



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Francis RC Primary School, Gorton, Manchester

URN105529

Carried out on behalf of the **Right Rev. John Arnold, Bishop of Salford** on:

Date:28-29 June 2023

Overall effectiveness The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....	3
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.....	3
Religious education (p.5) The quality of curriculum religious education.....	3
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	✓
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	Partially

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- St. Francis is a warm and welcoming Catholic community. It is highly inclusive and all members of the community are valued as unique individuals.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are mutually supportive and give daily expression to gospel values.
- Pupil led classroom prayer and liturgy is a key strength. Pupils fully participate and are able to engage with sacred scripture, relate this to their own lives and thoughtfully evaluate classroom worship.
- Leaders are realistic about the challenges the school faces and express a determination to succeed and provide an authentic and effective Catholic education for all.

Please write three bullet points picking out the school's main strengths.

What the school needs to improve:

- Develop a rigorous and transparent whole school self-evaluation process that involves all leaders and stakeholders.
- Leaders should ensure that previous formation is more consistently implemented in lessons and across all year groups so that all pupils experience a varied and creative, high quality religious education curriculum.
- Develop a more coherent and progressive religious education curriculum to enable all pupils to become more fully religiously literate.
- Extend further the work of pupil chaplains, CARITAS ambassadors, and all pupils to enable them to more comprehensively express their love and care for “the common good” and “our common home.”

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:.....	3
Pupil outcomes The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school	2
Provision The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school	3
Leadership How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school	3

Children value the Catholic identity of the school. Pupils recognise their own self-worth as members of God’s family. Most children behave well in class and around the school and where this is not the case leaders are taking action to raise expectations around behaviour. Pupils possess a growing understanding of Catholic Social Teaching thanks to recent engagement with CARITAS and others. They are bursting with ideas and enthusiasm to get involved so that they can help others less fortunate than themselves, both locally and overseas. Pupils took great pride in explaining how they had raised money for victims of the earthquake disaster in Turkey and Syria this year. The new leadership team is developing the role of the pupil chaplains. Whilst pupil chaplains and CARITAS ambassadors are proud of their role, for example raising money for Mary’s Meals, the scope and variety of social justice actions by pupils requires further extension.

Staff know and value the school’s mission statement. However, new leaders recognise this is a time to renew and refresh this expression of the school’s core values so that all staff are fully united and committed to achieving the highest possible standard of Catholic life for the benefit of all in the school community. The school is at the heart of this community and is highly valued by parents. School provides a warm home to a diverse and sometimes vulnerable families and its approach is truly inclusive. Staff, whilst in need of further formation, always act as role models for others and provide a high standard of pastoral care, especially to those most in need. The physical environment is undergoing a “facelift” and this will provide opportunities for leaders to more overtly express the

Catholic nature of the school. Chaplaincy, though established, needs further development. School delivers a relationships, sex and health education in line with diocesan guidelines.

Leaders, including governors are enthusiastic and determined to promote the Catholic life of the school. Parish links are strong and engagement with the diocese improving. School works harmoniously with parents to support and educate their children and to bring them to know themselves as children of God. Staff feel that they are appreciated, cared for and valued. Leaders recognise that an updated approach to their delivery of the religious education curriculum is required and they are currently working on this. It is further recognised that more systematic monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of their work is needed. Self-evaluation requires further development to ensure that an effective improvement plan is rapidly formulated and implemented. Staff value the training opportunities offered to them, for example the visitor from Caritas provided information and creative ideas to engage pupils. However, professional development needs careful planning to support the overall needs of the school, the staff and the governing body.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

3

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

2

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

3

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....

3



In most lessons observed pupils were motivated and engaged with their learning. Children clearly enjoy the religious education lessons. Book scrutiny evidence, floor books and talking to pupils provides more evidence that many pupils are making some progress – they know and remember more. Stronger classroom practice seen includes skillful teacher questioning that probes and extends pupils’ religious knowledge and thinking. Pupils’ use of correct religious vocabulary is improving. Occasionally, pupils’ misconceptions are not picked up quickly enough. Presentation of work in religious education books, whilst similar to other core subjects, is not yet good enough and high standards seen in some books should be shared across all year groups. The in class support and challenge for different attainment groups was limited in lessons seen. Books demonstrate that assessment is taking place but this needs further embedding and refining so that more forensic assessment leads to more precisely targeted challenge and support for different attainment groups within classes.

