

## Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary Academy

URN: 148739

Carried out on behalf of the Right Rev. Marcus Stock, Bishop of Leeds on:

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> May 2023

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.....	1
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.....	1
The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

### Summary of key findings

#### What the school does well:

- The school community is genuinely welcoming, inclusive and open, living out in every interaction its strong Catholic ethos and mission.
- The leadership team of the school is decisive in its drive for ensuring that St Francis' pupils receive Catholic education of a very high standard.
- The learning environment and Catholic life provided is exemplary and often very creative and unique.
- The school has established very effective self-evaluation processes, which involve all staff and children, and helps to drive rapid improvement.
- The behaviour and attitude of the pupils is exemplary in and out of lessons.

What the school needs to improve:

- Further strengthen the improvements made by the governors and senior leaders in recent years, embedding their impact and growing capacity, so they can be sustained into the future.
- Enhance teaching practice by ensuring that assessment strategies, marking policy, and feedback given to pupils are consistently applied in all classes and enable pupils to know how well they are doing and what they can do to improve.
- Develop the chaplaincy and collective worship provision further, so that pupils can evaluate their worship and contribute in a more systematic way to making it even better.

## 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 very effective head teacher, supported by the parish priest, and others, has created a vibrant and flourishing faith community. The distinctive Catholic ethos is obvious from the moment one enters the building and is actively supported and promoted by pupils and staff to an impressive degree. Pupils know that they are special in God's eyes. They are confident, happy and extremely well cared for. The love of Christ is evident in all relationships and interactions between pupils and staff. Pupils have a firm understanding of scripture and they know they are called to witness to Christ's love, by helping those who are less fortunate than them. Led by pupils in the mini-vinnies, chaplaincy team and school council, they have an awareness of the need to care for our planet and cherish its riches. They have planted trees, raised money for re-cycling bins, collected litter and helped at a local park. Pupils demonstrate great respect for each other, regardless of their background, faith or ethnicity. Behaviour is outstanding in lessons, on the playground, and in worship activities. All pupils take leadership roles in the faith life of the school, appropriate to their age and ability.

Displays, statues, inspiring scriptural quotes and creatively designed prayer areas are everywhere, embracing everyone with the spirit and word of God. The school's mission, 'Nothing is impossible with God', is highly visible throughout the building and is enthusiastically recited by all pupils at several key times in the day. Pupils also look for inspiration and support from their class patron saints. Staff members willingly participate in a variety of activities that reflect this mission, including retreat days, and prayer and worship opportunities. The school community includes a diverse mix of Christian and some non-Christian faith groups but pupils actively welcome and celebrate this fact. They show deep knowledge of other faith traditions. One non-Catholic parent told inspectors that he had 'learnt a lot about being a Catholic' from his three children. A recent Culture Day was

enjoyed by all. The practical, pastoral and emotional support provided to pupils and families whose circumstances have made them more vulnerable, including those with special educational needs, is inspiring. Parents and pupils are greeted with a warm smile and a positive word every morning. Sacramental preparation is done in the parish supported by staff from the school. The school meets the statutory and diocesan requirements for the provision of relationships and sexual health education.

The school works closely with other schools in the trust, diocese and local area. It has a close link with the other school in the parish. Parents appreciate the work undertaken to include them in the Catholic life of the school. One parent told an inspector that 'this school is an extension of our family' and another person called the school 'a hidden gem'. The head teacher and her senior team are inspirational witnesses to Catholic social teaching. Sometimes inspired by ideas from pupils in the mini-vinnies, and school council, leaders ensure that the most vulnerable are supported. In the last year alone, the school has very generously contributed to more than twelve different organisations, including Catholic Care, CAFOD, the Ukraine Crisis Appeal, the Gianna Baby Project, McMillan Cancer, and the St Vincent de Paul food bank. Staff feel highly valued and supported. Newer staff members have been given effective induction, enabling them to quickly contribute to the Catholic life and mission. The governors are highly ambitious for the school and offer both support and challenge, which have led to significant improvements. Self-evaluation systems have become more effective recently but are highly effective and accurate.

## 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.....

1



Pupils develop good standards of religious knowledge. They work hard, making good progress as they move through the school, so that they can recall biblical stories, use liturgical language and reflect spiritually on their learning. In a lower Key Stage 2 class pupils reflected in detail on the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the story of Pentecost. A pupil in Key Stage 1 said that ‘God is like the wind, which we feel but can’t see. We can’t see Him but we can see His work and feel His love’. In another class, inspectors listened to pupils comfortably listing several parables that illustrated what God’s kingdom is like. Pupils in the very youngest classes are given a firm foundation; one of them told his teacher that, ‘We learn about God because He loves us’. Pupils demonstrate increasing independence and are given a wide variety of learning experiences. They enjoy lessons and work books are well presented. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, have some awareness of how well they are doing, however feedback systems do not consistently enable them to understand how they can improve. Attainment in religious education is at least in line with other core subjects.

