



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Inspection Report

St Gerard's Catholic Primary School

Yatesbury Avenue, Castle Vale, Birmingham B35 6LB

Inspection dates:

5th - 6th March 2018

Lead Inspector:

Dominic Collins

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS:

Good

Catholic Life:

Outstanding

Religious Education:

Good

Collective Worship:

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection:

Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good Catholic school because:

- It is welcoming and inclusive with a strong Catholic identity and outstanding Catholic ethos.
- The headteacher provides strong, visionary leadership and sets high standards and expectations for all members of the school community.
- Catholic Life and Religious Education is firmly centred on the school mission and significantly shapes pupils morally and spiritually.
- The school is very well supported by the governing body. They work closely with the school leadership, chaplaincy and a dedicated staff team to provide the very best outcomes for all pupils.
- All staff are excellent role models. They know the children well and exercise a high level of pastoral care to ensure each pupil is fully integrated into the school community.
- Pupils make good progress in Religious Education because teaching is consistently effective and encourages purposeful learning.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are happy, confident learners and are able to thrive in a secure, harmonious environment. Pupil behaviour is exemplary.

It is not yet outstanding because:

- Pupils need to be challenged further in their Religious Education in order to increase the number of pupils who exceed age-related expectations.

FULL REPORT

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Plan learning objectives for Religious Education lessons that provide greater challenge, particularly for those pupils who are more able.
- Broaden the range of activities, which are matched to pupils' abilities, so that they extend pupils' knowledge, understanding and ability to record their ideas.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The quality of the Catholic Life of the school.	Outstanding
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.	Outstanding
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.	Outstanding
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school.	Outstanding

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

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

- A strong Catholic character and outstanding ethos permeates the school community in every way.
- At the entrance, visitors are greeted by a beautiful mosaic of St Gerard, which every pupil helped to make. This image presents a powerful symbol of unity within the school family, showing the essence and purpose of Catholic Life within St Gerard's school.
- The prominent guidance of the school mission and Catholic virtues, together with a variety of informative and reflective displays linked to the Gospel values, give a clear message of Catholic community. This is mirrored by the efforts of its pupils to follow in the footsteps of their patron saint.
- Pupils respond positively to the school ethos that is centered around the principles of its mission. They know how much they are valued and understand the consequences of their own actions and the effect this may have on others.
- A culture of mutual respect underpins the excellent relationships that are evident throughout the school at every level. Pupils realise the importance of their contribution towards creating a harmonious environment.
- Pupils are cheerful and welcoming, and their courteous behaviour is exemplary. They impress visitors with their smart appearance, initiative, positive attitudes and developing maturity. As a result, pupils are excellent ambassadors for the strong Catholic identity of their school.
- Pupils are taught the importance of reconciliation and forgiveness. They recognise that we are all made in the image and likeness of Christ and understand the need to show love and compassion for our neighbour.
- Pupils conduct themselves around school in an orderly and relaxed manner, showing genuine friendship, care and respect for one another. For example, meal times and playtimes are happy, social gatherings where pupils enjoy the company of their friends.
- The recent introduction of The Rights of the Child (UNICEF), across all year groups, has helped to highlight some of the global issues facing children today. As a result, pupils have a growing understanding of the importance of justice and peace.

- The school successfully promotes respect for other faiths, traditions and cultures and teaches that we are all God's children. Dedicated time is given to finding out about other world faiths.
- Pupils are active participants in the Catholic Life and mission of the school and reap enormous benefit from it. They are eager to engage in a variety of responsibilities around the school and perform their duties with pride. These responsibilities include contributing to and monitoring the school environment; fundraising for charitable causes; taking part in the school council, the spiritual council, Eco club and Mini Vinnies; acting as house captains and serving at Mass.
- The opinions of pupils are sought and listened to by the adults in the school. There is an active school pupil council, providing pupils with the opportunity to share their views. Suggestions made are carefully considered by staff and governors and actioned where appropriate.
- In addition, pupils make a valuable contribution to the evaluations of Catholic Life through well-structured questionnaires and discussions. As a result, pupils feel valued. This does much to develop their confidence, character and self-esteem.
- The recently formed pupil spiritual council monitors the quality of devotional areas in classes and throughout the school. They share their findings with the headteacher and Religious Education subject leader.
- Pupils understand that God is calling them to use their special gifts and talents. They are able to discuss why they should always do their best and try to make the right choices in order to follow the teachings of Jesus. They understand what it means to have a personal vocation and readily respond to appeals in support of local and national charities, knowing that their prayers and actions can make a real difference to others lives.
- These 'Faith in Action' activities extend pupils' learning and enable them to become active and engaged in their faith. In this way, they relate their faith to their daily lives.
- Following an audit of the school environment, the headteacher initiated a focus to place a greater emphasis on its Catholic character, Gospel values and how God is calling us to be his disciples. Visual reminders, such as 'God gives you your talents, what you do with them is your gift to God', were then placed around the school. As a result, pupils are immersed in a Catholic environment.
- Pupils understand and live the mission of the school and are guided by a committed and caring staff team, who know them well and are dedicated in providing the very best Catholic education.
- The whole staff have taken part in a retreat, which focused on maintaining and developing the Catholic Life of the school. This has supported staff to be excellent role models, promoting the Gospel values by their example and fostering a happy, secure environment.
- A major strength of the school is the high level of pastoral care for pupils. The school behaviour policy is effective, based upon promoting good relationships, allowing everyone to work together in an effective and considerate way. All staff vigilantly guide pupils throughout the day, ensuring they aspire to the high expectations made of them.
- The pastoral needs of all staff are also recognised and support is put into place when the need occurs.
- The school fosters excellent partnerships with parents and carers. Nurture groups, counselling and additional forms of support are provided, which include signposting families to appropriate agencies. Consequently, the willingness to support and guide pupils and their families is outstanding.
- Parents are kept well informed and are encouraged to take an active role in the life of the school. In addition to school events and liturgical celebrations, they are

