



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Francis Catholic Primary School

URN: 125203

Carried out on behalf of the Right Rev. Richard Moth, Bishop of Arundel & Brighton on:

Date: 04 - 05 October 2023

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The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- Under the leadership of the head teacher, the school establishes a warm and welcoming, distinctly Catholic ethos where every member of the community is valued, cared for, and feels safe. The most vulnerable are especially nurtured to ensure inclusion and equality of opportunity.
- The commitment and skill of the leadership team assures the successful implementation of the new *Religious Education Directory*. The school has capacity to complete the implementation, securing further improvements in teaching and ultimately in progress and attainment.
- Pupils are powerful ambassadors for the school and its values. They live out their school mission joyfully.

This Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection was carried out under canons 804 & 806 of the code of canon law. For maintained schools and academies in England it fulfils the statutory requirements of s.48 of the Education Act 2005. For maintained schools and academies in Wales it fulfils the statutory requirements of s.50 of the Education Act 2005.

- A rich and varied experience of prayer and liturgy engages and moves pupils and staff to be fully present participants. Music is an outstanding feature of all acts of worship.

What the school needs to improve:

- Ensure time and training is given to leaders and new governors so that the monitoring and evaluation process is consistently robust across all three areas.
- Develop pupils' understanding of Catholic Social Teaching so that pupils can clearly explain and drive forward the school community's charity work following the teaching and example of Jesus.
- Leaders to provide training and resources so that pupils prepare and lead prayer and liturgy with confidence and understanding.

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:.....

1

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

1

Leadership

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

1



Within the welcoming and inclusive environment that St Francis' school provides, all pupils feel valued and loved. They develop a strong sense of purpose which motivates them to put their mission statement into practice: 'In God's love we respect, reflect, achieve and grow together.' Even the youngest pupils have a simple understanding of how to live out their faith: 'I can be kind.' Pupils can identify ways in which they will follow, not only in the footsteps of Jesus, but in the life and work of St Francis. They eagerly accept responsibilities to care for their environment, linking this to the call of *Laudato Si*. In practical terms this includes achieving the Eco-Schools award, keeping cloakrooms tidy or even caring for the school tortoises. Pupils apply the principles of Catholic Social Teaching to activities which benefit those in need locally as well as nationally and globally. They donate harvest gifts for the local food bank and contribute to the Cafod World Gifts programme. Encouraged by the school, pupils support a wide range of charities including Missio, World Wildlife Fund, the Good Shepherd appeal and the Catholic Children's Society. In their behaviour and in their roles and responsibilities pupils demonstrate respect for themselves and each other. With maturity, pupils reflect on their school values to help them to mediate and resolve playground disputes: 'Our school values say that we have to be kind to one another and share. We just need to play together.'

All members of the school community are committed to creating a caring and safe environment. This is evidenced in positive relationships between school leaders and all members of the school community. During the inspection it was clear that pupils in the most vulnerable circumstances are especially nurtured with patience, understanding, and love. Pastoral care is prioritised. Specialist staff, in a dedicated space, teach pupils strategies to face

everyday challenges with resilience. Parents value the distinctly Catholic ethos which first attracted them to the school: 'My children have learnt to pray, hope and believe in God which the school has encouraged and supported.' Staff wellbeing is served through the 'open-door policy' of the leadership team and the friendship of peers.

The mission statement prefaces all policy documents, ensuring that in school life everything is faithful to the educational mission of the Church. The school engages positively with the diocese, through staff professional development and advisory visits as well as opportunities for pupils to join diocesan schools to celebrate together and learn from each other. The school enjoys a strong and supportive relationship with the parish priests. Pupils welcome this spiritual guidance: 'The priest comes into our class to teach us about how to live out our faith in our everyday lives.' Governors are highly visible in their support of Catholic life; they attend events regularly and discuss impact with pupils and leaders as part of their monitoring remit. Governors are confident in voicing challenge as well as support. Evidence of agreed actions to address issues raised should now be recorded in monitoring reports. The provision for relationships, health and sex education is carefully planned and resourced using the *Ten:Ten Resources* curriculum material. The school meets diocesan requirements in its implementation, endorsed by governors. Parents are consulted and invited to review teaching materials, enabling them to share in their children's learning. Pupils are involved and eager to participate in the Catholic life and mission of the school. Induction of new staff includes a clear introduction to expectations in a Catholic school with ongoing support from dedicated subject leaders and senior leadership.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

2

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



Pupils particularly enjoy those lessons which follow the new *Religious Education Directory*. The pace and content is designed to challenge and engage pupils, provoking them to think about their response to the issues raised. In Year 6 pupils considered the impact of climate change alongside Pope Francis' call to action in *Laudato Si*, resulting in their understanding that change begins with them. In the corresponding Year 1 lesson, children displayed a developing religious vocabulary, facilitated by a familiar game of 'you say, I say'. The children understood that: 'Pope Francis is in charge of all the Catholics.' In Year 5 pupils' knowledge of scripture is exceptional. They can recall and make links between different passages, easily referencing prior learning. Pupils make good progress in lessons and internal data shows attainment overall is at least as good or better than in other core subjects. Tasks need to be designed to challenge the most able pupils across all year groups and ensure engagement of all. Pupils need to know what they can do to improve their work.