School has chosen to use *The Way, The Truth and The Life* scheme and teachers stick closely to this and children were using this textbook in all lessons seen. However, an over reliance on one scheme/resource has tended, in some classes, to limit the creativity and pedagogic choices teachers make. Teachers’ planning follows the scheme of work but does not always use ongoing formative assessment to inform pupils of next steps in learning and so provision in lessons, is not always as precisely targeted as it could be to move learners on. Inconsistencies in the implementation of the agreed marking policy were noticeable when looking at books. Teachers do plan in reflection time to ensure the spiritual and moral dimension of learning is not lost. Teachers support pupils to relate scripture and other knowledge content to their own lives and how this can and does present them

with moral choices to make in everyday life. The quality and variety of resources used in lessons, whilst adequate, requires further investment over time.

Leaders have chosen to follow *The Way, The Truth and The Life* curriculum. Leaders have ensured that religious education remains a priority and has parity with other core subjects. However, consistency of implementation of this curriculum is variable and leaders need to monitor, and where necessary provide more bespoke training to staff to ensure all pupils, in all classes, benefit from high quality religious education lessons. Leaders are developing strategies to ensure full access to the curriculum for vulnerable groups like special educational needs pupils and also build into lessons regular retention activities. These are at an early stage of development. In the past governors have been too ready to accept information provided at face value and not challenge and interrogate this data. Recently governance has been strengthened so that this challenge as well as support is now in place. Leaders, including governors need to build on this firm basis and use detailed assessment and monitoring evidence to self-evaluate the quality of curriculum religious education and use this to plan future school improvement actions.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

2

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

Over a number of years, pupils have been supported and challenged to develop the quality and variety of collective worship. This is reflected in the exceptionally high quality of prayer and liturgy observed during the inspection process. Pupils of all ages are knowledgeable and can confidently describe the Church's liturgical year and articulate how this influences the liturgical and prayer life of the school. Pupils are highly engaged and fully participate in prayer and liturgy in all classes. They are empowered to lead these sessions and do so with passion, creativity and reverence. They select appropriate scripture, present this thoughtfully and link it back to their own lives. They use music, art, drama, symbols and silence to enhance this experience for all. They pray for themselves, their classmates and families and for those further afield and this sharing of intentions is generous, genuine and heart-felt. Children are experienced and highly skilled when critically self-evaluating prayer and worship sessions.

School leaders have ensured that each school day is framed by prayer and liturgy. These reflect the church's liturgical calendar, the religious curriculum scheme and significant days specific to the school such as the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi. Staff and children make effective use of traditional prayers from the Catholic tradition and in some classes, more innovative prayer and liturgy are used to enrich and fully engage all participants. Scripture is used often, is selected with care by both pupils and staff and is central to prayer and liturgy. Staff, including non-Catholic staff have benefitted from formation and are fully committed to the prayer life of the school. Staff act as good role models to others. The parish priest provides a weekly drop-in prayer session for staff, which is well attended. The best prayer and liturgy sessions utilise effectively music and other art forms and this best practice needs sharing across the school. Whilst there are prayer tables in each classroom and a prayer space outside, as yet the school lacks a dedicated, richly resourced prayer

room within the school building. Parents spoke highly of the prayer life of the school and they value this greatly.

Leaders are committed to developing the prayer life of the school and have worked hard to upskill others and provide guidance and support. Staff value this support. The school has a progression grid that sets out some basic expectations relating to levels of pupil participation. This valuable resource would be made even more useful for staff if it was supplemented with additional detail and real examples drawn from established practice in school. The school calendar sets aside opportunities to celebrate the Eucharist. For example, during the inspection children and staff attended mass to celebrate the feast day of SS Peter and Paul. This was a joyful occasion. The contribution of Father Kevin is highly valued, in particular weekly masses and weekly sessions in school with both staff and pupils. Governors recognise and are committed to their role as guardians of the Catholic life of the school. Going forward they recognise the importance of prayer and liturgy and are committed to supporting the head teacher to securing further improvements.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St. Francis RC Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	105529
Full postal address of the school	Ellenbrook Close, Gorton, M12 5LZ
School phone number	0161 2233457
Name of head teacher or principal	Mrs Lynn Elder
Chair of governing board	Acting Co-Chairs Pat Jones/Christine Maymon
School Website	https://stfrancismanchester.com/
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Trustees	Salford Diocese
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	June 2015
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

David Deane OBE	Lead inspector
Susan Lyonette	Team inspector
Name of inspector	Lead/team
Name of inspector	

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