



# St Aidan's Catholic Primary Academy

URN: 140295

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Brentwood

07–08 March 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

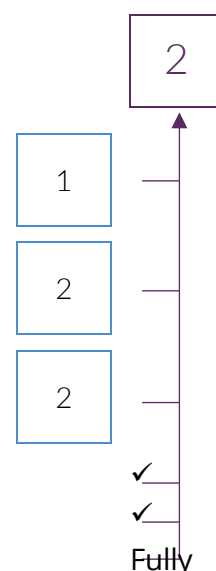
#### Collective worship (p.7)

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

- Pupils are excellent ambassadors for their school; they are enthusiastic, confident young people who love, and are proud of their school.
- The Catholic life and mission of the school is a great strength of St Aidan's. It unites the community and underpins all aspects of school life.
- There is a strong culture of welcome and inclusivity in the school. It is a warm, calm place with a palpable sense of community.
- The school's physical environment promotes the Catholic character and ethos of the school and provides pupils with a secure environment in which to grow and develop spiritually and academically.
- The principles of Catholic social teaching are firmly embedded and celebrated throughout the school.

## What the school needs to improve

- Implement the action plan for the introduction of the *Religious Education Directory* so that professional development impacts on the consistency and creativity in the teaching of religious education.
- Provide professional development opportunities for all staff to be able to support pupils in planning, leading and evaluating prayer and liturgy independently.

## 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**

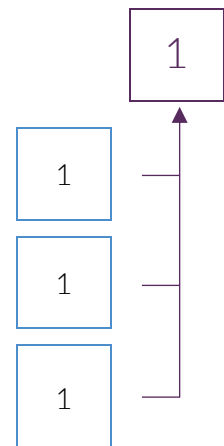
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

**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



Pupils are happy and confident; they feel safe and secure because they know they are part of a very special community. All members of the community describe St Aidan's as a family. A parent commented: 'St Aidan's is truly not just a school but a family!' Pupils know they are loved and valued as individuals made in the image and likeness of God. Enthusiastically taking on a variety of responsibilities as GIFT (Growing in Faith Together) members, house captains, mental health and well-being ambassadors, head and deputy head boys and girls, pupils have a highly developed understanding of how their actions affect the lives of others both within school and the wider community. They demonstrate real maturity and dignity alongside a desire to serve. The gardening club and woodland monitors grow food to be served in the school kitchen, donations to the local foodbank support local families and Christmas cards taken to the parish church help to make Christmas an extra special time for parishioners. Pupils are fully aware of their responsibilities towards vulnerable members of society; the principles of Catholic social teaching are firmly embedded across the school. Pupils can confidently link what they are learning in class to the principles of Catholic social teaching. During spiritual journaling sessions, pupils were easily able to identify how their learning reflected solidarity and peace whilst other pupils were able to tell the inspectors how they observed the principles of Catholic social teaching daily in the playground and around the school site. They enjoy sharing their observations with adults so that pupils can be acknowledged for their positive behaviour and attitudes. All pupils in this diverse community show a deep respect for those of other faiths. The behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school is further evidence of the love, pride and respect they have for their school and for each other.

The school mission statement is truly lived by the school community; it is well known and understood by all. Under the humble guidance of the headteacher and her senior colleagues, all staff make a significant contribution to the Catholic life and mission of the school resulting in a deeply embedded sense of community and welcome. Parents comment that the school is '...a clear example of Christ, a living testimony' and another that the school has 'a commitment to service in line with Catholic principles.' Relationships between adults and pupils are very strong with staff going the extra mile for the pupils and families in their care, providing strong role models for all. The physical environment of the school fully reflects its Catholic character and ethos; it provides pupils with a very special place in which to grow and develop spiritually and academically. Pupils' spiritual journals are added testimony to how pupils flourish in this special environment. St Aidan's has a carefully planned programme to deliver relationships, sex and health education. It meets all statutory and diocesan requirements, is firmly rooted in the teachings of the Church, and has been shared with parents.

Senior leaders are genuine witnesses to the faith; they share a common vision and clearly articulate the Church's mission in education. They are highly ambitious for the school to be the best it can be, and are unwavering in their commitment to the families they serve. Along with school leaders, governors and members of the trust board fully support staff in providing opportunities for professional development to improve their practice. Governors know the school well. The school enjoys a flourishing relationship with their local parishes and the parish priest is a frequent visitor to the school, celebrating liturgical events throughout the year and supporting teachers in delivering the curriculum. Regular newsletters keep parents fully informed of school events. The majority of parents engaging with the inspection were positive about the school, with one commenting 'The school encourages the children to let Jesus' light shine through them.'

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

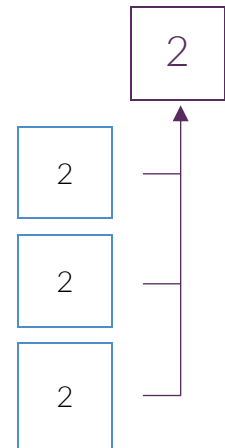
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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



The school is a widely diverse community, and most pupils enter the school with limited knowledge or understanding of the Catholic faith. They quickly develop into confident pupils, happy to contribute to religious education lessons, and consequently make good progress both within lessons, and across topics. Pupils are developing good religious literacy skills which they demonstrate successfully during discussions and written work. Pupils enjoy religious education lessons; their behaviour is excellent and promotes an atmosphere which is highly conducive to learning. Pupils have a clear understanding of how well they are doing in religious education as a result of regular and high-quality feedback from their teachers. In upper Key stage 2, pupil response to this feedback is well developed and shows the determination they have to continue to develop and deepen their understanding; younger pupils are developing this skill well because of regular support and guidance from their teachers. Pupils take pride in their religious education books; this is clearly evidenced in written work and in the respect they show by keeping them in special boxes that are then placed by the prayer area in classrooms. Pupils' achievement in the subject is good and favourably compares with that in other core subjects.