Subject leaders are highly skilled and passionate about delivering high quality religious education. Supported by the head teacher, they are driving the implementation of the new curriculum content and invest time, training and resources to equip all staff with the knowledge and strategies required to plan and teach quality lessons. 'Before we begin' staff meetings, at the start of each new topic, ensure a shared understanding of the theology and content. Teachers pose probing questions and pupils are encouraged to ask and explore questions of their own. This leads to powerful insights: 'Our parents don't have favourites and neither does God, so he will never abandon us because we are all loved equally.' Lessons follow a common format, setting religious education apart from other subjects. As the candle is lit at the start of lessons, pupils know that Jesus, the light of the world, is present. They recite the mission statement and recap prior learning. The focus on creativity in lessons is enjoyed by pupils and classroom displays feature religious topic vocabulary to support teaching and learning. Time for reflection is often found through spiritual journalling practised in

many classes. Pupils enjoy this activity which allows them to respond to scripture and to their learning in a way that is personal to them.

Religious education is valued as a core subject by leaders and governors who ensure that it meets the requirements of the Bishop at every level. At least 10% of the timetable is devoted to teaching. The quality of the subject leaders is recognised by the Diocesan Education Service: they have collaborated to produce new resources for the *Religious Education Directory* and to pilot the teaching materials in Year 2. The school benefits from subject leaders' inspirational drive to excellence in teaching which leads to increased enjoyment, engagement and attainment for the pupils. Governors check the information reported by senior leaders through looking at books, visiting classrooms and talking to pupils. Judgements are based on continual assessment for learning and are validated through consultation with colleagues within the deanery.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

1

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

1

Leadership

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

2



Pupils benefit from a rich and varied range of liturgical experiences. They can be reverent and attentive and love to participate whether serving at Mass, preparing the prayer focus, reading, or singing. Music is a strength of all liturgies observed and is always interpreted through sign language. Understanding the place of prayer in the Catholic tradition is part of the daily experience for all pupils. Starting with the sign of the cross, 'the sign of God's love', pupils learn the traditional prayers of the Church and, through opportunities for silent reflection, begin to formulate personal prayers. Pupils are well used to writing prayers, for example for liturgies, their school feast day and for governors' meeting intentions. Pupils understand the rhythm of the liturgical seasons through the changing cycle of prayer during the school year; during October a well-attended rosary club is led by a member of support staff. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to monitor and evaluate prayer and liturgy and feedback to leaders and governors.

Staff ensure that prayer and liturgy is a central feature of school life. The mission statement is included almost as a prayer itself in lessons and liturgies. In contrast to the routine prayers that mark the passing of the school day, music staff teach pupils songs of prayer and praise appropriate to the liturgical season such as the hymn to Mary during October. As part of the feast day celebrations, a wide range of prayer and liturgy is introduced, including canticles and novenas during a spiritual journal session. Scripture linked to the liturgical season is part of prayer and liturgy. By upper Key Stage 2, pupils are sufficiently skilled to make links or draw on passages of scripture to illustrate debates and discussions. Senior leaders are models of good practice to staff and pupils in all aspects of creating a prayerful space and experience. This includes Godly Play as a means of further engaging and illustrating scripture for younger pupils. The dedicated prayer garden in the school grounds is a beautiful, well-resourced and easily accessible space. Strong parish partnerships mean that Mass is celebrated both in

school and in the parish church. Parents attend Mass in school and are enthusiastic to participate and celebrate their faith as a school family.

School leaders ensure that the Church's liturgical year is fully reflected in the school calendar for prayer and liturgy. Holy days of obligation and other key times are observed with Mass or a special liturgy. For example, ashes are distributed on Ash Wednesday; during Holy Week, each day is marked with a special liturgy led by a different class in turn. This culminates in the Stations of the Cross, led by the Year 6 pupils, and attended by parents and carers. The feast of St Francis is marked by a day of special activities and the celebration of Mass. This fosters pride and a deeper understanding of the school's identity and values. Governors participate in school Masses and liturgies where follow up discussions with pupils and staff support their monitoring role. Governors are included in the school's annual day of self-evaluation. This ensures the school's provision of high-quality experiences which nurture pupils' spirituality and relationship with God. Although pupils need support from school leaders to develop their confidence in leading prayer and liturgy independently, the school's comprehensive Prayer and Liturgy policy document offers clear guidance to all staff and inspiration from Pope Francis. "The Lord tells us: 'The first task in life is this: prayer.' But not the prayer of words, like a parrot; but the prayer of the heart: gazing on the Lord, hearing the Lord, asking the Lord."

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Francis
School unique reference number (URN)	125203
Full postal address of the school	Whyteleafe Road Caterham Surrey CR3 5ED
School phone number	01883 342005
Name of head teacher or principal	Maria Wheeler
Chair of governing board	Annette Flannery
School Website	www.stfrancis.surrey.sch.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Trustees	N/A
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	21 March 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	1 - Outstanding

The inspection team

Hilary Blake	Lead inspector
Sarah Norville	Team 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