



# St Bernadette Catholic Primary School

URN: 117489

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster

**12–13 October 2023**

## 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 curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

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

Fully

## What the school does well

- All members of the school community joyfully embrace its mission of 'learning to grow in knowledge, faith and love,' enabling pupils to be proud ambassadors for their school and living witnesses to their Catholic faith.
- The school works hard to build a strong, diverse and vibrant community where all members are valued and cherished through supportive relationships.
- Pupils demonstrate good theological understanding in religious education lessons, confidently citing scripture passages and using subject-specific vocabulary during class discussions.
- The many opportunities for prayer and reflection ensure that Christ is at the centre of the life of the school.

- The distributed leadership model within the school leadership structure and governing body supports school improvement and development in key areas.

### What the school needs to improve

- Provide specific feedback so that all pupils understand what they need to do to make progress in their learning in religious education.
- Embed Catholic Social Teaching across the school so that pupils are given opportunities to be proactive in finding ways to respond to the needs of others.
- Develop a clear strategy for building pupils' skills of participation in prayer and liturgy as they move through the school.

## 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**

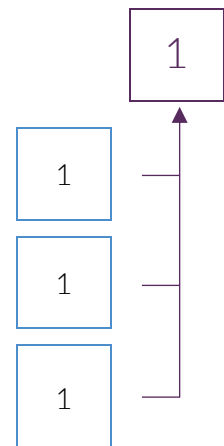
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

**Provision**

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

**Leadership**

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school



St Bernadette pupils know, understand and live the school's mission of 'Learning to grow in knowledge, faith and love, in friendship with Jesus and Mary'. They recite the mission statement proudly, with accompanying actions, during assembly. One pupil explained that the mission was 'to build a friendship and connection with Jesus'. Pupils actively participate through membership of the pupil chaplaincy team, 'Faith Friends', in order to seek opportunities to grow in virtue, pursue the common good and serve those in need. Pupils talk positively about the difference they make to their local, national and global communities, and they understand the theology underpinning their actions. Opportunities to serve include local food bank collections, CAFOD walks for hunger, singing at the local care home and fundraising for the Catholic Children's Society's Lenten appeal. One Faith Friend spoke about the need to 'share my kindness'. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and is centred around the 5 Be's: be kind, be respectful, be resilient, be motivated and be independent. Pupils can clearly express the understanding that they are made in the image and likeness of God. A Reception child was able to share the statement, 'we are unique', in a class discussion about the Sacrament of Baptism. Pupils demonstrate a deep respect for others, which is strengthened by a programme of learning about other faiths throughout the year for all pupils from Early Years to Year 6.

St Bernadette excels at being a Christ-centred school community. Parents speak warmly of the welcome provided to all families. A member of staff stated that they 'feel blessed to be part of the St Bernadette family'. Another commented that 'the ethos, aims and culture of this school are wholeheartedly underpinned by the knowledge and joy that Christ is the centre of all we do.' Staff embrace the mission of the school, which is encapsulated not only in their relationships with each other, but also in the highest levels of care and nurture they provide for all pupils,

particularly the most vulnerable. One parent reflected that her child 'loves to go to school' because the pupil 'is forever cared for and supported by the members of staff'. The school environment bears strong witness to its Catholic identity, with central displays focusing on the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, in addition to other areas, which give pupils the opportunity to write about their understanding of mission, being stewards of creation, and fulfilling God's mission for them. Welcome signs in a variety of languages are displayed throughout the school, and pupils' representations of The Holy Family around the world, celebrate the diversity of the school community. The provision for relationships, sex and health education is carefully planned and meets all statutory requirements. Pupils are able to speak confidently about their learning in this area.

