

Introduction

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Acts 2005 and 2011

The report of the inspection is produced for the Archbishop of Liverpool (Code of Canon Law 804 and 806) and for the governors of the school.

The inspectors are members of the Christian Education Department and their associates approved by the Archbishop of Liverpool for this purpose.

Information about this school

- St. Austin's school is an average sized Catholic Primary School situated in Thatto Heath, St. Helens serving the parish of St. Austin's.
- There are 220 children on roll of whom 167 are baptised Catholic, 5 come from other Christian denominations, and 48 from other faith or religious traditions.
- There are 10 teachers of whom 9 teach Religious Education and 5 have a suitable qualification in Religious Education. Six teachers are baptised Catholic.
- Since the last inspection there is a new Religious Education subject leader.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires Improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

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Overall effectiveness:

St. Austin's Catholic Primary School is an outstanding school in providing Catholic Education.

Inspection Judgements

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

- The extent to which the pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding.
- Pupils know and understand the school's Mission Statement, *Growing In Faith Together* and understand the part they play within it. They are fully involved in its evaluation.
- Pupils are given the opportunity to reflect on the schools' mission each year. Pupils are proud of their mission, relate to it daily and the mission displayed in all areas of the school.
- Their behaviour is outstanding; they have a good sense of right and wrong and apply this in their personal relationships. They lead by example and show responsibility for themselves and their actions.
- All pupils are actively involved in developing the Catholic character of the school and embrace opportunities to meet their potential in all aspects of school life.
- They are encouraged to take on roles of responsibility in the school, e.g. through the school council, activity leaders, head boy and head girl, house captains and the eco council.
- Pupils show wider responsibilities through a variety of fundraising events. Funds are regularly raised for the Good Shepherd, the British Legion and Children in Need.
- Pupils are involved in service to their local community. They have, for example, been working with *Renew Neighbourhood partnership* in conjunction a foundation to design a pathway of remembrance for a local rugby player, Steve Prescott. They have also been involved in community sports and enterprise projects.
- Pupils are involved in service to the local faith and religious communities, such as working with the parish to develop a Marian Trail. Members of the Muslim community visit pupils to share their beliefs and have invited pupils to take part in a mother's day card competition. This gives opportunities for both communities to work alongside one another and show respect and understanding of other religions.
- Pupils have had many cultural opportunities through residential to France, performing a nativity in French and have worked with French and Spanish tutors. They are also linked with a partner school in China. There have been exchange visits, giving pupils a wealth of understanding of school in a different culture.
- Many pupils benefit from other residential to outdoor activity centres and the school invites pupils for a sleepover in school. There is also a variety of educational day trips enjoyed by the pupils.
- Education for pastoral care and personal relationships has fostered positive attitudes in pupils. There is network of support for pupils, for example, through the *Rainbows* programme.
- St. Austin's praises and acknowledges the contribution of others, evident in their weekly house awards. Pupils show a readiness to embrace and celebrate their lived experiences.

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

- Pupils' achievements and enjoyment in Religious Education is good.
- Their attainment in Religious Education is good.
- They make good progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities.
- On entry to school many children have a limited knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith.
- There is no difference in performance between pupils of different gender.
- Outcomes for pupils with additional or special needs are good.
- Analysis of assessments undertaken provides evidence of pupils generally attaining appropriate level for their age and stage of development in each key stage.
- Pupils' standards of work can improve by continuing to moderate pupils work within school and share findings with clusters of local schools. This will raise expectations and encourage further challenge for pupils.
- Pupils are becoming increasingly more religiously literate. Their knowledge, understanding and skills are developing appropriate to their age or capacity.
- They are developing the skills that enable them to reflect spiritually, think ethically and theologically and are becoming more aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.
- Pupils' engage in and enjoy their learning, shown by their interest, enthusiasm and behaviour.
- Pupils are encouraged to work independently and collaboratively.
- Pupils are anxious to learn and improve their knowledge, understanding and skills as they become independent learners.

How well pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship

- Pupils' response to and participation in Collective Worship is outstanding.
- They show interest, respond well and actively participate in Collective Worship.
- Pupils' knowledge of prayer and liturgy is increasing.
- They are becoming familiar with a variety of prayer styles. They appreciate and are open to the Word of God in the scriptures.
- Pupils join in community prayers appropriately and with confidence.
- Older pupils are guided excellently in their worship and in their involvement of preparing and leading worship. This outstanding practice can continue to develop across the school by using the *Stepping Stones* Archdiocesan guidance for gradual expectations in worship across the school.
- On the day of inspection pupils gathered to film clips which captured their interest and led them into quiet reflection.
- Pupils act with reverence and are keen to participate in a variety of gatherings.

The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education

- The quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education is outstanding.
- It is consistently effective in ensuring that pupils are interested and engaged and make outstanding progress.
- Teaching encourages pupils' enjoyment of and enthusiasm of Religious Education.
- Teachers ensure there is consistency in behaviour and expectations of pupils. There are established routines.
- Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to work independently and collaboratively.

