

St Louis Catholic Academy

URN: 139448

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of East Anglia

20–21 November 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

2

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 general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

Compliance statement

- The school has responded fully to the area for improvement from the last inspection that is applicable within the Catholic Schools Inspectorate current framework. However, there is no longer a requirement to use the 'Journey with Jesus' assessment programme as advised in the previous Section 48 inspection.

What the school does well

- Pupils at St Louis are kind, happy and confident. They can clearly articulate how their faith enables them to put the Gospel values into actions.
- Staff provide supportive pastoral care for pupils and there is a commitment to the most vulnerable. Staff engage with the community to provide a range of helpful opportunities, including working with the Newmarket Pony Academy, Suffolk Young Carers and Holiday Activities and Food Programme.
- Pupils have a good knowledge of religious education. They are keen to discuss their learning and often ask thoughtful questions during lessons.
- The religious education leader has a clear vision, passion and high expectations for the religion education within the school.
- Pupils enjoy the prayer and liturgy opportunities provided by the school, often spending time in thought provoking reflection.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop effective strategies for engaging all parents, so that they feel they are working in partnership with the school to support its mission.
- Provide additional professional development opportunities to ensure all teachers' subject knowledge is secure in the teaching of the Religious Education Directory.
- Review and revise the Prayer and Liturgy policy so that it is useful to staff when planning 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

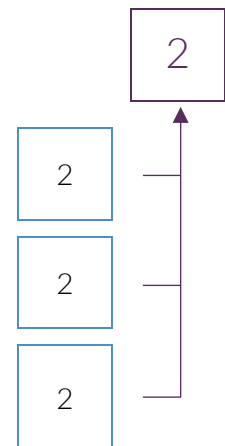
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 understand and can articulate the school's mission; 'Christ at the Centre, children at the heart. Loving to learn, learning to Love'. They explain how they put this into action in their daily lives. Pupils are valued and know they are listened to and appreciated. Pupils recognise that Gospel values help them to become responsible members of society and are enthusiastic about putting the principles of Catholic social teaching into practice both locally and in the wider world. They are passionate about helping those less fortunate than themselves; one member of the Mini Vinnies said 'The more we help people, the more we can make a better world, even if it's just a small gesture'. This can be seen in the school's support of Fairtrade and the Mustard Seed Kitchen. Pupils understand that we are made in God's image and that they have a responsibility to address discrimination; they demonstrate this by participating in annual 'Show Racism the Red Card' fundraising and by supporting other charities. Pupils demonstrate respect through excellent behaviour, in lessons and on the playground. Pupil play leaders help to facilitate this. Pupils in Year 6 are taking increased responsibility for chaplaincy within the school. They enjoy preparing resources, planning content and act as good models for younger pupils.

Staff can explain how they live the school's mission each day and strive to create a sense of community through introducing new families to other parents and encouraging parents to attend events. Staff participate in activities that encourage 'responsible attitudes towards our changing world', including facilitating fundraising and community projects such as the Toddler Group. Staff facilitate pupils working alongside pupils at the local Church of England school to raise money to support a child in Uganda. The school welcomes pupils and families from a wide variety of backgrounds. There is an International Food Festival, and a parent whose child arrived at the school in Year 2 reported that staff worked quickly and effectively to help him feel

included. Staff model good relationships based on the school values. Pastoral care is supportive; staff know their pupils and swiftly and unobtrusively intervene to support those in need. Parents report that whenever they have worries about their child's wellbeing there is always someone who will listen and help. The Catholic character of the school is evident in its environment. Formation for the Year 6 chaplaincy team is facilitated by the diocesan 'Ignite Team' and school leaders. Relationship, sex and health education is fully compliant with the statutory and diocesan requirements. The policy is available on the school website.

