



St Bernard's Catholic Primary School

URN: 105230

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Salford

09–10 May 2024

Summary of key findings

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

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

What the school does well

- A strong culture of compassion and dignity exists, created by the passionate head teacher and supported by a cohesive team.
- Joyful relationships are visible at all levels, built upon the foundation of nurture, mutual respect and underpinned by love.
- There is a strong sense of Christ being at the heart of this school and the 'power of prayer' being felt by all staff and leaders.
- Pupils live out the values of love, justice, compassion, forgiveness, and wisdom, fostering a positive and respectful school environment.
- The dedicated and ambitious religious education leader has engaged in a variety of relevant training as well as working collaboratively with a wider network and professionals.

What the school needs to improve

- Pupils would benefit from knowing how to further improve and what their next steps are in their religious education work.
- For the religious education leader to further enable the teachers to develop their ability to deliver the religious education curriculum more effectively, deepening learning.
- Opportunities to enhance the richness of spiritual encounters and widen the range of how pupils respond to prayer within 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

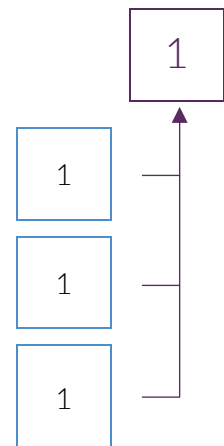
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



Pupils actively and enthusiastically support the school's Catholic mission. They proudly express that the committed staff team has made them feel loved and cared for. Pupils who talk about their roles as stewards of the faith with pride and passion are able to do so because of the significant emphasis placed on Catholic social teaching. Pupils are able to articulate the influence that belonging to this loving family has on their faith and are proud of their faith journey at St. Bernard's. Pupils feel empowered to take the initiative to address local, national, and international challenges when there is an open culture in place. Following a request by a pupil to respond to Pope Francis' *Laudato Si*, the eco team have been established and are now very active. The members of the Growing in Faith Together team are passionate representatives who serve as examples for others. Younger children look up to them as role models because they perform their jobs with pride and dedication.

St. Bernard's embodies its mission statement and truly are a 'unique family in faith, love and learning' not just through words but through actions. Staff go the extra mile, being approachable and visible outside of school hours. Many examples of this were given showing support the whole community and especially those who may be in need. Their dedication is clear, with one staff member stating, how it comes from the top and that the Headteacher "walks in Jesus' footprints". Another member of staff also said, "I feel safe here, I have moved house further away, but would not want to work anywhere else." This passion translates into positive role models for the students, who benefit from a supportive and loving environment. St. Bernard's celebrates the individuality of each child, fostering a sense of dignity and belonging. The school's commitment to its Catholic identity is reflected in the physical environment, an example being the beautiful Mary artwork created by a member of staff and used well by pupils. Furthermore,

the school provides a comprehensive relationship and health education program that meets all requirements. The school welcomes children of other faiths, or no faith, and teaches about those faiths as part of the curriculum, including parents with other faiths coming into school to share their own beliefs and traditions. Staff are excellent role models for pupils. Their mutually supportive relationships and love for the school is evident, not only with the staff and pupils, but by external agencies and other visitors. The pupils are wrapped in a community where the dignity and individuality of every child is celebrated and cherished.

All leaders, including governors, clearly share the same vision, ensuring that Christ is always at the heart of the centre of the school. Inspirational leadership from the head teacher, who is driven by an unwavering commitment to all, has created a school which is highly regarded by the wider community, including the parish. Governors and parents talk enthusiastically about St. Bernard's being a driving inspiration for the whole community. The school prioritises its Catholic identity and mission by ensuring all policies clearly align with these core values. The school embraces diocesan policies and initiatives with genuine enthusiasm. This fosters a dynamic partnership with the diocese, where they actively participate in working parties and training, while also contributing their own strengths and expertise in various ways. Governors are very experienced and have worked with the school and parish for many years, as a result they are dedicated, knowledgeable and highly supportive. They articulated their shared mission is "simple, to work together to change the world."

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

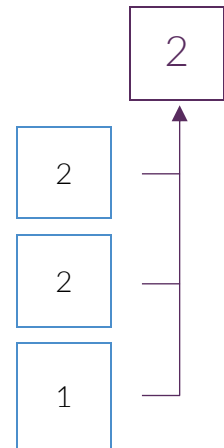
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Pupils at St. Bernard’s unanimously enjoy religious education and in all age groups demonstrate that they are retaining knowledge and are able to link this to everyday life. Pupils demonstrate that they are religiously literate, speaking with confidence, and reflecting spiritually. In all observed lessons, flashbacks were used successfully, making links to prior learning. Working independently the pupils respond well to a wide variety of tasks. Further opportunities, where children could have the freedom to show their individuality and creativity, would enhance their outcomes. Where the best practice was seen children in Reception and pupils in Year 1 heard, saw and re-enacted the story of The Ascension through ‘*reflective story telling*’. This enabled the children to hear and see the story through multiple methods, ensuring they were fully equipped to re-tell the story with progressing difficulty independently, after input from the teachers. A child in Reception went to the area to retell the story, he moved Jesus to the top of the rock and then moved a figure, saying, “this is Peter, he is watching Jesus go up to heaven.” He then pulled on fishing wire to make Jesus ascend into the clouds. Pupils have a relatively good understanding of how well they are doing, but now need to be given more meaningful feedback to ensure that they know how to improve.

