

Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Monica's Catholic Primary School

URN: 110482

Carried out on behalf of the Right Rev. David Oakley, Bishop of Northampton on:

Date: 14-15 June 2023

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|---|-------------------------------------|
| Overall effectiveness The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school..... | 2 |
| 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..... | 1 |
| 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 | <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

- Senior leaders and governors have a clear shared vision for Catholic education and have been relentless in their drive for improvement. The mission statement is at the heart of the school.
- Scaffolding of the religious education curriculum supports pupils who have special educational needs or disability and less able pupils to make particularly strong progress.
- Staff training is extensive, well planned and thorough.
- Prayer and liturgy are integral to the life of the school and scripture is used as a matter of course.

What the school needs to improve:

- Ensure more children are attempting the most challenging tasks so that they can go beyond age related expectations.
- Develop prayer and liturgy to involve more variety in ways of praying, for example symbol, silence, meditation, and reflection.

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

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



St Monica's is a Catholic school where pupils arrive with a strong faith and this faith is nurtured to allow it to grow further. The pupils and parents strongly value this journey. This was summed up by one parent who said: "All the positive role models my son is having in this school are helping him become a great human being." Pupils are happy, confident and have a clear sense of worth. They show a deep respect for themselves and others, as shown in the way in which they involve themselves in the Restorative Behaviour system. They respond to it well and some Year 6 pupils volunteer to facilitate mediation on the playground. There are active staff and pupil chaplaincy teams which are highly valued by the pupils. The pupil chaplains are eager, enthusiastic, and initiate lots of ideas. They enjoy seeing their ideas coming to life and often lead activities. Pupils have many opportunities to take on leadership roles at St Monica's. The children regularly raise money for charities and are currently working towards the Cafod 'Live Simply' award.

The school mission statement 'let trust, respect and love live here' is visible not only in the environment but also in the way it is lived out by the school community. It is well understood by pupils, staff, and parents. The "Help not Harm" award which is given to someone who has demonstrated a commitment to the mission statement is held in high regard. The pupils also benefit from a focus on weekly values which helps them to grow in virtue. As one parent said: "St Monica's has been an inspiration to my all girls as they have been taught about the right to respect others." Pupils can identify adults who support them in times of need such as if there has been a bereavement and appreciate the level of pastoral care. There is an embedded culture of welcome and warmth in the school. St Monica's is also an extremely inclusive school.

The innovative Treehouse provision for pupils with significant special educational needs or disability should be celebrated as it is rooted in Catholic social teaching. Staff spiritual development is also given a high priority and they particularly valued a recent retreat day.

Catholic identity is at the forefront of leaders' work. The headteacher and chair of governors have a clear vision for the mission of this school. This common vision is shared by the rest of the leadership team. Leaders recognise and support parents being the first educators. They use the monthly newsletter to promote the work of the school and most especially the Catholic life of the school. St Monica's lives out the mission of the church in many ways but, in particular, by ensuring the most vulnerable pupils are included and at the forefront of all their work. Governance is a real strength of the school. Governors regularly visit the school and their incisive observations have been the catalyst for school improvement in several areas. The relationships, sex, and health education curriculum meets both statutory and diocesan requirements. There is a strong induction programme, extended more recently to new teaching assistants.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

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

1

Provision

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

1

Leadership

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

1



Pupils develop excellent knowledge and understanding. Early on in their journey, pupils have a clear understanding of Pentecost and can accurately retell what happened. In later years, pupils develop this knowledge further looking at the scripture in more depth and making links for example in the role of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity. Pupils are then given more opportunities to write extensively, giving them the opportunity to show greater understanding. Now the school needs to encourage more pupils to challenge themselves in this way. Pupils with special educational needs and other lower ability pupils make particularly good progress which is as a result of well-structured lessons and work carefully differentiated for ability. There has been a significant focus on oracy to increase pupils' religious literacy and their ability to speak with confidence about what they have learnt in religious education. Book scrutiny evidences pupils' use of religious vocabulary and knowledge of scripture. Pupils enjoy and are actively engaged in lessons and as a result their behaviour is outstanding.