invited to participate in class led inspire workshops. These opportunities are welcomed and well supported by parents.

- Parents and carers are invited to express their views informally and through questionnaires about Catholic Life in response to their visits into school. Outcomes are collated by the Religious Education subject leader, then shared and evaluated by the staff.
- The school has recently formed a partnership with the Caritas Christi in Urbe (CCIU) - The Love of Christ in the City. This is a group of Catholic schools, formed with a common aim, to nurture the faith for all members. This collaboration offers excellent opportunities for pupils and staff to enhance Catholic Life across the schools. All the schools benefit from sharing good practice and developing the skills of staff and governors.
- There are strong links with the parish community. Pupils are trained as altar servers and regularly assist at parish and school Masses. Parents, parishioners and governors are always welcomed to join school Masses.
- Chaplaincy support for the school is excellent. The parish priest has established an effective partnership with the staff and pupils and provides valuable support and guidance in developing the Catholic Life of the school.
- Relationships and sex education is taught sensitively, with dignity and respect, in an age appropriate way, and is in accordance with diocesan guidelines.
- Celebration of the sacraments are a central feature of the school year. Preparation takes place during Religious Education lessons for all pupils, enabling those children who are not baptised Catholic to support their friends. Pupils, parents and carers, together with the parish priest and school staff, are all involved in sacramental preparation.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school.

- There is clear evidence that leaders and governors share a strong commitment to the Church's mission in Catholic education.
- Together, leaders and governors have clear sense of purpose and a common aim to provide the best Catholic education for pupils, placing their spiritual and moral development as their highest priority.
- Governors and leaders are committed to the Catholic mission of the school. At the beginning of each year, the mission is formally reviewed by staff and pupils. As a result, pupils are regularly reminded of its meaning and purpose.
- The newly appointed headteacher is passionate about developing the Catholic Life of the school. She communicates a fresh vision to promote and develop it further, which is shared by committed staff and effective, supportive governors. There is strong evidence that recent refinements are already having a significant impact.
- The school leadership sees self-evaluation as crucial to future improvement. They have taken swift action to conduct a thorough audit of Catholic Life, in order to identify areas of strength and those in need of development.
- Self-evaluation is based on a thorough knowledge of the school and the commitment of all leaders, governors and staff to the Catholic mission of the school.
- Systems used for monitoring and evaluating the Catholic Life of the school are developing well and clearly inform improvement planning.
- Information from this structured monitoring is used effectively by the headteacher and Religious Education subject leader. Consequently, they can make secure evaluations about the impact of the school's Catholic Life on pupils' spiritual and moral development.

- Evaluations of Catholic Life are used to produce a comprehensive development plan that highlights areas of identified focus. This practical and informative plan includes agreed actions and related success criteria.
- Governors are well informed through reports from the headteacher and Religious Education link governor, in addition to their visits and regular involvement in the life of the school. As a result, they have a thorough understanding of how the school witnesses to Christ and they are able to fulfil their responsibilities by way of support and professional challenge to its leadership.
- All new staff are fully inducted into their roles and responsibilities in the Catholic Life of the school. They are very well supported by the Religious Education subject leader and provision is made for them to attend appropriate continuing professional development.
- The school has a comprehensive website through which prospective and existing parents can access information about every aspect of school life. Catholic Life, sacramental preparation and provision for Religious Education features as the main priority.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The quality of Religious Education.	Good
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.	Good
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.	Good
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.	Good

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.

