



St Nicholas Catholic Primary School

URN: 139394

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Diocesan Administrator of Plymouth

23–24 November 2023

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

2

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

2

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

2

Collective worship (p.7)

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

2

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

Y

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

Y

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Partially

P

What the school does well

- The school is a welcoming, supportive and inclusive community which enables pupils to feel safe and valued.
- All members of the school community are committed to supporting the most vulnerable members of both the school community and the wider world.
- The self-evaluation undertaken by both leaders and governors is accurate and hence provides a clear route for further improvement.
- There is a very positive and productive partnership between school and parish which enhances the liturgical life of the school.
- Leaders and governors are committed to providing continuing professional development for staff with regard to Catholic life and religious education.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure there is a strategy in place, with regard to the prayer life of the school that provides clear, well-defined expectations for developing the skills of participation and leadership in each key stage, thus ensuring progression throughout the school.
- Ensure assessment systems in religious education are accurate rigorous and robust in order to be used effectively in monitoring and planning and lead to improved progress.
- Continue to provide opportunities for staff to increase their subject knowledge in religious education evaluating the impact of this on both planning and pupil 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

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

Pupils know and speak confidently about the school's mission statement and values. The 'Disciple of the Week award' not only encourages pupils to reflect on what these values might look like when lived out but also contributes to the pupils' sense of being valued. Pupils speak of the school as being a supportive inclusive community, one of the pupils explaining that "the best thing about the school is that teachers help you learn and keep you safe." Those pupils who have transferred to the school from other areas felt welcome right from the start explaining that "each new pupil is given a school buddy who helps you settle in." Pupils are respectful of difference and value opportunities to learn about other faiths. They are able to make connections between faith and life, a key stage 1 pupil explaining that "Jesus was kind and helped people so we need to as well." They take part in a variety of charity work including collecting for the local Exeter food bank, raising money for Cafod, the Poppy appeal and Children in Need. Younger pupils see the work of the Chaplaincy team as important and seek to become chaplains when they are older. The school's mission statement and gospel values are highly visible throughout the school and understood and valued by staff who feel they guide the direction of the school. One member of staff commenting; "Our school is a welcoming family where all strive to live by the values we teach" with a parent saying, "the school works really hard to make the Catholic life the centre of everything they do." The atrium which is at the centre of the school always has a central display reflecting the liturgical year and there is a prayer space in each classroom. The school is a supportive community with staff seeking to provide a high level of pastoral care for pupils. Support for vulnerable families is evident with the appointment of a family support worker and the school makes provision for vulnerable pupils to attend the breakfast and after school club. The provision of relationships and sex education meets all statutory and diocesan requirements and seeks to make links with

religious education. The school also takes part in the 'OPAL' initiative which focuses on helping pupils learn about risk taking and responsibility through outdoor play. Leaders and governors have a clear vision for the school as a Catholic community. They understand the Church's mission in education and see the development of the Catholic life of the school as a priority. They conduct a regular programme of observing, monitoring and evaluating which enables them to formulate clear actions for school improvement. Regular professional development opportunities are provided for staff to enhance their understanding of the Catholic Life of the school and staff new to the school have an induction programme which introduces them to the Catholic Life of the school. The school has a close and productive partnership with the parish, the parish priest is a frequent visitor to the school and the parish support assistant works with the school on a regular basis. 'GIFT' (Growing in Faith Together) events are held in the school on a Saturday morning and each class has an opportunity to visit the local church. The school seeks to involve parents in the life of the school with staff meeting and interacting with parents at the start of the school day. The school communicates with parents through regular newsletters and through 'Parentmail'. Leaders and governors have already identified the need to embed Catholic Social Teaching in the life of the school and offer pupils further ways to participate in the evaluation of the Catholic Life and Mission.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

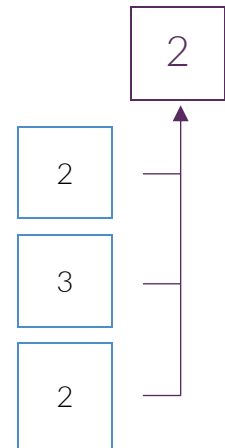
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 enjoy their work in religious education and as a consequence their behaviour is good. They value the opportunities it gives them to be reflective, to learn about other faiths and believe the lessons will be useful to them in making decisions when they are older. They make progress as they move through the school. For example, when talking about the Sacrament of Baptism Year 2 pupils were able to name some symbols used in baptism but older pupils were able to add more detail explaining their meaning and talking about the role of God Parents. Pupils achieve at least average attainment when compared with other subjects. Pupils concentrate well in class and actively seek to improve their knowledge. Pupils enjoy discussions and these often help them reflect on the connections between faith and life. Pupils understand the 'Cup Cake' system is designed to help them think more deeply about questions, (If you add icing or a cherry to the basic cake it means you are answering a more difficult or more reflective question). Although still reliant on teachers to know if their work is good, they are able to speak about how they might improve their work. Teachers value religious education and communicate this to pupils who therefore see it as an important subject. They celebrate success and use a variety of techniques to enhance the lessons including, drama, videos, art and quizzes. They provide pupils with time to reflect on their work often using 'I wonder questions.' Pupils' oral comprehension and knowledge is not always reflected in their books. The use of class 'black' books enables class activities to be recorded as well as individual work but on occasions this record is not detailed enough. Other adults in the classroom are used effectively to support learning. The subject knowledge of staff is variable, where it is secure teachers are able to question effectively and this leads to a deeper understanding on the part of pupils however this is not consistent across the school. In older year groups those tasks which would enable greater depth activities, are not always present. Pace in lessons can be too slow with too much time elapsing before pupils engage with a task. Assessment is not yet