Leaders and governors rightly see the school as a source of inspiration to the whole community and are highly ambitious about its contribution to the lives of the people it serves. They ensure that all policies reflect the Catholic mission of the school and have prioritised investment in this area, so that resources are targeted to support those in greatest need. The school provides support for families, as well as social and emotional support for pupils in the designated 'Hut'. Distributed leadership enables senior leaders and governors to focus on improvement in key areas. For example, there is a link governor for the Catholic life of the school, who is part of a team, which includes the link governors for religious education and collective worship. Leaders and governors work closely with the diocese, attending training and working in close partnership, in order to enthusiastically respond to diocesan policies and initiatives. Leaders and governors recognise the parish as being central to the Catholic life of the school, and they are committed to developing a flourishing partnership. The school has a vibrant parent engagement strategy comprising newsletters, the school website and information on social media, ensuring that parents are kept well-informed about key events in the Catholic life of the school. The leadership team are committed to the principles of Catholic Social Teaching. Staff speak unwaveringly about the highest levels of pastoral care which are offered. One staff member stated, 'I was made to feel welcome and I was treated as a valued member of the team.' Another staff member spoke of the supportive induction programme and the staff handbook which provided a strong explanation of the parts of the Mass.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

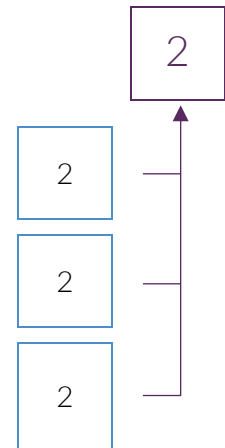
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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 secure knowledge, understanding and skills in religious education, reflecting the learning required by the *Religious Education Directory*. The FFB (four from before) strategy is used effectively at the beginning of each lesson in order to revisit prior learning. Pupils demonstrate a good knowledge of scripture, which is integral to lessons. Older pupils are able to analyse and compare Bible passages. Pupils' behaviour during lessons is good and they enjoy learning in the subject. They can relate learning in lessons to their own lives. A Year 1 pupil was able to explain that we receive the Eucharist 'to remind us that God is always near us.' Pupils can use subject-specific vocabulary seamlessly during class discussions. They are able to work both collaboratively and independently, ensuring good progress. Effective adult support and good visual resources are used so that all groups are given the help they need to achieve success. Achievement in religious education is at least as good as in other core subjects. Creative learning methods enhance pupils' engagement and allow them to explore their learning through a variety of media including art, music, drama, and dance. Pupils are very proud of their religious education books and can recall their learning over time.

Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge, and they value the influence religious education has on the moral and spiritual development of pupils. Pupils are regularly led into periods of reflection as part of their lessons, and they value these opportunities. As a result of regular professional development, through diocesan courses and support from the religious education subject leader, teachers have grown in confidence in delivering the scheme of work's content. Scripture is used as a focus in lessons and pupils are encouraged to link its message to their daily lives. Teachers' skilful questioning encourages pupils to delve deeper into their theological understanding to maximise learning. Pupils' books are well-presented and are a testament to the use of creativity in the lessons. Pupils are also given many opportunities to

explore their learning through extended writing. Dedicated spaces for reflection and prayer, available in the classrooms, throughout the school, and on the school grounds, promote pupils' independent reflection. Pupils' achievements are celebrated in whole-school assemblies, and their work is proudly displayed in classrooms and corridors. One parent commented, 'The school has nurtured, shaped and developed their understanding of all that embodies their faith.' Although pupils can talk about their work in religious education, they are not yet able to articulate what they need to do to improve their work in the subject.

Leaders and governors have ensured that the religious education programme faithfully delivers the curriculum set out in the Directory. They have ensured that religious education enjoys a parity with the other core subjects in terms of staff training, resources, and accommodation. The religious education subject leader ably supports staff in planning and delivering the scheme of work so that, over time, sustained improvement in the quality of teaching and learning has occurred. Staff speak appreciatively of the generous support and the 'open-door' policy provided by the subject leader and co-headteachers. Thorough planning sessions secure coherence across the ages and phases of learning. Through carefully planned lessons, additional adults in class are highly effective in supporting vulnerable pupils to achieve. In speaking about their religious education lessons, older pupils express that they are 'thankful for the opportunities to grow closer to God'. Action plans are shared with governors so that priorities are implemented, and the impact analysed. The link governor for religious education visits the school regularly, providing a clear and strategic vision for development, and appropriate support and challenge. Regular monitoring by the school leaders and link-governor results in accurate self-evaluation which leads to good outcomes for pupils.

