



## Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Austin's Catholic Primary School

URN: 142209

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

Date: 8-9 November 2023

Overall effectiveness The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....	<b>2</b>
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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	✓
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 Austin's lives out its mission as a Catholic school with Christ firmly at its heart.
- Catholic social teaching is a clear strength as it permeates all aspects of school life. Pupils can articulate it well.
- Excellent pastoral care means pupils feel safe and secure in a highly positive and loving community.
- Leaders, including academy company leaders, ensure staff training is well-supported through a meticulously planned programme.

What the school needs to improve:

- Plan religious education lessons to meet the needs of different pupil groups so that they know more and remember more.
- Review expectations relating to how work is presented in religious education books and how religious vocabulary spellings are corrected to ensure consistently high standards throughout the school.
- Ensure all pupils understand what they are learning in religious education so that their knowledge is secure.

## 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

The school's mission, 'Learn to love, love to learn; together with Christ', is lived out by all. Pupils understand it exceptionally well and can confidently explain what it means to them in their lives. This is because leaders and staff embrace the mission and are dedicated to promoting it in all aspects of school life. Consequently, pupils know that their God-given uniqueness is fully loved and valued. One pupil articulated this saying, 'God made us, we are special.' They experience excellent pastoral support in a caring and nurturing environment. This results in pupils feeling safe and being confident, happy learners. Pupils have a strong awareness of local and global issues and know how they can help others. This is demonstrated through their work for Mary's Meals, supporting the parish foodbank with harvest offerings, writing to the local supermarket to request food donations, and toy sales. Their knowledge and understanding of Catholic social teaching's principles is superb. It demonstrates their love for each other and their neighbours they will never meet. Pupils have a strong understanding about protecting our common home through stewardship. Pupils next steps are to take a leading role in responding to these demands. Pupils' highly value the chaplaincy provision at the school and the many varied prayer opportunities and experiences they encounter. They say, 'We love the opportunities and are really proud of our roles.'

As Christ is consciously at the heart of the school, there is an authentic and genuine sense of care for everyone. This leads to powerful senses of family and community, ensuring all school members are treated with dignity and care because of the excellent Christ-like pastoral provision. The school welcomes the most vulnerable through food bank offerings and extensive charity work. Relationships are positive and deeply rooted in dignity, kindness, and respect. New pupils and those from other belief traditions are welcomed into the community with a generous heart; staff refer to the school and academy company as a 'close-knit family.' The school environment is a true testament to the school's Catholic identity and mission. The strong chaplaincy provided by the

parish priest engages the pupils in their faith and helps to root the school in parish life. Staff ensure that pupils have a secure understanding of vocations as a 'calling from God to holiness and to the mission of evangelising the world', as required by the previous diocesan monitoring report. For the careful delivery of relationships, sex, and health education, using diocesan materials, the school meets statutory requirements.

Leaders and governors care deeply about the pupils and their families. They are diligent in the way they hold leaders to account for the school's Catholic life and mission and provide effective challenge and support to ensure it continues to thrive. Leaders are exemplary role models in the way they share their love of and joy in following Jesus. All staff and pupils embrace their faith-filled example. The school actively involves parents and carers and takes care to communicate effectively and extend its culture of welcome to all. Leaders place high priority on promoting Catholic social teaching's principles through a well-planned academy company approach which results in a common understanding of the school's mission. Subsequently, all staff are excellent role models for pupils and consistently model discipleship behaviours. Staff value the academy company's ethos and believe they are 'better together.' Leaders' and governors' ongoing evaluation of the school's Catholic life and mission is honest, detailed, and accurate, making it effective in bringing about further enhancements.

## 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.....

3

### 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' knowledge of religious education is developing against the planned curriculum, but they do not always remember their learning. Consequently, pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) make limited progress. For example, in Key Stage 2, pupils were unsure about what reconciliation is and could not confidently talk about their previous learning. Nevertheless, pupils are engaged in and enjoy religious education lessons, resulting in good behaviour. This is exemplified in their ability to concentrate well during independent work. They concentrate well because they find their lessons interesting. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their lessons because they 'Learn about Jesus and think about how to be like Jesus.' Pupils learn through a variety of activities used to present key concepts, but their work is not always presented to the highest standards. This is compounded by inconsistencies in teachers' correction of incorrectly used and spelt religious words. Pupils participate enthusiastically in lessons, but they do not always readily answer questions, meaning teachers have a limited understanding of how well they are achieving and what they need to improve. Most pupils meet or exceed age-related expectations by the end of their time in school. However, some pupils are not making sufficient progress in religious education, and their learning is limited.

