



# St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School

URN: 103460

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Birmingham

26–27 June 2024

## Summary of key findings

### Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

#### 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

#### Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

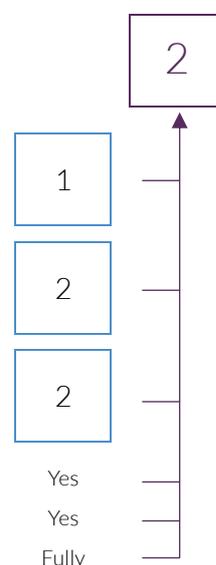
#### Collective worship (p.7)

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

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

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



## What the school does well

- St Bernadette's is a welcoming and inclusive community where there is a strong sense of family, deeply rooted in Gospel teaching.
- The committed religious education leader, supported by the head teacher, has a clear vision for teaching and learning demonstrated through the good standard of teaching in the subject.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school is exemplary because they have a secure understanding of how to enact Christian values.
- Pupils enjoy their religious education lessons; they engage well and are dedicated to improving their knowledge, understanding and skills.

- All staff are exemplary role models and have a loving and nurturing approach. Consequently, pupils are happy, confident, and proud to be part of the St Bernadette's family.

### What the school needs to improve

- Consistently provide challenge for pupils with higher prior attainment in religious education, which enables them to make progress swiftly.
- Support pupils in using creative and reflective prayer forms when planning, preparing, and leading their own prayer services.
- Ensure all subject leaders work together so that the whole curriculum is taught through a Catholic lens.

## 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

There is an inclusive and welcoming Catholic culture at St Bernadette's driven by the school motto, 'Learn to love, love to learn', which is understood, and lived out by the whole community. Pupils understand it well because it is well-known and used daily. There is a strong sense of belonging because of the welcome that leaders, governors, and staff have established, reflecting the teaching of Christ. Relationships between all within the school community are strong and are based on the authentic belief that Christ is at the heart of the community. Pupils feel happy and valued at school because they know that God has created them in his image and likeness. They have a well-developed sense of respect for themselves and for those of other faiths. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary in lessons and throughout the school, with the utmost care given to all. Pupils speak confidently and have a strong understanding of how they are called to enact Christ's moral code through the many works of mercy that they undertake. For example, the mini vinnies are proactive in raising funds for Rwanda involving schools within the diocese in their campaign, alongside supporting pupils in school who are poorly, national charities, such as Macmillan, and global charities, such as supporting those in Ukraine. Pupils say, 'If we have a concern, we take action.' Pupils speak with passion about such opportunities to witness their faith in practical ways and of the Catholic social teaching themes they have learnt about.

Christ is at the centre of St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School, where there are strong relationships that secure a strong culture of welcome. Staff are excellent role models. Because of this, pupils see Gospel values lived out each day, such as respect for the dignity of the human person, patience, and compassion. Parents have high praise for the staff's approachability and the warm, joyful, and supportive welcome they receive. Pastoral care is exceptionally strong. The parish's religious sister, who volunteers in school, is highly effective in her work with pupils, staff,

and parents to promote their well-being. Attractive displays of pupils' work, artwork, statues and outdoor spaces create a stunningly prayerful and spiritual environment which clearly reflects the uniqueness of all within the school community. The school has an embedded scheme for teaching pupils about relationships, which is well-planned and faithful to the teachings of the Church.

Leaders and governors and the dedicated parish priest are deeply committed to promoting the Church's mission. They are inspirational and passionate in their work and constantly support everyone, resulting in a community firmly rooted in its mission and faith. They are highly effective in evaluating the school's Catholic life and mission because of their visits to school and the tasks that they undertake such as 'ethos walks' and therefore know the school's strengths and areas for improvement well. They are meticulous in ensuring staff receive high-quality training and induction so that the Catholic life and mission of the school are consistently strong. Staff highly value the attention leaders give their physical and mental well-being, resulting in a happy team at St Bernadette's. The school serves the parish well and is supported by the parish priest who is highly valued and respected by the school community. Close collaboration with the parish ensures strong sacramental preparation and supports parents as the primary educators of their children. Governors' high expectations and aspirations are reflected in the quality of Catholic life and mission, evaluating effectively with rigour, analysis and targeted improvement. Leaders' and governors' next steps are to develop a Catholic lens across the whole curriculum.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

**Pupil outcomes**

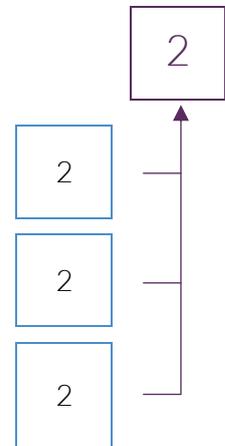
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

**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



Attainment in religious education is good and has been sustained over time. Pupils' knowledge, understanding, and skills are developing securely because lessons follow the planned scheme of work. Pupils demonstrate and articulate good prior knowledge confidently because teachers ensure that this is planned for and recapped in lessons. As a result, most pupils' progress in knowing more and remembering more is good, as reflected in the work recorded in their exercise books. Pupils enjoy their religious education lessons and are motivated and engaged, resulting in exemplary behaviour despite the slow pace in some lessons. Pupils can competently reflect on the impact of religious belief on everyday life due to the effective links with Catholic social teaching in their religious education lessons. Religious vocabulary is clearly explained, and pupils are developing a secure knowledge of this. Pupils with additional needs are nurtured and inclusively integrated into all learning activities with appropriate scaffolding and adaptations to help them be successful learners. Pupils are able to articulate how well they are doing in religious education, and they know what they need to improve because of the quality of the feedback given to them.