## 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

2

2

Pupils engage reverently during daily prayer times and in moments of quiet reflection. A range of ways of praying are offered to pupils, including meditation, silence, reflection, as well as spontaneous and traditional prayer. A class 'prayer bear' is sent home with younger pupils to encourage family prayer. Older pupils value using prayer journals during reflections to foster a deeper personal relationship with God. Scripture is central to prayer and is used meaningfully to deepen pupils' experience of prayer. Appropriate liturgical music is chosen during liturgies to provide a calm, prayerful atmosphere. Pupils' singing is of a high standard; they readily and enthusiastically sing hymns which complement liturgies. The school has recently engaged with the National Schools Singing programme through the diocese, as part of their plan to develop the prayer life of the school. Prayer spaces are provided both in the classrooms and in the prayer garden. Each class has a prayer book where pupils' individual prayers are offered and shared with peers. Throughout the year, pupils participate in prayer linked to the liturgical year. The rosary is recited in the prayer garden during the months of October and May. Mass is celebrated on feast days and holy days during the liturgical year. Pupils enthusiastically participate in the celebration of Mass. One parent commented that school Masses are a 'joy' to attend. Pupils work well with others, such as teachers and other pupils, to prepare and lead prayer and liturgy sessions. Whole-school acts of worship are a testament to the school's Catholic identity and mission.

The school is a prayerful community. Prayer supports and nourishes all members of the school and pupils speak about feeling 'privileged' to have the many opportunities offered for prayer each day. Designated prayer areas provide a focus for prayer in each class. During a Year 2 liturgy celebrating God's love, a pupil shared, 'Jesus helps us spread love through the world'. A Year 6 pupil spoke positively about starting the day with a reflection to music on the question, 'What do

you want to ask God's help with today?' Pupils have a good knowledge of their daily prayers, and prayer times are a cherished part of the school's daily life. The school community works hard to recognise the wider Church family and, through its prayer life, helps pupils to develop a deeper understanding of the Gospel message and the call to serve. The co-headteacher, with members of the Faith Friends, leads a weekly whole-school liturgy which focuses on embedding the message from the Sunday Gospel. Music is central to prayer and liturgy and pupils are eager to contribute their gifts. The school works with the local parish priest to ensure that pupils participate in the breadth and richness of Catholic tradition. Staff are excellent role-models for pupils, participating fully, with reverence and commitment, in the prayer life of the school.

Leaders and governors ensure that pupils in the school are offered a wide range of high-quality, meaningful experiences of prayer and worship. Leaders support staff to lead appropriate prayer and worship through clear guidance in the collective worship policy. Diocesan resources using the four elements (gather, word, response, mission) are used to plan and prepare liturgies, encouraging pupils to 'go forth' in action as followers of Christ. Leaders and governors ensure that the school calendar reflects significant dates in the liturgical calendar, resulting in a wealth of opportunities for pupils to celebrate the Eucharist, in particular on holy days and feast days. Parents are welcome to attend assemblies, liturgies and Masses. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered at key times in the liturgical year, in particular during Advent and Lent. Governors prioritise a generous budget for resources, for developing prayer areas, and for providing professional development for all staff. Resources are effectively allocated to ensure staff are able to develop and deliver high quality experiences of prayer and liturgy. Leaders and governors prioritise the formation of staff. Staff are given the opportunity to attend relevant diocesan courses, deanery meetings and moderation days. As a result, staff are competent in leading prayer and liturgy in the classroom and in whole-school worship. Speaking about the impact of prayer and liturgy on the pupils, a parent commented, 'The school has nurtured, shaped and developed their understanding of all that embodies their faith.' Leaders, including governors, now need to develop a strategy to build pupils' skills of participation in prayer and liturgy as they progress through the school.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Bernadette Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	117489
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9193416
Full postal address of the school	St Bernadette Catholic Primary School, Walsingham Way, London Colney, St Albans, AL2 1NL
School phone number	01727822489
Headteacher	Sandra Lavelle-Murphy / Jodie Reilly
Chair of Governors	Catherine Turton
School Website	<a href="http://www.stbernadette.herts.sch.uk">http://www.stbernadette.herts.sch.uk</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	N/A
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	February 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good/ Outstanding

## The inspection team

Norah Flatley  
Christine Curtis

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