Leaders and governors are able to explain how the mission of the school is lived out by pupils and staff and is revisited by stakeholders. Engagement with the diocese is regular and strong. Parish links are well established with the parish deacon regularly visiting the school. Leaders work to forge partnerships with parents through inviting them in to school events. However, greater clarity is required to ensure all parents engage effectively with the school. Leaders have an extremely strong commitment to Catholic social teaching. The SVP Mini Vinnies volunteer expresses this as being 'child-up, not top-down'. Furthermore, the leaders demonstrate their commitment through their support for the most vulnerable. Leaders understand that the Catholic curriculum has a place in all curriculum subject areas, with plans developing to ensure that Catholic social teaching is embedded in relevant subjects. Leaders and Governors are committed to the rights of employees through their implementation of the Living Wage policy and signing up to the Wellbeing Charter for teachers. Governors are ambitious and have a good knowledge of the school, seeking the views of parents, pupils and staff as part of their self-evaluation as well as asking challenging questions. Pupils are beginning to evaluate the Catholic life of the school with pupil chaplains recently monitoring the school environment. Although professional development for Catholic life has not yet been scheduled, feedback from staff about individual training is positive.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

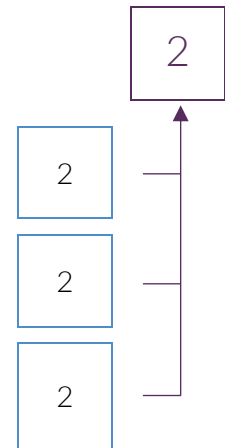
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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’ secure knowledge and understanding in religious education (RE) is evident in their discussions during lessons and their work. They enthusiastically and joyfully embrace the new learning opportunities provided by the *Religious Education Directory*. A Year 6 pupil explained, ‘there is always something new to learn about God’s story’. Pupils make good progress in knowing and remembering more over time. Pupils use their religious knowledge to reflect spiritually, and to think ethically and theologically. In a Reception lesson focussing on the Annunciation a child reflected that ‘the Angel Gabriel hasn’t got real wings because he is a spirit’. Year 6 pupils can clearly articulate how Fairtrade products help farmers have a good wage, and they link this to fairness and equality. Younger pupils are able think of abstract virtues as their gifts from God. Pupils have good recall of Bible stories. Year 6 pupils discuss ‘strong women like Ester and Miriam’ as Old Testament role models. Pupils ask exceptionally thoughtful questions, examples include, ‘who created God?’ and ‘I wonder why Mary shut her eyes?’ In most lessons pupils concentrate, engage well and demonstrate increasing independence as they progress through the school. Pupils’ work in their RE books and faith life books show a range of work, including the development of creativity. Some pupils understand how well they are doing in their religious education. However, not all pupils can articulate what they need to do to improve their learning and how they have made progress.

Staff are committed to the introduction of the new *Religious Education Directory*, and usually have high expectations of all pupils. In the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, teachers are increasingly confident in their subject knowledge. However, there is a need for further professional development to ensure all teachers, have a good understanding of the knowledge appropriate to their phase. Most RE lessons are interesting and informative. One parent explained ‘my children often come home talking about what they have learned, and make links

to their wider faith at home and in church.' Planning is secure where the *Religious Education Directory* is embedded, and is developing well in other year groups. Most teachers are highly skilled in questioning pupils to build on their prior knowledge, develop their vocabulary and encourage deep thinking during lessons. Teachers ensure pupils have time for reflection during RE lessons and know how their learning translates into actions. Teachers are therefore making increased direct links with Catholic social teaching. A variety of resources are used, including a diverse range of modern and traditional art to support learning. Additionally, scripture is often used well in lessons.

Leaders and governors are ensuring the successful and faithful implementation of the *Religious Education Directory*. Through their monitoring processes they have identified a need for additional professional development for teachers in Key Stage 2. RE has parity with other core subjects in terms of timetabling, staffing and professional development. However, not all parents have a good understanding of what pupils are learning in religious education, and how they are making progress. The subject leader has excellent knowledge, a clear vision and great passion for her subject. Her leadership qualities are recognised beyond the school as she willingly shares her expertise in other diocesan schools. Consequently, a range of adaptations to lessons is in place to support pupils with additional needs for example, pre-reading of scripture, use of a laptop and additional scaffolding. Leaders and governors self-evaluation is informed by regular monitoring of RE books and teaching. Governors ask searching questions as they strive for improvements. However, leaders and governors do not effectively analyse religious education data to ensure strategic and well-targeted planning leads to improved outcomes.

