



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for  
**Abbey Catholic Primary School**

URN: 147669

Carried out on behalf of the Most Rev. Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham on:

Date: 11-12 October 2023

Overall effectiveness The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....	1
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.....	1
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	Fully

## Summary of key findings

### What the school does well

- Leaders and governors have created a caring, nurturing, and thriving family school with strong relationships and pastoral support for pupils and staff.
- The whole school community actively lives out Catholic life and mission.
- Catholic social teaching is outstanding, resulting in pupils who excel in their knowledge and understanding of living out the Catholic faith.
- Teachers use excellent questioning that deepens pupils' understanding of religious education.
- Prayer and liturgy are central to school life, offering inclusive, joyful celebrations of faith.

What the school needs to improve:

- Develop pupils' understanding of what they need to do improve their work in religious education.
- Enable pupils to lead times of prayerful silence, reflection, and meditation.

## 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



Abbey Catholic Primary School is a welcoming, vibrant Catholic school whose values and inclusive nature fully embody its mission of 'Learning to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, with our friends, family and parish'. This inspiring message significantly impacts the lives of everyone in the school, who demonstrate it daily through their actions and deeds. Pupils recognise the importance of the school's values. One pupil commented, 'There is a seed representing us from when you are in reception that helps us work towards all our values.' A strong sense of belonging to a joyful community permeates every person connected to the school. Pupils are confident and recognise that everyone is a unique person made in God's image and likeness. Mutual respect is evidenced in their exemplary behaviour.

The Caritas Ambassadors group leads assemblies and actively participates in 'family and parish' weeks. Pupils speak enthusiastically about how Catholic social teaching is helping them build a closer relationship with God by achieving Cafod's LiveSimply Award and standing in solidarity with refugees, meeting 'Little Amal' during refugee week. Pupils say, 'The best thing about school is being able to solve injustices in the world and doing it here in school.' Further, they enjoy leading charity and outreach work, such as fundraising for The Sifa Fireside and collecting coats for the Columban Missions and the Erdington Food Bank. There are strong and tangible lived senses of community, family, and a strong sense of Christ being at the heart of the school. The quality of relationships, pastoral care, and support for the most vulnerable shows how the school goes the extra mile for all. The stimulating environment fully reflects the school's Catholic identity; the many vibrant displays enable pupils to learn, reflect, pray, and grow spiritually and morally. A focus on the principles of the Church's social teaching and thoughtful scripture encourages the pupils to respond to the teachings of Jesus in a meaningful way. Relationships, sex, and health education is carefully planned to reflect Catholic teachings and principles fully. School and parish work in close

partnership with each other. For example, parish priests visit regularly to lead liturgies, support pupils' sacramental preparation, and help teach the religious education curriculum, whilst classes attend parish mass weekly.

Leaders and governors are united in their vision. They embody Catholic leadership values by esteeming all staff and working with them to embrace a culture of inclusivity. The dedicated principal and senior leaders demonstrate exemplary commitment to caring for their community. Governors are passionate about their role within the school, supporting and challenging leaders so that the school can be the best. Leaders are highly committed to the further development of staff, which has led to high levels of confidence. An effective induction programme supports new staff in becoming fully committed to the school's Catholic life and mission. Other staff are Catholic life mentors, helping pupils to contribute to its evaluation and planning development actions for the year ahead. The school's policies promote a safe and caring ethos, ensuring that Christ-centred learning behaviours are embedded. Parents know the school provides their children with a nurturing and faith-filled environment which enables them to explore and strengthen their relationship with God.

## 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 enjoy religious education lessons and develop excellent knowledge and skills as a consequence. Pupils with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) are well catered for, as teachers adapt resources and work effectively with teaching assistants to ensure pupils achieve the best possible outcomes. There is clear evidence of pupils' independently reflecting and thinking on the themes of their lessons. For example, in Year 6, pupils connect different topics to form personal responses regarding those who have died for their beliefs in Christ. The opportunities pupils have to reflect spiritually and think ethically are strengthened by teacher questioning at the start of each lesson. Pupils actively engage in lessons through paired talk and discussion. Even the youngest pupils respond enthusiastically to the many varied teaching strategies their teachers use, such as exploring how the Pope calls them to be active by following in the footsteps of Jesus'. Impressive are the links pupils make with the Church's principle of solidarity. For many pupils, their attainment in religious education is above their achievements in other curriculum subjects, a triumph sustained over the last three years.