Teachers demonstrate confident subject knowledge. They expect the best from pupils and ensure they make good progress, appropriate to their age. There is a clear assessment, marking and feedback strategy, though this is relatively new and feedback does not always help pupils understand what they need to do to improve. Pupils’ achievements are celebrated through a system of class-based rewards, such as stickers and ‘dojos’, as well as in whole school assemblies, where certificates are awarded with links to Catholic virtues, such as resilience. Recalling previous learning and including meaningful reflection time, are integral parts of every lesson. Resources for the teaching of religious education are of a high quality, and when combined with the impressive skills of teaching support staff, these help to optimise learning in most lessons. Teachers plan learning activities that are varied and increasingly creative, so that pupils often do artwork, mind-mapping,

and singing. They play games, engage in deep discussion, work in collaborative groups and enjoy role play. A younger class of pupils were given time to create and then present the story of Pentecost, which they did well. Two support dogs now regularly visit the school so that some pupils can read to them. The dogs and their owners even joined a whole-school May Procession recently.

Leaders ensure that the working environment of the school is of a very high quality and a top priority within the budget. Professional development opportunities are valued by staff and are accessed enthusiastically by them. The school's system of holding regular 'Circle Discussions' with all staff, including the caretaker, teaching assistants and others, enables very efficient sharing of information, new ideas and policy reminders. One newer staff member is being funded to voluntarily undertake the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies. The subject leader is totally dedicated to her role and has had a significant impact on teaching and learning provision. Colleagues speak highly of her work and her support for them. Consequently, teaching is never less than good. The growing and increasingly solid partnership between leaders and governors is excellent, producing very focused and effective improvements across the school. Self-evaluation systems inform improvement strategy in a timely manner, meaning that the impact happens quickly. Stakeholders are regularly asked to complete surveys. These are overwhelmingly positive and constructive, leading to identifiable actions, such as the new staff meeting strategies and the construction of the new prayer garden and outdoor classroom.

## 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 .....

2

### 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 enjoy varied and high quality worship opportunities provided. They use scripture, symbolism, silence, reflection, artwork, music, singing and even dance as normal parts of prayer. They demonstrate reverence when praying. Older pupils say the Rosary and Angelus at lunchtime. Pupils develop the ability to plan their worship time, and become skilled liturgical leaders. Appropriate to their age, they can confidently set up a prayer focus with a coloured drape relevant to the time of the year, and add a cross, a statue, flowers, background music and more. They do not yet systematically evaluate pupil-led worship. Pupils show an understanding of how events in the wider world can influence prayer. This might involve asking the Holy Spirit for courage when life is challenging or asking God to look after children in Ukraine. Prayers frequently conclude with an enthusiastic proclamation of the mission of the school, 'Nothing is impossible with God', and a call on the intercession of class saints. One pupil in the chaplaincy team told an inspector that 'we pray for those in need and support them through our fundraising because that is what Jesus told us to do'.

Liturgies take place inside, as well as outside, weather permitting. The parish church is next door, and is used frequently. Pupils also walk to the sister parish church of St Anthony's to join children from that school for feast day Masses. Scripture has a high profile, and inspirational scripture quotes adorn many of the classroom and corridor walls. Displays and prayer spaces throughout the school are very carefully and thoughtfully created to a high standard. All staff, including those who are not Catholics, are exemplary role models in their prayer and worship practice. Retreats, prayer meetings and Masses are well attended by them, and are highly valued. Teachers are highly skilled at planning and leading worship. The chaplaincy team were involved in the design of the new prayer garden and insisted on an altar being included, so that Mass can be said there. The parish priest

has blessed this altar. The parish and school work hard to involve families in prayer and worship activities. Older pupils can receive the Sacrament of Confession at specific times in the year.

The much respected parish priest works with the school to plan an extensive calendar of worship activities, throughout the year. Leaders do not shy away from 'thinking outside the norm', as exemplified by the planning of a May Procession route, for the whole school, through the local streets, rather than staying within the school or Church grounds. They are also planning a parish and school Mass on the field for the end of August, before the new school year starts. The school also uses real candles in prayer, rather than electric ones. Leaders make sure that worship opportunities are available specifically for staff, to support their prayer life. The sacrament of Reconciliation is available to older pupils at key times in the year. The school has an embedded policy for collective worship describing what is expected in pupil-led worship. Even the youngest pupils demonstrate a secure ability to lead. All staff, where relevant, have had access to professional development on the provision of high quality and creative worship and prayer. One pupil told an inspector that 'I learnt how to lead a worship by watching my teacher'. The prayer life of the school is regularly evaluated by leaders, and involves pupils to an extent. This process is not yet systematic enough, especially when involving pupil-led worship activities. Resourcing is given an extremely high priority by leaders.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI CATHOLIC PRIMARY ACADEMY
School unique reference number (URN)	148739
Full postal address of the school	Lady Pit Lane, Leeds LS11 6RX
School phone number	01132 700978
Name of head teacher or principal	Vera Snejberkova-Taylor
Chair of governing board	Sally Hardiman-Douglas
School Website	<a href="https://bsf-leeds.co.uk">https://bsf-leeds.co.uk</a>
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	GREGORY THE GREAT CATHOLIC ACADEMY TRUST
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Trustees	DIOCESE OF LEEDS
Gender of pupils	MIXED
Date of last denominational inspection	22 <sup>nd</sup> & 23 <sup>rd</sup> June 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

### The inspection team

Mark Brennan

Lead inspector

Angela Phillips

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