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 respond well to the prayer and liturgy opportunities provided by the school. They can reflect in silence, and as a result, their prayers are thoughtful. In Year 3 pupils reflect on the quality of Christ as King, recognising his humility and service to the poor. Pupils understand a variety of ways of praying, including reflecting on art work. In Year 1, artwork depicting Jesus holding a mantle prompts a child to comment that 'the cape is covering all the children, like everyone is together'. Pupils confidently describe the Church's liturgical year and the prayer and liturgy opportunities provided by the school to help them pray during each season. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are developing confidence in planning and leading their own prayer and liturgy. The pupil chaplaincy team discuss how they research appropriate quotes and choose music. Younger pupils are beginning to plan half termly class liturgies with guidance from staff. Pupils recognise that their learning influences their prayer petitions. They pray for people in need, include those in war zones and those who are troubled. Moreover, they are thankful for all they have in their lives. Pupils use their own prayer journals to write heartfelt and meaningful prayers. Pupils know that prayer is their 'connection to God', that praying can make a difference and can help them to 'become closer to God'.

The school has a well formulated plan for prayer to be central to the daily pattern of and rhythm of school life. Times of joy and sorrow are celebrated in prayer, for example in May pupils bring flowers for Our Lady. In November they gather for remembrance. The richness of the tradition is reflected in the prayer life of the school, including a focus on the rosary in October and the Stations of the Cross in Lent. Although the school has a plan of prayer expectations and progress for pupils, it is not used consistently to enhance the richness of tradition. Scripture is used in some whole school assemblies. However, seasonally appropriate scripture passages are not always central to prayer and liturgy to help those present fully and actively participate. Staff are confident in leading prayer and liturgy and regularly include quiet reflective music and art as a focus to support pupil engagement. Space is provided in each class for a reflective prayer table.

However these prayer tables are not always a focal point for pupils during class prayer and liturgy due to their current locations. The school encourages parents to join them in prayer at assemblies and at Mass. Some parents have provided photographs of praying at home and in the Reception classes a nativity is taken home during Advent. However, not all families have a sense of being included in the school's prayer life and they would welcome further support in developing the prayer life of pupils.

The school has a policy on prayer and liturgy. It is not, however, formulated to ensure it is fit for purpose, and that it is used consistently by staff as a reference point when planning prayer and liturgy. Leaders and governors are developing a skills strategy to further increase pupil planning and leadership of prayer and liturgy, particularly for younger pupils. Opportunities for professional development for prayer and liturgy have been organised for leaders and staff, which is beginning to impact on staff confidence in leading prayer and liturgy. Leaders are aware of the need to allocate additional time to further develop staff knowledge. Leaders and governors have a planned school calendar to ensure pupils can attend holy days of obligation. This includes attending Mass in the parish church for the feast days of house saints. The religious education leader has worked with pupils to devise a class worship template to support them in planning their own prayer and liturgy. Resources are provided to support prayer and liturgy opportunities. Governors have a good knowledge of the prayer and liturgy opportunities provided by the school. However, they do not always work alongside school leaders, to regularly review the quality and impact of prayer and liturgy as part of the school's cycle of self-evaluation of improvement, including seeking the views of pupils.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Louis Catholic Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	139448
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9353318
Full postal address of the school	St Louis Catholic Academy, Fordham Road, Newmarket, CB8 7AA
School phone number	01638 662719
Headteacher	Sue Blakeley
Chair of local governing body	Bethan Byrne and Marc Walker
School Website	http://www.stlouisacademy.co.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Our Lady Of Walsingham Catholic Multi Academy Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	15 th September 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	Grade 1

The inspection team

Mrs Gael Hicks

Lead

Mrs Felicity Hope

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