



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for **St Gabriel's Catholic Primary School**

URN: 124373

Carried out on behalf of the Most Rev. Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham on:

Date: 16-17 November 2023

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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	Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- St Gabriel's is a welcoming and inclusive community where everyone is embraced in Christ's love, made explicit to them, within a vibrant partnership with the parish.
- Its mission is comprehensive, well-known by pupils and staff, and a lived reality for all community members, resulting in excellent pupil behaviour.
- Leaders' and governors' ambition to be an excellent Catholic school with Christ at its heart is high. This is reflected in the diligence with which they work and the time and energy they commit.
- Pupils' understanding of the topics covered in religious education is extended well through teachers' effective use of questions, which are always carefully planned.

- Pupils speak confidently about how prayer is influenced by the school's curriculum and wider life.

What the school needs to improve:

- Plan activities in religious education lessons which enable teachers to make secure assessment judgements against the planned curriculum, particularly for pupils with higher prior attainment.
- Establish a coordinated approach to chaplaincy in which roles are understood so pupils can articulate their contributions to their spiritual and moral development.
- Enable pupils to plan and lead age-appropriate prayers in all year groups.

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:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

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

1

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



Pupils have an excellent understanding of the mission statement. This is because it is well-known and used daily. Consequently, pupils are confident in explaining how they can live out each of its clauses; this energises pupils, who actively participate in opportunities to improve the world around them by promoting it. Pupils feel valued and are happy at school because they know that God has created them in His image and likeness. Therefore, they understand the behaviours that honouring this entails and subsequently have an acute awareness of their responsibility to treat each other with kindness and love, exemplified, for example, in their excellent behaviour throughout the school. Christ's example is of prime importance for pupils. They are very knowledgeable about His teachings and the challenges of Christian discipleship. Their age-appropriate knowledge of some key principles from Catholic social teachings is sound, particularly from *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*. For example, Year 6 pupils have decided to participate in Cafod's 'World Gifts' programme instead of their traditional Secret Santa activity. The superb chaplaincy work from the parish is supported by a wide variety of activities, all of which offer pupils an opportunity to lead the school community in an aspect of its life. However, pupils cannot identify how the full range of chaplaincy activities contributes to their spiritual and moral development.

The mission inspires staff, who readily embrace opportunities to promote it, making them excellent role models for the pupils. Staff say, 'St Gabriel's is a fantastic school where we put the Catholic faith at the forefront of everything we do.' There is a palpable sense of community at St Gabriel's. Everybody is welcomed into an inclusive community; the gospels' messages infuse the school's work through the high level of pastoral care on offer. For example, the attendance and welfare officer is acutely aware of her role as a disciple of Jesus, which catalyses how she engages with families. Parents told inspectors, 'We are always made to feel welcome at school'. The school's physical environment strongly witnesses the school's Catholic identity. Eye-catching displays are linked to

the liturgical year and detail pupils' reflections on how Jesus' teachings relate to their lives. Catholic social teachings and values from the *Catholic School Pupil Profile* are celebrated throughout the site, contributing to pupils' knowledge and application of them.

Links with the parish are exceptionally strong. St Gabriel's serves the parish by actively contributing to the 'Heart of Tamworth' and 'parish prayer partners' initiatives and helping collect goods to stock 400 food parcels for those in need. Importantly, leaders ensure the school prays for these initiatives, too. The parish priest is incredibly grateful for the school's support in serving the local community, which helps pupils to enact the school's mission. For example, a pupil told inspectors, 'We think that this is what Jesus would do; he fed the 5000 and so we feed people experiencing homelessness.' Furthermore, pupils preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation partook in a parish-based retreat day as part of their formation. Staff have begun collaborating to ensure the whole school curriculum is expressed through a Catholic lens, wherever possible. For example, during a history topic on World War I, teachers enabled reflection on soldiers' sacrifices. They prayed for them, and pupils discussed Creation as a gift from God on a geography curriculum visit to a local river. Formal plans for the whole curriculum's expression of Catholic life are in development, and leaders have rightly identified this as a school development priority. Governors are highly ambitious; they are consciously and regularly involved in monitoring activities and are confident in the accuracy of the reports leaders present. Through the link governor especially, there is a constant desire to improve Catholic life and mission.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

2

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....

2

Pupils demonstrate their secure knowledge within lessons, strongly focusing on religious literacy. This ensures all are developing their knowledge more deeply as they move through the school. Pupils are beginning to pose their own questions to enhance their learning, often prompted by religious art, though these only sometimes reflect deeper thinking. Pupils' engagement in religious education is consistently good across all ages. This is because teachers present stimulating lessons which stir curiosity in pupils' minds. Consequently, pupils enjoy the subject and behave very well during lessons. Their presentation of work and standard of completion are consistently high-quality throughout the school and comparable to standards in other core subjects. Most pupils progress in religious education because prior learning is frequently recalled, meaning they are always primed to extend their knowledge. However, those with higher prior attainment make varying levels of progress because the tasks they are given do not consistently match the curriculum's demands. Attainment in the subject is strong and at least as good as other core subjects; however, where pupils are identified as achieving above-average outcomes, these are not always evidenced in their work.