Teachers plan well-sequenced and well-resourced lessons. They have high expectations of their pupils which in turn motivates pupils to always do their best. Careful planning takes account of, and is linked to pupils' needs, so that all pupils can be successful learners. Teachers make good use of scaffolding to enable learners with special educational needs to fully access the learning. Furthermore, additional adults are deployed well; they skilfully maximise learning opportunities for those who need additional support. Teachers' questioning identifies what pupils have learnt and where they may need further explanations. Where teachers use a range of challenging questions, pupils' responses are insightful and show a good understanding of the topics that are taught. Important vocabulary is identified, explained and used effectively in most lessons and

any misconceptions are quickly discussed to ensure pupil understanding. Pupils' efforts are recognised and celebrated regularly which leads to high levels of motivation and enjoyment. Teachers provide pupils with opportunities to present their learning using a variety of forms. In one class pupils enjoyed a role-play activity to consolidate their understanding of the Offertory during Mass, whilst in another, pupils responded to a piece of art work.

School leaders, governors and members of the trust board ensure that the religious education curriculum is well planned and interwoven with the principles of Catholic social teaching. It is faithful to the requirements of the *Religious Education Directory (RED)* in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* throughout the rest of the school. They have embraced the new Directory eagerly and are now ambitious to embed it throughout the school. Leaders further ensure that religious education enjoys parity with other core subjects in terms in funding, staffing, accommodation, and time allocation. The subject leader for religious education has a clear vision for securing good teaching and learning in the subject. The subject action plan clearly demonstrates her passion for the subject and the determination to provide high quality experiences for pupils to enable them to develop as lifelong learners. Staff feel well supported by her and regularly draw on her expertise to improve their own subject knowledge and practice. Those staff who are new to the school or who are non-Catholic benefit from a well-developed induction programme. All staff benefit from in-house, trust and diocesan professional development opportunities, including assessment and moderation opportunities to ensure the accuracy of their judgements. Governors give generously of their time; they are supportive and challenging, and they know the school very well.

## 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 of all faiths engage in prayer and liturgy experiences, including dedicated moments of quiet reflection. In whole school assemblies, pupils' joy is evident through their singing, which is led by the school choir. The signing of hymns adds power to the meaning of their celebrations. From Nursery onwards, pupils are confident in making the sign of the cross as well as saying daily and traditional prayers. The use of visual representations of the actions and prayers help support pupils, especially those with special educational needs or disabilities and English as an additional language. Older children are able to respond to Gospel readings. Pupils have a good knowledge of key events during the liturgical year, and they shared how they remembered their house saints, harvest celebration and the school's patron saint. Pupils expressed that prayer helps them to help themselves and others and linked it to the importance of Catholic social teaching. A Year 1 pupil stated that, 'our spirit connects to Jesus when we light our candle. We can pray to God for everyone.' The recently formed GIFT team talked passionately about their work and how they are delivering it. They take their responsibilities very seriously and continue to work closely with staff to plan, lead and evaluate prayer and liturgy opportunities.

Prayer and liturgy are central to the daily lives of the school community and staff are committed to ensuring that pupils are provided with meaningful experiences. The scripture used in worship is well selected and seasonally relevant. Spiritual journaling is effectively used through the school to enliven pupils' faith formation. Pupils' responses range from self-written prayers, reflection on scripture to links to actions related to Catholic social teaching. Staff use diocesan-approved resources to support prayer and liturgy experiences for pupils. Older pupils are beginning to adapt these resources when delivering class liturgies. There is a whole school prayer and liturgy book where pupils respond to their liturgies, and this is shared in assembly. Pupils are beginning to reflect on these liturgies and evaluate. Focal and reflective areas and displays in classrooms

and around the school are given the highest priority and are conducive to prayer. The prayer garden is valued by pupils and staff, and is in regular use. The gardening club ensure the area is well maintained and cared for. Families are actively encouraged and invited to participate in the prayer life of the school, and they speak positively about this. The school has a thriving relationship with the parish priest.

School leaders and governors ensure that the parish and school work closely together so that the school is part of the local church's mission. The school's policy on prayer and liturgy is available to all staff and is regularly reviewed. School leaders and governors make sure that prayer and liturgy is accessible to all pupils enabling them to participate and respond at an age-appropriate level. Masses and liturgies are timetabled successfully to guarantee that pupils are offered the opportunity to receive the Eucharist, and the Sacrament of Reconciliation is available during Lent and Advent. School leaders and governors ensure that high-quality resources are made available for all when preparing celebrations and liturgies. Although the subject leader is new to role, she has a clear vision and is aware that she needs to provide continual professional development so that staff are well supported and understand how to effectively plan, lead and evaluate prayer and liturgy in class in order to model expected practice for pupils. School leaders and governors are beginning to review the impact of prayer and liturgy in the school's cycle of evaluation. The views of pupils should now be consistently sought as part of this evaluation process.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Aidan's Catholic Primary Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	140295
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3173507
Full postal address of the school	St Aidan's Catholic Primary Academy, Benton Road, Ilford, IG1 4AS
School phone number	02085905223
Headteacher	Victoria Campling
Chair of Local Governing Body	Natalie Holden
School Website	<a href="http://www.staidansacademy.org/">www.staidansacademy.org/</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	The Good Shepherd Catholic Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	N/A
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	29 <sup>th</sup> September 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

## The inspection team

Mrs Angela Podmore

Miss Isabel Quinn

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