

# St Catherine's Catholic Primary School, Penrith

URN: 151052

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Lancaster

03–04 October 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

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

2

## What the school does well

- St Catherine's is a fully inclusive school where children are happy, feel safe and are supported pastorally alongside their families.
- Pupils are proud to belong to their school. Their participation in school life is a strength of the school. Behaviour is exemplary and pupils show respect for each other and for the adults in school.
- There are effective and productive relationships between home, school, and parish where the children and families benefit.
- The strong vision of leaders has guided the school through changing times and circumstances.
- Parents are very supportive and appreciate and work with school staff to allow their children to flourish.

## What the school needs to improve

- To involve staff, governors, parents, and pupils collaboratively in the self-evaluation process.
- For pupils to know how well they are doing in religious education and what they need to do to improve to ensure further progress.
- To develop progression in skills to enable pupil leadership of prayer and liturgy throughout 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

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

Pupils at St Catherine's Catholic Primary School play an active role in the Catholic life of the school; they are engaged and positively share their faith and embrace the distinctive identity. Pupils are happy, confident, and secure. They show great respect for one another and feel valued. This is appreciated by the parents interviewed. One parent said: 'the school is like a family and each pupil is loved and cared for.' Behaviour of pupils is exemplary during lessons and throughout the school day.

Pupils show determination to answer Pope Francis' call to make a difference in the world as shown by the choices they make. The school has a strong tradition of supporting local, national, and global charities, including food banks, the Samaritan Shoe Box Appeal and Cafod. Pupils link and communicate with a school in Zambia.

The Parish Priest is dedicated to the development of faith in the community, ensuring that Christ is at the centre of school life. He provides weekly support and nurtures the spiritual life of staff, pupils, and families.

The life and mission of the school are deeply rooted in the Word of God. The school excels in being a community based on Catholic tradition and practice. Staff enthusiastically participate in, and contribute to, activities that reflect the life and mission and the service it offers to the local community. Examples include working with Penrith community gardeners, and the choir singing at local care homes. The school is fully inclusive of all faiths and cultures, going the extra mile to provide an exceptionally supportive and joyful community. Staff are exemplary role models, providing love and pastoral care.

St Catherine's school mission is clearly displayed and visible to all, both outside and around the school building. High-quality displays reflect the liturgical year, including the weekly Gospel message and value of the week. These are lived out and celebrated daily in school. A display states that: 'We are all stewards of God's creation,' a quote inspired by the papal encyclical '*Laudato Si*'. Dedicated prayer spaces, within classrooms and around the school are well resourced and looked after.

Governors and leaders exercise their duty as guardians of the Catholic life and mission with diligence and care. Policies and procedures clearly reflect the priority given to the Catholic identity and mission of the school. Leaders and governors promote the bishop's vision in the diocese, responding to all diocesan policies and initiatives. The school recently joined Mater Christi Multi Academy Trust. A strength of the school is its flourishing partnership with the parish which is central to the Catholic life and mission of the school. This is evidenced in the school's website. The parish priest is a regular visitor to school and members of the parish speak highly of the school's work in the mission of the Church. The school engages well with parents, supporting them and inviting them to liturgies, both sacramental and non-sacramental, in school and church, empowering them in their vocation.

Policies and procedures are in place showing a high level of pastoral care for staff. There is a clear commitment to their physical and mental wellbeing. Opportunities have been taken across the full breadth of the curriculum to ensure choices that reflect the richness of Catholic contributions to culture.

Governors are highly ambitious for the Catholic life and mission of the school and lead by example. They offer challenge and support where necessary. They are passionate, have high levels of expertise and are organised and thorough in their work. Self-evaluation is a target for development, involving all stakeholders in a collaborative process. The induction of new staff is outstanding. They are supported by experienced staff, through formal and informal coaching models.

Teaching with regard to relationships, sex and health education and the delivery of the *Religious Education Directory* meets both diocesan and statutory requirements.

## 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

2

#### Provision

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

2

#### Leadership

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

1

2

Pupils have a secure knowledge, understanding and skills and school are in the process of introducing the *Religious Education Directory*, using relevant resources, and training. Good progress is being made across all year groups from very low baseline assessments. Pupils are able to articulate their religious knowledge well and they do this with confidence and skill. Their knowledge of scripture was impressive throughout the key stages. For example, in a class 2 lesson observed during inspection pupils were familiar with, and enthusiastic about, many Bible stories involving animals. A year 6 pupil demonstrated that they could work creatively and independently, taking inspiration from St Paul and using his example in society today.

Pupils spoke with inspectors about how they enjoy learning in religious education. Observations in lessons validated this expression where excellent behaviour led to positive engagement in their learning. Books show consistent outcomes and a very good standard of work. Behaviour in learning and around school is exemplary.

Attainment in religious education is higher than in other subjects and demonstrates consistency over time. Teachers are confident in teaching religious education and have good subject knowledge and understanding about how pupils learn, especially in mixed age classes. They are committed and value the importance of religious education and work effectively together as a strong team. The previous directives and the more recent *Religious Education Directory* are used to plan lessons. Teachers use effective questioning to deepen pupils' knowledge.

