

St Monica's Catholic Primary School

URN: 111322

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Shrewsbury

13–14 November 2024

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

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

2

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

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

Fully

Compliance statement

- The school meets the requirement as laid down by the Bishops' Conference in that it devotes at least 10% of the taught timetable to the teaching of religious education.
- The school is fully compliant with the additional requirements of the diocesan bishop in that its admissions policy is in line with the diocesan policy, its schemes for religious education and relationships, sex and health education are the required schemes, and personal, social and health education is delivered through a Catholic lens.
- The school has fully addressed all areas for improvement relating to distributive leadership and the creative curriculum and there is clear evidence that the school has improved provision for all.

What the school does well

- St Monica's is a welcoming school; the vibrant environment celebrates the Catholic life of the school giving a tangible sense of belonging to a Catholic community.
- Inspirational senior leaders and governors have a clear vision for St Monica's Catholic Primary School and fully promote the Church's vision in education.
- Pupils enjoy their religious education lessons and benefit from the school's consistent approach to building on prior learning.
- Through careful planning, leaders and governors ensure appropriate significance is given to prayer and the celebration of the sacraments which enriches the provision for pupils and their families.
- All staff are committed and caring, and fully support the Catholic life and mission of the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure provision in religious education lessons is effective in enabling all pupils to demonstrate secure knowledge and understanding over time.
- Develop effective coaching and mentoring practices to enable all staff to deliver engaging and purposeful prayer and liturgical celebrations.
- Introduce rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures so that new initiatives are firmly embedded, their impact evaluated and clear action plans are devised.

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

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

1

St Monica's Catholic Primary School is a warm, welcoming school where the mission statement 'Loving to learn; learning to love like Jesus' is lived out daily, and pupils recognise their uniqueness as members of God's family. A member of staff comments: 'The school creates an inviting environment for prayer and spiritual growth, helping pupils to develop a strong sense of faith and community.' Pupils say they love their school and feel that it is a very special place where they are safe, secure, and nurtured, and as a result they flourish. They are happy to come to school and they are keen to participate in the growing number of pupil groups and activities the school provides, including the Mini Vinnies group where concern is turned into action. Pupils are involved in supporting a range of local and global charities such as the Good Shepherd appeal, St Joseph's Family Centre in Warrington, Mission Together and Cafod. They enjoy organising special events to raise funds such as the annual Lenten stalls and the Hello Yellow day. The school's recently introduced Mission days encourage pupils to focus on their responsibilities in helping others and in caring for the earth. These days help them make explicit links to the demands of Catholic social teaching. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary, and they respect and care for all within the school community. Parents recognise how much their children benefit from the emphasis placed on Catholic life and mission as one parent says, 'The school's Catholic ethos and mission permeates all that it does.'

Staff are fully committed to supporting the Catholic life and mission of St Monica's and they, in turn, are supported by it. They are proud of their school, and as one member of staff comments, 'I feel honoured to work here and be part of a strong team.' They embrace all opportunities for continuing professional development. Parents value the contribution staff, who they consider to be exemplary role models, make to the formation of their children. Parents say the pupils'

kindness and respect for others is, 'a true testament to the hard work and dedication of the staff.' Provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school is well planned and resourced, supported very effectively by the parish priest, ensuring all are included and supported to be part of a living faith community. Pupils of other faiths are encouraged to share their beliefs to the mutual benefit of all. The school's well planned pastoral care provision, including the use of the well-resourced Sunshine Room and specialist staff, ensures the needs of the most vulnerable are met. The school environment, with carefully arranged prayer focal areas and beautiful displays, enriches the Catholic life and mission of the school and supports pupils' understanding of the Church's liturgical year. The school's relationship and health education programme is fully embedded and complies with all diocesan requirements.

Inspirational senior leaders and governors are highly ambitious and committed to the Catholic life and mission of St Monica's and they fully promote the Church's vision in education. They nurture staff and pupils alike and prioritise their well-being. Staff appreciate, 'having senior leaders who have a strong Catholic faith acting as positive role models for all staff to follow.' The partnership between leaders, governors and parents is a significant strength of the school; parents are glowing in their praise of the school's ethos and environment and very appreciative of all the school does to support pupils' faith journeys, 'I couldn't imagine not being part of St Monica's family where the children are at the heart of everything they do.'

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

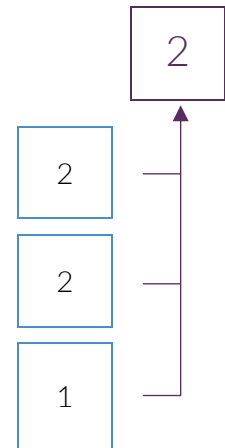
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 are developing good knowledge as measured against the learning required by the *Religious Education Directory*; however, their skills and understanding are not so secure and as a result they are not always able to speak confidently about key concepts in their learning. Pupils say they enjoy their religious education lessons, particularly when they are encouraged to make connections between their experiences and what they have learned; one pupil comments, 'religious education lessons make me think, they remind me that everyone is invited to the Kingdom of God.' They also enjoy opportunities to discuss important issues, for example pupils showed their understanding of justice by making links between justice and injustice in their own lives. Pupils are consistently helped by their teachers to make links to prior learning at the beginning of their lessons, but misconceptions identified are not always corrected. Pupils are becoming more religiously literate through good questioning in some classes and the provision of some opportunities for reflection. Pupils generally work well independently and concentrate appropriately, however at times they work passively and need to be given more opportunities to use their initiative and work with greater independence. Pupils take pride in and value the work in their religious education books and the standard of presentation is good. The school's marking and feedback practices support pupils in knowing what they need to do to improve but this is not yet consistent across the school. Pupils' attainment is good when compared to other core subjects.