sufficiently detailed or accurate enough to improve planning. Teachers provide pupils with feedback but this is not always sufficiently detailed to enable pupils to improve their work. The religious education curriculum meets all the current requirements of the Religious Education Directory and the school is implementing the new directory in early years and Year 3. However, the school needs to ensure that the delivery of the new directory closely follows the diocesan structure. The development of religious education is a priority for leaders and governors with professional development opportunities being provided on a regular basis both in terms of subject knowledge and pedagogy. Training is often recorded so that staff can access this after the actual course. The subject leader has a clear vision for the subject and through the monitoring and evaluation of books and lessons by leaders and governors there is a clear action plan for improving the subject. Specific governors take responsibility for linking with religious education and report back to the main governing body. Pupils are provided with opportunities to enhance their learning by for example visits to the parish church, sessions run by Cafod and interviews with people connected to religious orders.

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 respond well to their experiences of prayer and worship. They participate in whole school liturgies through drama, singing, silence, reading and participating in prayer. The pupils sing enthusiastically and this is enhanced by signing which enables even the youngest pupils to participate. The signing also adds to the reflective atmosphere in one liturgy observed for example, the opening hymn was played but the children signed the words without singing. This enabled a prayerful reflective atmosphere to be developed before the liturgy began. Scripture is always used in prayer and is connected either to a school value or the liturgical season. Pupils understanding of the liturgical year is enhanced through frequent opportunities to celebrate special feast days or seasons of the year and prayer tables in classrooms which reflect the colours of the liturgical year. Pupils can make connections between the prayer life of the school, the school values and actions to help others. Younger pupils were encouraged to set up a focal area for class prayer, to choose objects to be part of the focal area and say why they choose those objects. However, this good practice is not yet being built on sufficiently in older groups.

Prayer is central to the life of the school and there is a daily pattern of prayer which reflects the life of the church. One parent commented, "We are overjoyed that our children go to school at St Nicholas and that prayer and worship are part of their everyday." Seasonally appropriate liturgies take place that reflect the traditions of the Catholic Church including, Harvest, (linked to the season of creation), Stations of the Cross, celebrating the crowning of Our Lady in May, Advent services and the feast of St Nicholas. The parish priest celebrates the Eucharist regularly in school uses the opportunity to explain the different parts of the mass thus enhancing the knowledge of both pupils and staff. Children's prayers are often displayed in classes and on the newsletters. Families and parishioners are encouraged to join in

celebrations with one parent commenting, “my family and I love being invited to liturgy and I love hearing my children talk about religion and love to hear their songs and prayers.” To further increase the participation of families in the prayer life of the school ‘Prayer Bags’ have been sent home in Advent and Lent with ideas on how to use these to pray together. Spaces around the school reflect the prayer life.

Relevant Leaders are models of good practice to staff and pupils. Leaders and governors are highly committed to developing the prayer life of the school. The importance they attach to the prayer life is reflected in the time set aside for prayer. The school calendar, with the support of the parish priest, is planned in advance to reflect the liturgical life of the Church, including the celebration of the Eucharist. Holy days and the feast of the school’s patron, St Nicholas, are always celebrated. The school has adopted the multi academy trust policy on prayer and worship. Continuing professional development for staff is provided on a regular basis and there are resources provided to support staff in the delivery of class prayer. The use of these resources however, is not yet consistent across the school. Leaders and Governors monitor the prayer life of the school and this includes some input by pupils. This monitoring and evaluation has enabled leaders and governors to clearly identify next steps which include strengthening pupil planning and leadership skills in delivering prayer and worship and ensuring a consistent approach to prayer in classrooms.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Nicholas Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	139394
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8782005
Full postal address of the school	St Nicholas Catholic Primary School, Ringswell Avenue, Exeter, EX1 3EG
School phone number	01392445403
Headteacher	Cathy Blatchford
Chair of Local Governing Body	Sarah Osbond
School Website	http://www.st-nicholas-exeter.devon.sch.uk/website
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Plymouth Cast
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	N/A
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	01/03/2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Ann Fowler
Paul Cotter

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