- Religious Education at St Gerard's School is good.
- School self-evaluation is accurate in its judgment that the majority of pupils made consistently good progress in Religious Education throughout the school and some pupils exceed expectations.
- The judgement is based upon the evaluation of a variety of formal and informal processes used by the subject leadership to monitor provision and outcomes.
- Pupils experience a positive start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and evidence of tracking progress shows a consistent improvement across each key stage.
- Due to consistently effective teaching, the majority of pupils' knowledge and understanding of their faith develops well.
- Senior leaders' monitoring of outcomes over time show that the quality of teaching in Religious Education is at least good and some elements of teaching is outstanding.
- Teachers plan and deliver interesting, well balanced lessons to fully engage all pupils. As a result, pupils enjoy their Religious Education lessons and have developed a good attitude to learning.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is excellent. They respond enthusiastically to opportunities for collaboration within a whole class or group setting and are able to offer opinions and consider those of others.
- 'Blooms Taxonomy' is used effectively to develop challenging, high order questioning skills that extend and deepen pupils' learning. This strategy is used

throughout the school for all subjects but particularly in Religious Education to provide opportunities to explore 'big questions.'

- Evidence of Religious Education used in a cross-curricular way is the 'Mathematics for Life' connection. Subtract all your fears, Divide your blessings with others, Multiply your good deeds, Add Jesus to your life, Equals a wonderful life!
- The recently reviewed school marking policy is consistently applied and used effectively to inform pupils about their progress and their next steps to improve.
- As a result of self-evaluation, classroom support staff are effectively deployed and provide excellent guidance to individuals and groups in their learning. Consequently, the progress pupils make in relation to expected levels of attainment is rapidly narrowing.
- Pupils are proud of their work in Religious Education and by the end of key stage 2 show evidence of their knowledge and understanding of the Faith developing in maturity, quality and presentation.
- Pupils now need to be challenged further, so that more pupils exceed diocesan and national expectations. The school should consider planning lesson objectives and providing tasks that extend further pupils' knowledge, understanding and ability to record their ideas in Religious Education.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

- Religious education is very well managed by the subject leader. She has worked effectively to address the recommendations from the previous inspection and maintains a high level of support to staff if required, in the delivery of the Religious Education curriculum.
- Staff are confident of their subject expertise. Formal monitoring of Religious Education is conducted by the headteacher and subject leader across the school. Ongoing monitoring of individual pupils' work by the class teacher takes place through progressive marking, questioning techniques and a variety of differentiated teaching strategies.
- Regular scrutiny of planning, lesson observation, analysis of assessment data, moderation of pupils' work, pupil interviews, class discussion and learning walks give a clear and reliable insight into the quality of Religious Education provision and the impact of teaching on pupils' learning.
- Governors are involved in the monitoring process and evaluation of Religious Education provision through informal meetings with pupils, scrutiny of work and learning walks. In addition, the Religious Education subject leader meets with the link governor to share monitoring and evaluation outcomes. As a consequence, governors have an informed understanding of the quality of Religious Education provision and the impact on pupils' learning.
- Using diocesan guidance, the school has implemented practical and informative assessment systems for class teachers to track and monitor pupil progress. Pupils' work is also moderated against the diocesan strategy expectations.
- The data from these assessments are carefully analysed by the subject leader and shows good, continuous improvement in progress and a consistency in attainment from a low starting point on entry into school.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The quality of Collective Worship.	Outstanding
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How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.	Outstanding
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.	Outstanding
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.	Outstanding

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.