Almost all teachers' subject knowledge is secure, meaning they teach confidently; where this is not the case, leaders have put support in place through a developing academy company coaching model. Religious education is central to the school's mission, with teachers effectively communicating the subject's importance to pupils. Teachers do not always target questions to the needs of specific pupils or provide an appropriate level of challenge to those with higher prior attainment, meaning they do not always know whether or not the pupils have understood and remembered the knowledge being taught. Teachers' feedback often helps

pupils recognise their learning successes and what they need to improve in line with the school's marking and feedback policy. However, sometimes feedback is insufficiently focused on the lesson's learning intention, meaning pupils are not always being helped to make progress. Teachers routinely and consistently praise pupils during lessons, further motivating them. A range of teaching activities is used to inspire pupils in their work. Pupils acknowledge this exclaiming, 'Teachers make our lessons fun!' The school has invested in good quality resources including Bibles, which are used well by staff to aid learning. Teachers understand the contribution the subject makes to pupils' spiritual development.

There is clear fidelity to the diocesan scheme of work. Leaders and governors ensure that provision complies with the archbishop's requirements; for example, the subject is resourced equitably compared to other core subjects. The required amount of curriculum time is always allocated to religious education in every classroom, sometimes more. Leaders have a deep commitment in providing excellent training and use the academy company's coaching model, which is in its infancy, to support all staff in delivering high-quality religious education lessons. The school works with other Catholic schools locally and across the academy company to moderate religious education standards, helping to improve the quality and accuracy of teachers' assessment. All staff feel highly supported by school leaders which aids the subject's development. Staff say, 'We can ask for help at any time and it is always given with a good heart.' Opportunities for pupils to engage in enrichment activities that enhance the school's delivery of the curriculum are evident through visits to the high school and through its engagement with 'One Life' music opportunities and visiting speakers from Cafod.

## Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

1

### 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

Pupils at St Austin's actively participate in prayer and liturgy, meaning they are consciously engaged in conversation with God. They are very reverent in their participation; for example, they can sustain prayerful silence, evident in reflection time after communion, and support their peers through their prayer leadership. A wide range of prayer opportunities are experienced at St Austin's which is greatly valued by staff and pupils. Pupils readily articulate how prayer and liturgy influences their lives, through the actions that they take in school and in the wider world. Leaders have successfully developed pupils' ability to plan, organise, and lead well-constructed prayer. Pupils are involved in evaluating their prayer services, detailing what they enjoyed and what they desire to improve the next time they plan worship. Pupils know the traditional prayers of the Church, appropriate to their age. Through a wide variety of opportunities given to pupils within school and through strong parish links, pupils demonstrate excellent knowledge of different ways to pray. The Catholic journals displayed in every classroom illustrate the occasions when pupils have had experiences that have called them and inspired them to pray; for example, when Queen Elizabeth II died and praying for the holy souls throughout November.

Prayer is central to the life of St Austin's; for example, the school's mission statement becomes a prayer to God each day. Pupils are extremely familiar with the pattern of prayer at their school. Significant moments in school and parish lives are identified, planned for, and then celebrated in prayer including the parish priest's birthday. The detailed plans created by the senior leaders at the start of each year ensure that all experience the rich heritage of Catholic prayer traditions. The school environment strongly promotes the school's mission and has been creatively designed with spirituality in mind. Scripture is used very well to support prayer and liturgy within the school. Staff are creative in the way they introduce prayerful activities to pupils, including providing opportunities for the youngest children to lead prayers and engage in prayer with their parents. Parents value such opportunities to share in worship with their children including the 'stay and pray' sessions and

there is a strong presence of parents at the weekly school Mass. Each classroom has its own special prayer space. Pupils appreciate these spaces and, with support from their teachers, take great ownership of them. They clearly reflect the liturgical year and are beautifully presented throughout the school.

Pupils are supported by senior staff who are highly skilled in leading prayer and liturgy and who act as inspiring role models for others. The school calendar revolves naturally around the Church's liturgical year and the school prioritises the celebration of Mass and the Eucharist on a weekly basis, in addition to key liturgical times and religious feast days, such as the solemnity of SS Peter and Paul. This means pupils have an excellent understanding of the liturgical year and have confidence in using the four-part structure leaders have introduced for prayer. Leaders pay particular attention to inducting new staff, so they have a secure understanding of how to contribute to the school's rich prayer life. Leaders, governors, and the academy company work together to ensure that staff formation is given the highest priority. All deeply value this. The school's prayer policy ensures there is a clear progression of expectations surrounding prayer, appropriate to the age and stage of each pupil. Prayer and liturgy are monitored by leaders and other stakeholders, including the local governing body, parish priest, and the academy company. This ensures they have a detailed and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders and governors ensure prayer and liturgy are prioritised in terms of resources.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Austin's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	142209
Full postal address of the school	Garden Street, Stafford, ST17 4BT
School phone number	01785 413277
Name of head teacher or principal	Karen Bennett
Chair of governing board	Kenneth Wilson
School Website	<a href="http://www.st-austins.org.uk">www.st-austins.org.uk</a>
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	The Painsley Catholic Academy
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	3 to 11
Trustees	Archdiocese of Birmingham
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	October 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

## The inspection team

Rebecca Nash

Lead inspector

Helen Rigby

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