- Teachers display excellent subject knowledge and deploy a range of teaching styles. There are excellent pupil and adult relationships which encourages pupil discussion. Teachers and pupils share their own experiences effectively.
- Teachers take into account pupils' prior learning and work consolidates, builds and extends their knowledge and understanding.
- In one lesson observed pupils were recognising the gift of friendship. Clear expectations were given at the beginning and shared experiences of friendship were explored throughout the lesson. The pupils reflected on a 'thinking question' and revisited it at the end of the lesson. This enabled outstanding use of a plenary to extend and challenge pupils' exploration.
- In another lesson observed younger pupils shared and prepared for a toy bears birthday. Discussion and activities throughout the lesson were animated and focused, keeping all pupils engaged in their preparations for a party. The excitement in the classroom was palpable.
- In the Foundation Stage there is outstanding evidence of pupils' individual work which is presented to a high standard. Religious Education is promoting and developing many early skills. Work is shared with parents who are then able to comment and take part in their child's Religious Education.
- Effort and achievement at all stages of learning is celebrated.
- Teaching Assistants throughout the school provide outstanding care and support to pupils and teachers. They are deployed effectively and show sensitivity to pupils needs. They ensure all pupils in their care reach their full potential.
- Opportunities for Information Technology were used well, including the use of an interactive whiteboards and i-pads.
- Planning is annotated and shows some differentiation, a range of activities and evaluations. Planning will continue to improve with use of consistent differentiation using the driver words.
- Pupils are informed of their progress and how to improve both orally and through marking. Marking is positive, affirming and supportive which can continue to improve by introducing developmental marking using the driver words to enable pupils to respond to comments in their work.
- Using the driver words in planning, teaching and learning and then through marking will continue to develop and improve differentiation, pupil expectations and extend the content of pupils work.
- The school has outstanding assessment strategies in place which provides detailed information on the achievement of all the pupils including detailed formative and summative comments for Early Years pupils.
- Teachers are able to identify how well pupils are achieving and tackle underachievement. The school tracks the achievement of all the pupils and specific groups are identified.

The extent to which the Religious Education Curriculum promotes pupils' learning

- The extent to which the Religious Education Curriculum promotes pupils' learning is outstanding.
- The curriculum is outstanding in meeting pupils' needs.
- The school using the *Come and See* programme recommended by the Archdiocese meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory for Religious Education. Appropriate levels of the programme are being followed in different classes. This ensures complete Religious Education entitlement for each child and meets National and Archdiocesan requirements.

- Of the total curriculum time 10% is allocated to Religious Education. This fulfils the requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales.
- Planning ensures full coverage of the Religious Education programme. Imaginative and well planned strategies are deployed to enrich pupils' learning.
- The school implements new curriculum developments as appropriate.
- The curriculum is customised to meet the needs of groups and individuals.
- The curriculum has been used to link with many areas of school life, for example, awards such as the International Schools award, timetabled *Awe and Wonder* week and *De Bono thinking hats* allowing pupils to solve moral dilemmas.
- The school environment is remarkable. A vast variety of areas allow pupils an abundance of opportunities for play, learning, prayer, reflection, sport and cultural links. The space known as *The Meadow* project is a collaboration of work from school, parish, home and the wider community. Spaces created are having an outstanding impact on the Religious Education curriculum.
- The school, parish and local community have further plans to work alongside *Faiths 4 Change* in developing a grotto area and 'Marian' trail.
- The new school building is an inviting and vibrant space and great care is taken to provide well-presented displays reflecting pupils work. For example, pupils worked with an artist to produce mosaics depicting pupils' house teams and on the day of inspection a Christmas tree was lit outside as pupils entered school with wonder and excitement.
- There are outstanding international links with a partner school in China. Pupils have French and Spanish tutors and the schools' nativity play, written by the headteacher, is presented in French.
- There are close transition links with local schools and the school is a strategic partner in the Teaching School Alliance linked to Hope University.
- Pupils take part in many after school clubs such as, football, multi-skills, choir and Rainbows.
- Pupils have explored the beliefs and values of other faiths and religions. This helps to promote tolerance and respect for those who think differently. Judaism is taught each year and Islam and Hinduism are taught bi-annually.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.

- The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is outstanding. It reflects the Catholic character of the school and takes into account other faith and religious backgrounds among the pupils.
- Collective Worship has a high profile and is central to the life of the school.
- Collective Worship plays a key part in meeting the spiritual needs of the pupils.
- Children are enabled to pray formally and informally using a variety of prayer methods and styles.
- The school provides opportunities for staff to develop the skills in planning, leading and evaluating Collective Worship.
- The teachers are providing older pupils with the necessary resources and opportunities to help children to develop the skills necessary to plan and lead Collective Worship and to evaluate it effectively. This should continue to be extended consistently across the whole school.
- There are many opportunities provided to enable full, active and conscious participation of the whole school community, for example, Advent and Lenten services.
- Opportunities are provided for parents, carers the local and wider faith communities to participate in a variety of celebrations of the *Come and See* programme.