Teachers value religious education and communicate this well to pupils. There is a clear commitment to high expectations. Teachers' subject knowledge is good, meaning they impart knowledge confidently to pupils. Teachers have effective questioning skills, but the higher prior attaining pupils are not always sufficiently targeted in a way that helps them to think more deeply in their verbal and written responses. There are links in all lessons to prior learning, helping pupils to access new learning. Lessons are planned and structured in a consistent manner across the school; however, planning to extend knowledge and skills for those working at greater depth is not yet developed meaning that these pupils are not appropriately challenged in their religious education lessons. Teaching is almost always good because staff receive training relating to

teaching and learning, and they feel confident and supported to teach the subject. Well-chosen resources support engagement, participation, and promote learning. Teachers understand the impact religious education has on pupils' moral and spiritual development, but time is not always given for deeper reflection in lessons. Celebration of effort is evident in books but is not routinely shared with the school community or with parents.

Leaders and governors ensure staff receive regular high-quality training, enabling a good provision of religious education. The school uses the diocese strategy to ensure good coverage of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. This also ensures leaders organise the curriculum so that pupils build on their prior learning. The subject leader has a powerful vision for religious education in the school and is inspirational in her aims for all pupils. Due to her detailed approach and evaluation and the development of the subject, the approach to teaching across the school is consistent and well-understood by teachers. The curriculum is designed to meet the needs of most pupils, though explicit attention to planning for the rapid progress of pupils with higher prior attainment is not yet present. The religious education link governor supports school leaders, ensuring appropriate support and challenge to contribute to the subject's development. Governors ensure that religious education has parity with other core subjects concerning staffing and resourcing; they are actively involved in monitoring classroom timetables to ensure the school always complies with the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales requirements. There are opportunities for pupils to engage in enrichment activities that enhance the school's delivery of the religious education curriculum such as residential to Alton Castle.

## 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

1

**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 at St Bernadette's are incredibly respectful and participate well in prayer. Their engagement is authentic with all pupils demonstrating deep reverence, particularly in the celebration of Mass. During Mass, pupils confidently and enthusiastically undertake ministries, including altar serving, reading, and joyful singing. The pupils, alongside key staff, have composed music for parts of the sung Mass which they have taken ownership of. All pupils are active in prayer and fully participate in it; this reflects the Catholic character of St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School. Pupils fully understand their role when they are given the opportunity to lead liturgies and undertake these confidently and with skill. Pupils evaluate the quality of prayer and liturgy and know how to improve it. For example, pupils decided to change the 'gather' arrangements when leading prayer and liturgy about the 'Good Samaritan' to depict the road the traveller walked along. This creativity is slowly emerging in moments of prayer across the school but is not yet fully realised. Pupils can articulate the messages they encounter in prayer and understand how it makes a difference in people's lives, especially those most in need of prayer.

All classes are timetabled to attend Mass throughout the school year, in church and in school, and enjoy their experience of it. The school calendar allows for pupils to have some opportunity to plan, prepare, and lead prayer and liturgy with the support of their teachers each half term, with themes linked to the liturgical year. However, pupils' experiences in preparing prayer are limited because it does not happen frequently enough, due to inconsistencies in opportunities available between different classrooms. Scripture is used well throughout the school; passages used in prayer and worship are always well selected and seasonally relevant, which helps pupils to engage and make relevant links. Remembrance was one occasion which provided parents with the opportunity to join classes for 'stay and pray' and be involved in the prayer life of the

school. Parents say they would welcome more opportunities to gather with the pupils in prayer. There is a progression of traditional prayers taught across the classes which pupils know well. Staff are confident and capable of supporting pupils to plan and lead prayer and worship, but older pupils are now ready to do this independently. There are beautiful prayer spaces in each classroom and around the school with Bibles, statues, and relevant religious artefacts prominently displayed. Appropriate liturgical music is used to good effect, though other ways of making prayer creative are not routinely modelled to pupils, who subsequently struggle to introduce such elements into the prayers they prepare.

The school's prayer and liturgy policy is helpful to staff and clear in its expectations. Leaders and governors always ensure that sacramental and liturgical celebrations, holy days of obligation, and patron feast days are prioritised in their planning. However, there are inconsistencies in the provision of opportunities for all pupils to prepare and lead prayer and liturgy. Pupils are clear about the structure of prayer and can clearly describe the different components of gathering, listening, responding and going forth. All staff have the opportunity to lead prayer and worship, but these often turn into question-and-answer sessions rather than an encounter of God's presence in a truly reflective and meaningful way. Whilst staff experience a range of ways of praying through training, they have yet to experience a wider variety of prayer types including meditation and quiet reflection which they can then implement into the classroom. Governors monitor and evaluate the provision of prayer and liturgy through their visits and the reports they receive from leaders; they ensure that prayer is appropriately resourced, as seen in classroom resources and prayer spaces.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	103460
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	330 3372
Full postal address of the school	Hob Moor Road, Yardley, Birmingham, B25 8QL
School phone number	0121 783 7232
Headteacher	Angela Cowings
Chair of governing board	John Lenihan
School Website	www.stberns.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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	March 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

## The inspection team

Rebecca Nash	Lead
Joe Bridgewater	Team
Sarah Laskey	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