Teachers' subject knowledge is strong, meaning they respond to pupils' questions competently and confidently. Teachers use questioning to deepen pupils' understanding of the topics studied in the lesson. This is particularly effective because teachers carefully plan questions to deepen pupils' knowledge. Teachers communicate the value of religious education to their pupils, reflected in their engagement and openness to answer questions within a safe, nurturing climate for learning. Teachers know their pupils well and deploy supportive resources that make the curriculum accessible to all. For example, teaching assistants are used to support all pupils in answering questions more deeply. However, teachers' assessment of pupils with higher prior attainment is insecure because their planned activities do not always align with the outcomes identified in the curriculum. Staff routinely praise pupils in lessons and is a genuine response to their successes,

which further motivates them. Teachers' feedback is similarly affirmative but does not consistently inform pupils how to improve their work. Such feedback is usually given verbally, but pupils' responses vary. Where appropriate, teachers create opportunities for spiritual reflection within lessons. Sometimes, this relates to personal experiences, whilst at other times, it relates to the feelings of people who feature within scripture readings or art pieces. Teachers also present opportunities for pupils to reflect on Catholic social teaching to apply their learning to meet needs in the modern world. Pupils are presented with a wide variety of approaches to learning. Still, they are limited in demonstrating their emerging individuality and creativity because everybody in the classroom completes the same task.

Leaders are committed to further enhancing teacher subject knowledge through regular training, both in-house, in collaboration with other schools within the Catholic cluster, and from the diocese. They have also provided resources such as *YouCat* so that teachers can thoroughly prepare to teach the topics on the curriculum. The involvement of governors in monitoring is impressive. They are proactive in working alongside school leaders to ensure standards of provision are reported accurately, and improvement strategies meet the school's needs. The responsibility of subject leadership is in a period of transition, but good leadership standards are being maintained. Data analysis is shared between leaders and class teachers, meaning changes to provision are made swiftly as the need arises. However, analysis has not been undertaken forensically as its validity has not been tested against the expectations of the diocesan curriculum.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

2

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

Pupils participate well in prayer. They join in confidently in their responses and the gestures associated with them because it is part of the school's daily rhythm, and clear expectations and routines are in place. The parish priest says, 'Pupils have a strong love for Jesus and enjoy prayer.' The pupils who are part of the voluntary choir club, run jointly by a staff member and a parishioner, instils enthusiasm and exuberant joy in pupils' voices. Pupils use a range of prayers: they learn the prayers expected by the diocese for each year group, can hold periods of prayerful silence, and write petitions for their intentions. A more comprehensive range of contemporary prayer methods is not yet embedded. During Mass, pupils confidently undertake various ministries, including altar serving, playing musical instruments, and singing as cantor. Pupils enjoy using the prayer garden and tending to it. Pupils are confident in describing the Church's liturgical year and how this changes the prayer corners in their classrooms. Upper Key Stage 2 pupils can explain how prayers change during certain seasons; for example, 'During Lent, our prayers become sorrowful so that we are ready to celebrate Easter.' Pupils lead prayer throughout the school, with young pupils impressively reading directly from the Bible. However, prayers that adults plan sometimes limit creativity. Pupils are very confident in speaking about prayer's important role in their school, explaining how prayer features in different curriculum areas and how it is used in response to local community circumstances. Equally, pupils speak of how prayers lead them to action, such as litter picking and other activities identified on the school's LiveSimply plan. However, the school usually provides such opportunities rather than pupils' self-inspiration.

A daily pattern of prayer flows through each school day, contributing to pupils' confidence in speaking with God. The Bible is used in almost all forms of worship and following the Church's liturgical norms. Senior staff members are models of good practice, especially in preparing pupils to pray in larger gatherings. However, other staff are not always in attendance to witness this to develop their practice. Nevertheless, all staff participate in prayer and singing and accurately use

gestures associated with Catholic prayer. This enables pupils to participate confidently from the youngest years. A few teachers, in particular, have a great love for the liturgy and combine this with a great respect for pupils and their wishes. Artwork is regularly used as a stimulus for prayer, which improves accessibility and invites a personal response to the themes prayed. Prayer corners in every classroom are well-maintained and are conducive to prayer. Family members and parishioners respond enthusiastically to regular invitations to pray with the school community, further developing the flourishing partnership between school, home, and Church.

The prayer and liturgy policy is helpful to staff because it clearly defines leaders' expectations surrounding prayer daily and weekly, the resources available to staff to enhance prayer, and how it will be monitored. Celebrating the Eucharist is given the highest priority and is at the heart of school worship. Leaders work with the parish to offer the Sacrament of Reconciliation every year. Training and formation about the Church's liturgical norms and spiritual input from a religious sister have been provided to staff. Governors actively monitor to verify existing school improvement initiatives are successful before introducing new ones, as can be seen in the introduction and development of the four-part prayer structure.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Gabriel's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	124373
Full postal address of the school	Wilnecote Lane, Belgrave, Tamworth, B77 2LF
School phone number	01872 213910
Name of head teacher or principal	John Hayes
Chair of governing board	Theresa Miller and Rob Vernon
School Website	www.st-gabriels.staffs.sch.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	4 to 11
Trustees	Archdiocese of Birmingham
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	March 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Ben McArdle	Lead inspector
Tamsin Davis	Team inspector

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