Lessons are planned to engage the pupils using a variety of tasks and activities, such as bible story re-enactments, peer to peer discussions and referring to scripture to answer questions. Pupils' progress is assessed to evaluate learning and plan subsequent lessons. In one class

children formulated their own spiritual questions to lead learning in the next session. Pupils now need to consistently understand what they need to do to improve their work and make progress in their learning.

Good quality resources are used to provide a high-quality provision, and the school is well resourced. Leaders and governors ensure that the religious education curriculum is a faithful expression of both religious education directories currently used by the school.

Continuous professional development for all staff is excellent and the impact across school is very clear in all classes. The experienced subject leader has a clear vision, and she is valued by governors, staff and pupils in school. Her knowledge and expertise is very comprehensive, and she is committed and passionate about providing the pupils with the best opportunities at St Catherine's and to maximise their Catholic learning as many continue their education in schools other than those in the Catholic sector. She communicates well with other subject leaders in the local cluster, working on diocesan guidance to improve outcomes, as evidenced in external moderation of pupils' work.

Leaders ensure that lots of enrichment activities are provided to enhance religious education, including a residential for upper key stage 2 pupils to Barcaple Centre, where pupils can explore what it means to live a Christian life and follow Jesus' example through many engaging activities.

The ongoing self-evaluation, although it is in its infancy, shows potential and needs to engage all stakeholders to accurately inform governors and leaders about the areas to develop and focus on. Leaders ensure that the delivery of religious education is fully comparable with other core subjects, and this is evidenced through school policies, reporting to parents and relevant timetabling and resources.

## 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

1

#### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

2

2

Prayer and liturgy is central to the life at St Catherine's and is valued by all. From a young age, pupils respond well to experience of prayer and liturgy. They participate through respectful reflection, joining in prayer and singing enthusiastically, as witnessed throughout the inspection. Prayer and liturgy is appropriate to pupil age and stage of learning. Pupils have a rich variety of ways of praying that are part of the Catholic tradition. In the Early Years, for example, pupils knew that they light a candle to show that Jesus is the light of the world, during their prayers. In another class children chose objects to focus and support spiritual reflection. Pupils are able to recognise and talk about the ways in which prayer and liturgy influence the wider life of the school, for example praying for peace in the Ukraine and the Holy Land.

Prayer is routinely planned and is a central part of every school day, forming routine gatherings of pupils, staff, and leaders. Interviews with pupils and observations show that this daily pattern of prayer reflects the rhythm and prayer life of the church. Seasonally appropriate scripture is shared across liturgical year with the Sunday gospel of the week shared and reflected on throughout the week. Prayer bags go home regularly with children in every class and the impact on the prayer life at home shared through the digital learning platform.

Older pupils were seen leading prayer that was well-structured on the gospel message of the week. Their peers were given opportunities for individual reflection and finally a mission to go forth and be generous to the people in our families at home. All the pupils responded well and were comfortable and familiar with taking part in prayer and liturgy. Pupils demonstrated reverence and respect when reading scripture and reflecting on the impact in their lives.

All prayer and liturgy observed during the inspection was seasonally appropriate and started in a calm manner with music to gather to and reflect, which enabled everyone present to fully participate. The pupils sang well and enthusiastically during prayer and liturgy. Pupils interviewed said they enjoy prayer and liturgy and are able to discuss what they have learned. One said that prayers in school help her to feel God is with her every day. Parents, parishioners, and governors are welcomed to share in the spiritual life of the school through various services, including liturgies and Masses throughout the year. For example, they attend Harvest Mass, crib blessings and the May procession.

Leaders celebrate the uniqueness of the St Catherine's community. They understand the liturgical year and are role models to both staff and pupils. Priority is given to high quality professional development for staff and governors that is provided by the diocese. Progression in skills with formation now needs to be planned in line with the new *Prayer and Liturgy Directory*, to enable pupil leadership in prayer and liturgy throughout the school.

Leaders, including governors, have planned the school year and timetable carefully to ensure that opportunities to celebrate the Eucharist, particularly at key times in the liturgical year and at significant moments within the life of the school, including the patronal feast day in November and the recent Silver Jubilee of the Parish Priest.

The school works well with the Parish Priest and parishioners to help pupils participate more fully in the liturgy. Parishioners spoken to during the inspection were proud of the children in school and looked forward to them coming to Mass. This partnership is a strength of St Catherine's, with events shared and newsletters sent home, enabling effective communication between home, school, and parish.

Good use is made of the indoor spaces available for prayer and all classes have dedicated prayer tables. The displays in classes, outdoors and around school are of a high standard. The school provides regular opportunities for pupils to visit the parish church for the celebration of Mass and the parish priest recognises and appreciates the pupils' improved participation in the liturgy. There are plans to reintroduce the sacrament of reconciliation in Advent and Lent.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Catherine's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	151052
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9433315
Full postal address of the school	Drovers Lane, PENRITH, CA11 9EL
School phone number	01768 864612
Headteacher	Rebecca Davies
Chair of Governors	Denis Smith
School Website	<a href="http://www.st-catherines.cumbria.sch.uk">http://www.st-catherines.cumbria.sch.uk</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Mater Christi Multi-Academy Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	N/A
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	March 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	1 - Outstanding

## The inspection team

Fran Wygladala  
Claire O'Donnell

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