There is a clear consistency in teaching across the school which is the result of extensive training for all staff. Lessons are well prepared with resources prepared to support pupils working at different levels. Pupils are aware of their targets and are working in a focused way to achieve them. A focus on key vocabulary helps pupils to remember more and articulate their answers better. There is a significant focus on oracy. Teaching assistants add considerable value, supporting pupils in a variety of ways. Skillful questioning is used to draw out and revisit prior learning to help the pupils make progress. Teachers have high expectations for the pupils' work in their 'special book,' their RE book, which is held in high regard. This is clearly evident in the presentation and quality of the pupils' work. A weekly religious education award in assembly is one method of displaying high quality work and

encouraging other pupils. There is time for reflection in religious education lessons as well as in times of prayer, including in relating what is learnt to pupils' own lives. Information on the school website is thorough and gives parents a picture of what religious education looks like not only in their child's class but also the progression across the school.

The headteacher and governors ensure that religious education is given a high priority in line with English and mathematics. Timetabling is monitored to ensure at least 10% of the timetable is spent on religious education in line with Bishops' Conference requirements and this is supported by evidence of curriculum coverage in pupils' books. The leadership of the joint religious education leaders is outstanding. They have an inspiring vision of religious education which they share with staff through regular high quality professional development. Leaders work collaboratively with staff and monitoring ensures that any support is carefully targeted. They use assessment data and other evidence to ensure all groups are making expected or better progress. The work done to support pupils who have special educational needs or disability is a particular strength of this school.

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

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



All pupils fully engage with prayer and liturgy at St Monica's. During the inspection, observations of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 prayer and liturgy showed that the children were respectful and keen to respond fully to the experiences offered to them. The children have opportunities to plan prayer and liturgy for their classes and for the whole school. In recent times, the school has been working more closely with the parish and are now attending Mass as a class several times a year. Pupils can describe the different parts of the liturgical year and understand how prayer and liturgy affects their lives and the experiences they have had. Pupils apply to be members of the Children's Chaplaincy Team and have recently planned a Pentecost liturgy. They have been involved in raising money for the Prayer Garden which has been transformed into a beautiful space. The next steps are to include a wider variety of ways to pray in prayer and liturgy. St Monica's have two choirs, a more traditional one and a Gospel 'mash-up' choir with both choirs involved in the prayer and liturgy we observed during the inspection. These choirs are extremely popular and give the pupils the opportunity to worship using both traditional and contemporary music. Staff have volunteered many hours to ensure that the pupils do not only enjoy singing in these choirs, but that they also have high expectations of themselves.

There is a daily pattern of prayer and liturgy embedded across the school. Prayer and liturgy are integral to the life of the school and scripture is used as a matter of course. A weekly Gospel assembly reflects the church theme. All staff are committed to the prayer life of the school and acts of worship are planned throughout the year. The 'Stay and Pray' sessions, which classes plan for their parents at least once a year, are very well received by the school community. The use of space is a particular strength of the school. There are several spaces dedicated to prayer including a timetable prayer room and the prayer garden.

Prayer and liturgy are well led and supported by both the adult chaplaincy team and children's chaplaincy team. There is a clear policy in place which includes clear progression for pupil participation across the school. Leaders plan the school calendar and timetable carefully to ensure that opportunities to celebrate are consistently offered to the whole school community, particularly at key times in the liturgical year. The use of school funding, as well as money raised by the pupils to enable the development of the prayer garden, show a clear commitment from governors to prayer and liturgy. The next steps are to support staff in using diverse types of prayer so that they can model this for pupils.

Information about the school

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|--|---|
| Full name of school | St Monica's Catholic Primary School |
| School unique reference number (URN) | 110482 |
| Full postal address of the school | Currier Drive, Neath Hill, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, MK14 6HB |
| School phone number | 01908 606966 |
| Name of head teacher or principal | Robert O'Malley |
| Chair of governing board | Michael Manley |
| School Website | http://www.st-monicas.co.uk/ |
| Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable) | N/A |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age-range of pupils | 5-11 |
| Trustees | Diocese of Northampton |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Date of last denominational inspection | 14 th July 2016 |
| Previous denominational inspection grade | Good |

The inspection team

| | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Mark Holdsworth | Lead inspector |
| Phil Turnham | 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 |