- The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is outstanding.
- Provision for Collective Worship is central to the Catholic Life of the school. Staff and pupils pray together daily and there are opportunities for pupils to experience different types of prayer and worship.
- Underpinning the Catholic family of St Gerard's School is the opportunity for all to pray and learn together. Prayer is at the heart of the school and pupils participate with reverence and enthusiasm in all forms of Collective Worship each day.
- Pupils are encouraged to compose their own prayers and petitions, in addition to traditional prayers, and these are an integral part of Collective Worship in school.
- Staff are dedicated to ensuring that times of prayer are made special. They go to great lengths to create a calm, reflective atmosphere using music and visual resources effectively. As a result, pupils' response to Collective Worship is excellent. They are attentive and reverent in prayer because they understand the importance it has in our daily lives.
- Testimony to pupils' enjoyment of prayer and worship, is their voluntary participation in the recently introduced Ignatian lunchtime reflections for Years 5 & 6 entitled 'Pray As You Go'. These sessions are well attended and very well led and prepared by the pupils. Due to its success, the school is now planning to extend this prayer time to other year groups.
- Guided by the Religious Education subject leader, the school has an active spiritual council, with members from both key stage 1 and 2. They make a significant contribution to preparing and leading Collective Worship throughout the school, including whole school and key stage assemblies.
- In addition to leading pupil voice evaluation in prayer, Gospel virtues, Catholic Life and Collective Worship, the spiritual council also led Rosary devotions during October and a Lenten Liturgy each lunchtime during Lent.
- Although the school provides many opportunities for pupils to plan and lead Collective Worship, especially by the pupil spiritual council, these opportunities could now be extended further.
- A school Mass is celebrated each week in church and each class has a termly classroom Mass. Special liturgically themed class bookmarks are sent inviting parents to celebrate Mass with their children.
- Mass celebrated during the inspection inspired heartfelt response and engaged all pupils, parents, governors and parishioners who were present. A well organised group of pupil musicians supported joyous, original songs, performed with actions and a fervent passion. A group of pupils have also started to compose their own musical arrangements.
- In order to develop choral singing in school, the headteacher has engaged the services of St Chad's Cathedral Choral Outreach, who worked with Years 1 and 2 during the Autumn term, culminating in a concert at St Chad's Cathedral.
- Following feast days, retreats and other liturgical celebrations, pupils are invited to write a reflective response in their Collective Worship class folders. These are monitored by the class teacher, headteacher and Religious Education subject leader.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

- The school Catholic Life and Collective Worship policy is shared and practised by all members of the school community. Leaders and governors vigilantly promote, monitor and evaluate its success.
- Collective Worship is very well organised by the headteacher and Religious Education subject leader. A comprehensive timetable of Mass and assembly themes reflect the liturgical calendar and diocesan strategy units. Meetings are also included to provide opportunities for staff discussion and evaluation.
- Staff are excellent role models and guide the pupils in Collective Worship by their own personal example. They receive professional development to enhance planning and delivery of Collective Worship. Five members of staff are commissioned to serve as Eucharistic ministers.
- Governors are very supportive of the school and often attend Masses, assemblies, prayer services and liturgical events. They regularly share celebrations and Collective Worship with pupils and staff and are an integral part of the school family.
- A dedicated link governor works clearly with the headteacher and Religious Education subject leader to promote and evaluate the quality of Collective Worship.
- The development of Collective Worship is a continuous focus for the school. Leaders use of a broad range of formal and informal monitoring and evaluation, involving staff, governors, pupils and parents.
- The findings from all monitoring and evaluation outcomes are shared with staff and governors and are used to inform future planning. Consequently, Collective Worship is an outstanding strength of the school.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Unique reference number	103458
Local authority	Birmingham
<i>This inspection was carried out under canon 806 of Canon Law and under Section 48 of the 2005 Education Act.</i>	

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range	3 – 11 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miss Margaret Dunsford
Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Buck
Telephone number	01214642613
Website address	www.stgerard.bham.sch.uk
Email address	c.buck@stgerard.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 th /20 th March 2013

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS SCHOOL

- St Gerard's is a one form entry Catholic Primary School, serving the parish of St Gerard's in Castle Vale, Birmingham.
- The percentage of Catholic pupils is currently 65%.
- The church and school share the same site, located in the heart of Castle Vale on

the outskirts of Birmingham City centre. The large majority of pupils live in rented accommodation in an area of high social disadvantage.

- The number of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is above the national average.
- The number of pupils from a minority ethnic heritage group is below the national average.
- Attainment on entry is below the national average.
- St Gerard's School has undergone a significant number of changes since the last diocesan inspection.
- Following the retirement of the previous headteacher, the current headteacher was appointed from September 2017. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in February 2018. Three new teachers have also been appointed.
- The governing body has undergone significant change over recent years.
- There have been two new parish priests since the last inspection, with the present parish priest being in place for the last three years.
- In October 2017, the school became a member of 'Caritas Christi in Urbe', a collaboration of twelve Catholic Schools working together for Catholic education in the inner-city area.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION

- The inspection was carried out by one Diocesan Inspector.
- The focus of the inspection was on the impact, quality and leadership of the school's provision of Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship.
- The inspector observed teaching across four Religious Education lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. All of these lesson observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspector completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic Life, the impact of Religious Education teaching on their learning over time and their experience of Collective Worship.
- Meetings were held with the chair of governors, the Catholic Life link governor, the headteacher, the Religious Education subject leader, parish priest and parents.
- The inspector attended a whole school Mass, class Collective Worship and undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of learning and teaching in Religious Education, the presentation of the Catholic Life of the school and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, data about pupils' attainment and progress, Analyse School Performance (ASP) data, the school development plan, the Religious Education action plan, teachers' planning and learning journals.