Teachers are continuously growing in confidence in their subject knowledge. They are not only committed to personal development but also to ensuring that the pupils recognise the central importance religious education holds in their school. Effective assessment – using the ‘check-in and check-out’ approach – informs planning and provides valuable feedback, ultimately improving pupils’ learning. High quality resources have been prioritised and are strategically used to enhance learning opportunities and cater to varied learning styles. Effort and achievement are celebrated, and staff clearly communicate the high priority placed upon religious education. Well-crafted questions are used throughout lessons, with teachers readily

adapting them to support most pupils' progress. Understanding the importance of moral and spiritual growth in religious education, teachers create opportunities for pupils' reflection throughout lessons. There is a range of activity and task types in pupils' books which allows them to express their learning in a variety of ways. While the current approach fosters a strong foundation, teachers would now benefit from further following the religious education leader's expertise in planning opportunities to allow pupils to delve deeper into their learning. This could involve tasks encouraging independent research, original thinking, and creative expression.

St. Bernard's benefits from exceptional leadership in religious education. All leaders, led by the dedicated and ambitious religious education lead, share a clear vision for outstanding religious education provision. They work collaboratively with the diocese, as evidenced by the religious education lead's involvement in a working party, ensuring alignment with diocesan expectations. This collaborative approach fosters continuous improvement. Leaders have prioritised staff development, providing ongoing professional learning opportunities for staff in all three key stages. The staff speak highly about the religious education leader and the commitment that she has shown. She has a clear vision and action plan for the future. The religious education subject leader possesses an inspiring vision for teaching and learning, backed by a drive to make this a reality. This powerful combination effectively drives improvement, leading to consistently good religious education throughout the school. Leaders and governors work well together to monitor religious education at St. Bernard's and this results in strategic, well-planned actions, which will undoubtedly help the school continue to grow.

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

St. Bernard's fosters a vibrant atmosphere during prayer and liturgy experiences. Whole school assemblies showcase this spirit, with pupils confidently reflecting in silence, respectfully joining in prayer, playing percussion to create atmosphere and singing with enthusiasm. The school ensures prayer and liturgy are age-appropriate, enabling pupils to understand and appreciate the rich tapestry of traditional Catholic prayer forms. The growing pupil chaplaincy role allows students to take pride in their contributions to St. Bernard's vibrant prayer life. Prayer and liturgy is central to the life at St Bernard's. Many significant moments in the life of the school, and its community, are supported by prayer. Prayer areas, both inside and outside, are used by both staff and pupils and are recognised as being important parts of the environment. All members of the school community are encouraged to put forward their needs and intentions. Parents voiced how appreciated this is. There is a positive response from pupils, who demonstrate respect, reverence and prayerfulness. They recognise appropriate times for silence during liturgies, listen to scripture well and pray with confidence. They understand the format of the liturgical year and how this influences the prayer life of the school. They undertake the ministries willingly and with growing confidence. With the support of staff, pupils work together to plan, deliver and evaluate prayer and liturgy. There is an opportunity to elevate the quality of class prayer and liturgy experiences. Observations during visits revealed best practice in Reception allowed pupils to encounter God's presence through awe, wonder, stillness, and reflection within a prayerful environment. Replicating these practices consistently across year groups in a variety of spaces within school and incorporating opportunities for spontaneous prayer and using wider resources to respond to prayer would be beneficial.

Opportunities to attend Mass further strengthen the school's connection to the wider community. Staff highlight taking children to church as a highlight, noting the positive

relationships fostered with parishioners. A shared commitment to prayer is evident at St. Bernard's. Both staff and pupils value the time dedicated to shared prayer, which forms a central part of all school celebrations, including staff briefings. Staff commented on the 'power of prayer' and how this has helped them as a staff body deal with some difficult times and one staff member shared how after a staff liturgy using sleeping St. Joseph, she was bought one and this has helped her in her personal life also. Parents feel a strong sense of inclusion through open invitations to weekly gatherings and the Sacramental programme. Similarly, governors demonstrate their commitment by ensuring St. Bernard's remains a worshipping community and maintains strong links with the parish.

Leaders, including governors, have ensured that there is an effective policy for prayer and liturgy in place. There is a clear progression through the school with pupils taking increasing responsibility for the planning, preparation and delivery of collective worship. The school calendar is planned around the liturgical year giving opportunity to mark important events, including feast days. Professional development has been a priority for leaders, and this is beginning to pay dividends throughout the school. Looking ahead the religious education leader now needs to plan how to continue to share good practice to further elevate experiences for pupils and how monitoring of this with governors and senior leaders will ensure consistency.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Bernard's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	105230
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3503337
Full postal address of the school	St Bernard's Catholic Primary School, Wendover Drive, Ladybridge, Bolton, BL3 4RX
School phone number	01204652147
Headteacher	Clare Doodson
Chair of Governors	Philip Ashcroft
School Website	www.st-bernards.bolton.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	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	24/1/2020
Previous denominational inspection grade	Requires improvement

The inspection team

Jane Myerscough
Danielle Ellison

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