Through access to a wide range of training and the support of a dedicated subject leader, teachers are becoming more confident in their subject knowledge and more effective in their delivery of religious education. Staff appreciate the support they are given, and as one member of staff comments, 'New leadership has strengthened the teaching and understanding in both staff and children.' Teachers are deeply committed to teaching religious education and

understand its significance in developing pupils' spiritual and moral development. Staff planning is thorough but needs to be firmly linked to the assessment of pupils' prior learning so that misconceptions can be addressed, leading to more secure learning. Teachers' questioning is good but is not consistent across all phases and so opportunities are sometimes missed to embed and extend learning. Pupils' behaviour is always good and relationships between pupils and adults are warm and affirming. Staff use a wide range of good quality resources, including the very effective use of technology, to enhance provision. The attractive learning environment within classrooms enriches experiences for all pupils. Parents recognise the quality of provision for religious education, 'We are thrilled with how the Catholic faith is taught...it is respectful and inclusive of difference.'

Leaders and governors are passionate in their promotion of provision in religious education; they ensure the curriculum is faithful to the requirements of the *Religious Education Directory* and has full parity with other core curriculum subjects. Good quality resources, such as new bibles and beautiful artefacts for prayer focal areas, enhance provision and demonstrate the high priority given to resourcing religious education. Leaders and governors are committed to supporting all staff in their continuing professional development. The recently appointed headteacher, who leads religious education, has a clear vision for teaching and learning, and the quality of her leadership is recognised by all members of the community. Leaders and governors are excited about change and eagerly embrace all new initiatives but monitoring and evaluation processes of religious education need to be more rigorous to evaluate impact.

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

1

2

Pupils respond well to the opportunities for prayer and reflection which are part of everyday life at St Monica's. They say they enjoy preparing and leading times of prayer; one pupil comments, 'Tomorrow I'm leading prayer, I feel special.' Pupils value times of prayer and are reverent and respectful when participating. They particularly enjoy saying their beautiful school prayer which was composed by pupils and the headteacher. Reflective and contemporary music enrich times of prayer and help pupils reflect on what God is saying to them, as seen at a whole school gospel assembly reflecting on the Ten Lepers. Pupils understand the variety of ways of praying and are familiar with scripture, meditation, and the importance of symbols and responses within prayer and liturgy. Pupils are learning to relate their prayer to their own lives. For example, a younger pupil says during reflection time, 'It made me feel that God is with me.' Pupils are becoming more confident in planning and leading prayer. For example, a group of older pupils skilfully link the story of the Good Samaritan to Anti-Bullying Week, however practice is not yet embedded across the school.

The parish priest considers St Monica's to be, '...a source of inspiration...there is a very good prayer tradition within the school.' Gathering in prayer is central to pupils' everyday experiences. There are well-established daily prayer routines, and a well-planned calendar of liturgies agreed between school and parish, including weekly opportunities to attend Mass and the Rosary. Much time and thought has been given to the compilation of beautiful prayer booklets to teach traditional prayers and ensure there is progression across the school. Some staff are becoming more confident in supporting pupils to plan and lead thoughtful experiences of prayer and liturgy, with senior staff being very good role models. However, practice is not consistent and is an area to develop. The use of scripture is prioritised within prayer and liturgical celebration and pupils respond reverently to the proclaiming of the gospel using appropriate responses. Prayer

spaces within classrooms and the dedicated prayer room are beautifully created, reflecting the significance of the liturgical calendar and celebrating pupils' work. School has begun to develop a prayer garden, and pupils are involved in its design. School works very hard to include families in the prayer life of the school and works closely with the parish to improve provision. Parents appreciate this and say, 'The school carefully plans time for worship and celebration of the word, which always has a celebration of achievement as well.'

Leaders and governors, supported by dedicated parish clergy, have a very clear vision for prayer and liturgy and have compiled a comprehensive liturgical calendar that ensures the school community has regular opportunities to celebrate together. They are outstanding role models and show a thorough understanding of Catholic tradition. The sacramental programme, led by the school, is well-structured and builds closer links with the parish and with families. The school's policy for prayer and liturgy is carefully formulated and is becoming a useful reference for staff and leaders. Governors plan to review it to ensure it supports the needs of all staff in ensuring consistency of provision in prayer and liturgy. Resources are prioritised to provide opportunities for staff and pupils to enjoy Mission days and to ensure that continuing professional development for all staff is available. Governors are kept well informed of school developments through regular meetings and reports from the link governor and senior leaders. They now need to ensure that action planning is more strategic, and the impact of actions more carefully considered.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Monica's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	111322
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8773512
Full postal address of the school	St Monica's Catholic Primary School, St Monica's Close, Appleton, Warrington, WA4 3AG
School phone number	01925267609
Headteacher	Jessica Pearson
Chair of governors	Louise Barker
School Website	www.stmonicasprimary.co.uk/
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	31 October 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Roisin Moores
Louise Conlon

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