How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.

- Leaders, governors and managers are outstanding in promoting monitoring and evaluating the provision for the Catholic life of the school and in the way they plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.
- This is reflected in the school's own Mission Statement. All who form part of the school community including parents, clergy, governors and children were involved in the development and review of the Mission Statement. Its aims and practical objectives direct and guide every aspect of school life and are a useful tool by which the school can evaluate its effectiveness.
- Leaders, governors and managers are outstanding in the way they use monitoring data to evaluate the schools performance, celebrate, and plan future improvements.
- The Self Evaluation Document provides evidence of the schools' monitoring, searching analysis and self challenge. It provides a basis to celebrate strengths and outlines areas for development.
- Leaders, governors and managers at St. Austin's are deeply committed to the Church's mission in education. The headteacher leads with great care and support, leading the school as a source of inspiration for the whole community.
- Governors have full knowledge and understanding of the Catholic life of the school and fulfil their responsibilities. They have effectively helped to shape the direction of the school.
- Governors are regularly invited into school for a variety of events and liturgical celebrations. Regular updates are received from the headteacher regarding the Catholic life of the school. Governors are rightly very proud of St. Austin's and know and care deeply for the school and surrounding community.
- The Parish priest visits school regularly celebrating Masses, whole school events, such as, an outdoor Advent service, beginning of the year Mass and a variety of liturgies with pupils. Time is given by the priest to enhance the *Come and See* Religious Education programme in classes supporting teachers and pupils.
- There are home, school, and parish links for the *With You Always* sacramental preparations and celebrations.
- Staff play an active part in the Catholic life and mission of the school. It is an inclusive school where all are made welcome. A staff member commented, '*We are one Big Family.*'
- The school works closely with their neighbouring Catholic primary school to provide spirituality sessions. Staff regularly take part in reflections at the beginning of each theme taught. They have attended reflection days linked to their mission and a CAFOD retreat day was led for staff through the Christian Education Department.
- The school provides valuable induction and regular in-service training to enable staff to further understand the Church's Mission in Education and play their unique part in it. Some staff members have their Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies. Governors and the headteacher continue to encourage the completion of the certificate for all staff members teaching Religious Education.
- The quality of Collective Worship is a priority of the school. An up to date detailed policy and monitoring is in place.
- Parents are consulted regularly and involved in a variety of ways in the life of the school e.g. through regular newsletters, the school website, a variety of liturgies, celebration and fundraising events. There is an active and supportive Parent, Teacher and Friends Association and a variety of parent education sessions are offered to them.

- Parent views of the school are very positive, one parent commented, '*The very nature of the school promotes a very caring environment, where every child is valued.*'

How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Religious Education of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.

- Leaders, governors and managers are outstanding in promoting monitoring and evaluating the provision for the Religious Education of the school and in the way they plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.
- The subject leader is new to the post and is working in partnership with senior leaders whilst settling into her role. She leads Religious Education with commitment and takes good advantage of the advice and training she is receiving. She has introduced new initiatives when appropriate and has focused plans for the future.
- The Self Evaluation Document is a reflection of monitoring and self-challenge. Action plans are very detailed and comprehensive.
- Briefing meetings provided by the Archdiocese are attended regularly and continuing professional development opportunities are provided for staff. Communication between the headteacher, staff, parents and governors is effective.
- Governors are informed of standards in Religious Education and the Religious Education governor is kept informed by the subject leader on a regular basis.
- There is a robust programme for the monitoring and evaluation cycle.
- Monitoring data is used effectively to evaluate the schools performance and plan for future improvements.
- Teaching and learning is monitored regularly and appropriate feedback and support given as necessary.
- Detailed and comprehensive documentation guides and directs all staff in the delivery of the subject. This is updated as necessary.
- Formal assessment tasks are undertaken in line with Archdiocesan guidance. Moderation is completed by the Religious Education subject leader and staff members.
- Assessment information is outstanding. It is collated and tracked by the subject leader and shared with the leadership team and governors.
- Curriculum outlines are provided for parents who are consulted on different issues depending on the topic being covered.
- Formal written reports give priority to Religious Education and inform parents of their child's knowledge, understanding and achievements.

What the school needs to do to improve further?

- Develop pupils' participation in Collective Worship by:
 - using and seeking advice on the *Stepping Stones* Archdiocesan guidance enabling gradual expectations in worship across the school.
- Continue to develop teaching and learning of Religious Education by:
 - using the driver words in planning, teaching and learning and then through marking to develop and improve differentiation, pupil expectations and extend the content in pupils work.

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education	1
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OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils	
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	1
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	2
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	1

PROVISION

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education	
The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education	1
The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning	1
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	1

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How effective leaders, governors and managers are in developing the Catholic Life of the School	
How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
How well leaders, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	1

Key to judgements: Grade 1 is outstanding, Grade 2 good, Grade 3 requires improvement and Grade 4 inadequate
