



St Clare's Catholic Primary School

URN: 105554

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Salford

01–02 February 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

1

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

3

What the school does well

- The inspirational headteacher leads her cohesive staff team to ensure that St Clare's is a vibrant, Catholic community focused on celebration, improvement and togetherness.
- This is a highly inclusive school which deeply cares for all the children in line with its mission statement which is alive in all parts of the school. Pupils and families totally feel part of this school community because the level of care is outstanding in the way it reaches out to all, including those who are vulnerable in any way.
- The quality of religious education is good and the children are religiously literate and highly enthused in their work. Scripture holds a central part here, allowing the children to relate their learning to their own lives.

- St Clare's is a school with a strong faith dimension in which prayer and liturgy has become a central feature of day-to-day life. The children pray with reverence, confidence and enthusiasm in this important aspect of their personal lives.
- The pupils of St Clare's deserve every credit for the way they behave, their attitudes to learning and their contribution to the strong Christian relationships throughout the school. They are keen to do what they can to make their world a better place to be, and they do this with great success.

What the school needs to improve

- To provide opportunities for the children to enhance their learning by allowing greater chance to think philosophically, to be more creative in their responses during religious education lessons.
- To continue the journey started in September, so that teachers ensure that pupils are provided with relevant and specific feedback which ensures that all pupils clearly understand what they need to do to make progress in their learning.
- Work to enable pupils to fully construct their own experiences of reflective prayer and liturgy.

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

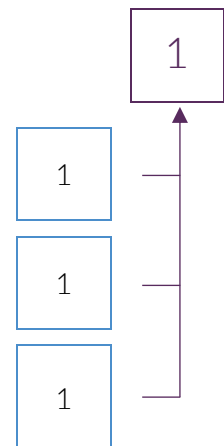
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



The St Clare's mission, 'Guided by Jesus Christ, our teacher, we journey together, learning to dream, believe and achieve' is apparent in all aspects of the school's life and underpins the lived commitment to place Christ at the centre of all actions undertaken by the school and live out the modern mission of church. Pupils at St Clare's have a deep understanding of the lived-out mission of the church in education. They can articulate how this is lived day to day through their relationships with others and the wider community. Through a focus on scripture, seen throughout all year groups in the school, pupils grow in understanding of their God given, unique role in society and see themselves as missionary disciples. As a result, they take on ambassadorial leadership roles with drive and energy. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary because children see themselves as part of the mission of the church, showing respect towards others and themselves. They have a strong commitment to Catholic social teaching and service to others, shown through a keen sense of community through parish and charity projects, including those enhanced by the school's chaplaincy provision, focused on 'Laudato Si' inspired environmental stewardship.

The rich learning environment, including a dedicated prayer space, is anchored in the distinctive Catholic character of the school, with a focus on the dignity of all and support for those most in need. Scripture is visible throughout St Clare's, and is known and understood by the school community, informing their daily choices and actions. The dedicated staff team, led by an inspirational Headteacher, articulate how their role is one of servant leadership, commitment to all pupils, with a particular focus on supporting disadvantage. A support staff member spoke about the school enabling all to flourish, anchored in Christ, promoting strong growth, blossoming and a sense of freedom. There is a permeating culture of welcome and joy in a

community which is visible in all routines. A parent observed, 'We are so blessed that our children come here – I drive past other schools to bring my child to this school.' St Clare's commitment to pastoral care is visible through high quality expert staffing, outreach to families and governance that prioritises those in need. Parents welcome the strong wellbeing culture and support provided by the school. One commented, "Teachers know the children so well it is incredible!" Relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) provision meets all statutory requirements and has involved high quality communication with parents. It is led enthusiastically by the subject lead and fully meets diocesan requirements.