Staff teach religious education confidently and have high expectations of their pupils, which are clearly communicated. Many staff have excellent subject knowledge, and their skilful questioning enables pupils to learn exceptionally well. For example, in Reception, children respond meaningfully to the vocabulary and stimuli on display relating to the lesson. Teachers accurately model the use of technical language and use age-appropriate questions to extend pupils' knowledge. Teachers are supported in various ways to be innovative and improve their subject knowledge. For example, staff have worked hard to improve their questioning skills; consequently, they now adapt learning appropriately to maximise learning for all groups of pupils, particularly those with SEND. Teachers consistently follow the feedback policy so that pupils benefit from live marking. This further motivates them to improve their learning and respond to the challenge of applying religious beliefs to everyday life. Feedback does not, however, always instil awareness in pupils of what they need

to do to improve. Resources, including Bibles, are used effectively by staff and pupils to aid learning. Pupils' moral and spiritual development is effectively facilitated through extension questions, verbal and written, which support them to reflect at a deeper level.

Leaders and governors ensure that the religious education curriculum faithfully expresses the bishops' requirements. Subject content is carefully mapped to be effectively sequenced by building on prior learning, which supports pupils in knowing and remembering more. Leaders work on adapting aspirational targets for those with additional needs so that the curriculum is fully accessible. Links with the broader curriculum, utilising 'Building the Kingdom', embeds Catholic social teaching further and enhances the curriculum for all. Religious education has full parity with other subjects; timetabling and resources are of a high quality. Staff new to the school undergo a well-planned induction programme and receive support from mentors. The principal and the subject leader share a clear vision for teaching and learning and are very well-skilled in achieving this. The subject leader is an exceptional leader focused on striving for the best quality of teaching and learning. Her inspiring vision for outstanding learning outcomes ensures rapid action is taken to improve the school's achievements continually. Staff speak highly of her expertise, which they value greatly. The processes used for self-evaluation demonstrate a thorough approach, which always leads to strategic action being taken.

## Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

1

### 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

Pupils participate well in whole school prayer and liturgy, responding to the messages shared and relating them to their own lives. They participate confidently in liturgy, joining in with responses with a sense of purpose and embracing the opportunities they are given to pray through song, which they do with great joy and enthusiasm. Pupils understand various ways of praying that are part of the Catholic tradition, and pupil prayer leaders deploy a variety of spiritual celebrations for their peers. Pupil-led celebrations of the word in classrooms follow a 'gather, listen, respond and go forth' model for prayer. This enhances their experience of listening to God's word and thinking about its message for their lives. Pupils respond well to each other during prayer, and time is given for personal reflection, which elicits meaningful, age-appropriate responses. Opportunities for pupils to lead times of silent, reflective, and meditative prayers are not yet fully exploited. Pupils evaluate the quality of their liturgies, well. For example, after reflecting on a class prayer session, pupils felt inspired to attend the Rosary Club. This club is deeply valued by those who attend and speak confidently about what this way of praying means. Pupils' prayers enable them to ponder on the themes selected for worship. For example, Year 1 pupils have written prayers about Creation, thanking God for what He has provided, and prayers asking God to help refugees and to help open their hearts so they can welcome people into society with love. Pupils respectfully speak about prayer and the different ways they talk to God.

The centrality of prayer and liturgy is evident in all aspects of school life. The school is a prayerful community with Christ at its head. All staff are encouraged to participate actively in the prayer life, worship, and liturgy; staff lead prayers in meetings, staff briefings, and at other special times, including in the parish. There are strong family and parish links to support the developing prayer life of pupils; celebrations of the Eucharist and other liturgies take place throughout the school year. A parent told inspectors, 'Prayer is interwoven within everyday school life and is actively encouraged through initiatives such as Rosary Club, daily classroom prayer and weekly Mass'. Dedicated areas

around the school, including the spiritual garden, allow pupils to spend time praying and reflecting. Spaces are used well to ensure that prayer and liturgy are extraordinary; effective lighting, music, and religious artefacts transform areas such as the school hall into a sacred space.

School leaders have developed a prayer and liturgy policy that clearly sets their expectations and is securely embedded. The policy is fit for purpose because staff know its requirements and are supported very well to ensure that all in the school community experience high-quality prayer and liturgy. The principal, senior leaders and all staff prepare pupils to become confident leaders of prayer and liturgy. Pupils in Key Stage 2 can evaluate what they have designed and suggest what they could do better in the future, whilst younger pupils have yet to become skilful with this process. The governing body is active in its commitment to the school's prayer life and staff formation, further contributing to the school's very high standards. The senior leadership team and governors have a deep and genuine commitment to ensuring prayer and liturgy are given the highest priority, ensuring that the school continues to be a faith-filled community, inspiring its pupils and preparing them for the next stage in their faith journey.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	Abbey Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	147669
Full postal address of the school	Sutton Road, Erdington, Birmingham, B23 6QL
School phone number	0121 373 1793
Name of head teacher or principal	Joseph McTernan
Chair of governing board	Maria Stirrop
School Website	www.abbeyrc.bham.sch.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St John Paul II Multi Academy
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	4 to 11
Trustees	Archdiocese of Birmingham
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	December 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

## The inspection team

Krystyna Bickley

Lead inspector

Kerry Cox

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