowledge of praying and are familiar and confident with liturgical sources; they work closely with the parish priest to organise weekly school Masses in the parish church. Governors are fully involved in the school's prayer life. Teachers have received training to support liturgy planning and value the support given. The quality of the school's prayer life is reviewed and evaluated by leaders and governors; consequently, identified areas for development are addressed promptly.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Ambrose Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	141413
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	885 3393
Full postal address of the school	Leswell Street, Kidderminster, DY10 1RP
School phone number	01562 823568
Headteacher/Principal	Emma Brocklesby
Chair of governing board	Joanna Griffin
School Website	st-ambrose.sch.life
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Emmaus Catholic MAC
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	May 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Marie Conway
Deborah Enstone

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