All members of the school community talk with admiration about the charismatic role of the Headteacher. The parish priest reflected, 'She is on fire with her faith, care for the children and passion for the school.' As a result, everyone is ambitious to move the school forward as a successful and joyful community in its Catholic identity. The school community places itself at the service of the parish and diocese in a variety of ways including through pupils working with the parish to prepare hampers and support the local food bank. Staff have engaged with Diocesan training, including this as part of staff induction, and they apply the training received enthusiastically to their practice. A strong parish-school partnership is articulated by the parish priest as, 'giving the community hope for the future'. Parents value the effective communication from St Clare's. It is through this reaching out that they feel well engaged to support their children's learning, wellbeing, and development. Leaders and governors are highly ambitious and, inspired by Catholic social teaching and principles of servant leadership, ensure that 'no child is forgotten' regardless of their background or ability. Their ambition for the school ensures that all children achieve well through well targeted funding of support staff and resources to support those in greatest need. Dignity of the person is reinforced through effective pastoral care for all members of the staff team, whose wellbeing is prioritised. The school successfully creates a positive learning culture which seeks to make improvements wherever possible. Through monitoring, evaluation and analysis, the skilled staff work collectively to bring about planned improvements.

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

2

2

Throughout St Clare's, pupils enjoy and achieve well in their religious education lessons. This starts effectively in the early years, where children respond with excitement to their learning, in an environment which is richly based around language development. Through the school's 'flashback 3' model, pupils are supported to make good progress in knowing, remembering, and doing more, when measured against the planned curriculum throughout the school. For example, in a Year 4 class, children recalled what Father Jeremiah's Franciscan cord represents; and the messages from Pope Francis in Fratelli Tutti. Pupils are supported well to ask good questions of adults and peers, which enhance learning. They grow in religious literacy throughout their time at St Clare's and ably apply this to spiritual and ethical reflection and thinking. Therefore, they grow in awareness of their responsibility towards the common good. In a Year 3 class, when writing letters to a new friend, children reflected on the importance of prayer in helping us arrive at making good choices. Pupils enjoy their learning; therefore, behaviour is exemplary in lessons. Attainment is comparable to other core subjects and has improved over time. Greater focus in teacher feedback will provide pupils with a clearer understanding of how well they are doing, and what they need to do to improve, enabling pupils to make accelerated progress.

Teachers have a good subject knowledge which reinforces their commitment to the value of religious education for all learners. In the best examples seen, they skilfully question in order to adapt explanations and task in order to maximise engagement and learning. Reflection is a core aspect of religious education provision, enabling children to think more deeply about their learning and apply this to their own decision making. For example, in one class, when learning about carrying out Christ's mission, the teacher skilfully used questioning techniques to find out how much the children knew and understood about ministry before flipping this to enable

children to ask appropriate questions. The quality of support staff and adults working around the school is a key strength at St Clare's. Together with teachers, they support the learning of all pupils with great skill, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Consequently, this allows all children to make good progress in their learning. The school has identified the need to feedback to children in a more comprehensive way so that the children have a clear understanding of how successful their learning has been and the next steps they need to take. Occasionally, the children's work and their responses to learning are restricted using scaffolds which unintentionally stem the children's creative responses and put a cap on their learning.

The school confidently and effectively delivers the *Come and See* programme, which is used creatively and supplemented with personal and imaginative activities, fulfilling the requirements of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* and enabling a sequenced and coherent approach. Leaders and governors ensure that the religious education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference, with 10% of the timetable dedicated to the subject across all year groups. Governors ensure religious education has full parity with other core curriculum areas. The headteacher and co-subject leader for religious education have a clear vision apparent in the school's self-evaluation and action planning. Leaders know their school well and agree with the areas for improvement highlighted by inspectors, including limiting scaffolding to promote extended pieces of writing and developing feedback and philosophical enquiry skills. A range of enrichment activities, throughout the year, linked to the liturgical calendar, engage pupils in creative opportunities and outreach. These include engagement with the Marist centre, stations of the cross, CAFOD assemblies and Laudato Si inspired forest school activities. Sufficient opportunities are provided for learners to progress sequentially through subject content in readiness for the new *Religious Education Directory*.

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

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

1

1

St Clare's provision of prayer and liturgy offers a dimension to day-to-day school life which the children benefit from enormously and respond to with enjoyment and enthusiasm. They have developed strong attributes, which help them in the wonderful way they join in communal singing, their ability to be mindful and to meditate, and the reverence which they show in all aspects of collective worship. A strong feature of this provision is the way the children feel comfortable, and are confident to make their own individual responses, whether through actions, dance, personal prayer, or song. Class provision for prayer and worship is well embedded. Effective self-evaluation has led to this strong provision. In class celebrations of the word, pupils set up the prayer focus with liturgical colour cloth and other artefacts. They enthusiastically participate in and lead aspects of prayer and by upper Key Stage 2 are able to fully lead. Next steps will involve all children constructing their own experiences of reflective prayer and liturgy. Spontaneous prayer is promoted and encouraged and prayer spaces in classrooms reflect this. Pupils readily talk about the relevance of prayer and liturgy in their lives and the impact this has. They are extremely confident with this.

Gatherings for liturgy, singing and routines of prayer are central to the daily life of St Clare's. All children enthusiastically gather in song for all routine acts of worship in the school. From an early age, children are encouraged to make their own creative responses, leading to a climate where spontaneity is valued. Children know and recite the school mission during prayer times. Children know their mission. Staff, including senior leaders, engage fully in all aspects of prayer and liturgy and are inspiring models of exemplary practice to others. Well-chosen scripture passages, informed by the liturgical season and enhanced through singing hymns of praise, ensures that all children actively and consciously participate. Space, both inside and outside, is used imaginatively for large scale and more intimate prayer experiences. Families are invited to

engage in the prayer life of the school by attending stay and pray and other assemblies. Reflecting on assemblies, one parent said, 'The school uses the examples of the lives of saints to develop my child's understanding further'. The parish priest is a regular and welcome visitor to the school and the children value his pastoral support and encouragement. He works closely with the Mini-Clares, altar servers, choir, and all pupils to, 'reach places we can't reach in church alone.' He said, 'The school provides hope for the future. The seed we throw out grows in our children's hearts, giving them their hunger for spirituality.' Leadership is inspirational and has brought about significant changes to the authentic ethos of St Clare's as a worshipping community – this is recognised by all we spoke to about the school. So much is the impact of this, that frequent examples were seen of children taking their passion for prayer and liturgy into their own homes.

The annual reviewing of the school's prayer and liturgy policy ensures it remains relevant, current, and fully reflective of the lived worshipping experiences of the school community. Pupils develop their ability to participate in prayer and worship from their enthusiastic and excited responses in the early years to more mature and deeper thoughts with the older pupils. Parents are engaged through regular and accessible newsletters which focus on Gospel messages. Masses and services for holy days and other special occasions, including St Francis' day, which is also combined with the school's patronal feast day, are included in a yearly plan and become a focus of celebration and aspiration. The parish priest talked about the pupils' active engagement in worship during Mass, including the Mini Clares, choir, and those who are altar servers. Their exceptional singing and reverence are also highlighted by the wider parish community. School leaders work as an integral part of the parish to ensure a highly effective programme for sacramental preparation and sacraments are celebrated as part of school life, for example the Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered in school during Lent. Training and professional development for prayer and liturgy is given high priority. There is an expectation from everyone that prayer is at the heart of the school. As a result, there is a real pride in the quality of provision which enables all participants to become closer to God.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Clare's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	105554
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3523501
Full postal address of the school	St Clare's Catholic Primary School, Victoria Avenue, Blackley, Manchester, M9 0RR
School phone number	01617404993
Headteacher	Colette Howe
Chair of Governors	Gerard Collins
School Website	www.st-clares.manchester.sch.uk/
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	N/A
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	23 June 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

Martin Johnson	Lead
Damian Harrison	Team
Mary Garvey	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