

St Adrian Catholic Primary School

Watling View, St Albans, Herts, AL1 2PB

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 5 June 2019



Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education is outstanding

- The religious education curriculum fully meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory. It allows pupils to develop religious literacy in a lively, rich and creative way.
- Pupils' achievement and progress across all key stages is outstanding. Pupils' excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning play a significant part in their progress. They are eager to do well. They listen attentively to and take advice from their teachers on how to improve their work even further. They are articulate and confident when discussing topics and in writing tasks and enjoy their religious education lessons.
- Teaching across the school is outstanding. Teachers work in partnership with other teachers most effectively to plan learning and share ideas. This ensures that pupils receive high quality teaching that is matched closely to their needs and abilities.
- The school has developed comprehensive assessment procedures that enables them to evaluate pupils' progress accurately. As a result, teachers have a clear understanding of pupils' achievement and whether they need additional support or challenge. Staff use this information highly effectively to set appropriate work that challenges pupils' thinking.
- Governors know the school very well. They share the school's vision and support and challenge school leaders to ensure that the school continues to provide an excellent education for its pupils.

B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- The mission statement 'To learn, to love, to live as a community of God with Christ as our teacher' permeates life at St Adrian's. It is lived out in a very real way by the whole school community.
- Religious education is at the heart of this vibrant Catholic school. It fully meets the 10% of curriculum time as required by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.
- Prayer and worship are an integral part of daily life for pupils and staff. Pupils are provided with extensive opportunities to take part in and plan liturgies and acts of worship. Pupils fully appreciate the diverse opportunities for prayer and particularly enjoy taking home their class prayer book to share with their families as they write their own prayer.
- Strong partnerships with parents, the local parish and the wider Catholic community contribute significantly to the Catholic life of the school. Parents are overwhelmingly positive in their praise of the school.
- Pupils fully recognise their responsibilities towards the Common Good and are highly proactive in supporting those in need. They are dedicated to sharing their gifts and talents to the benefit of all.
- The dynamic head teacher, senior leaders and governors are relentless in promoting the Catholic ethos and culture of the school ensuring that the 'Mercy' legacy from their founders, the Sisters of Mercy, continues to thrive.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

The recommendations highlighted in the previous inspection have been fully addressed. The school has refined their cycle of planning, assessing, moderation and tracking to ensure that pupil outcomes in religious education (RE) are at least in line with their outstanding outcomes in English. Marking and feedback systems provide pupils with clear guidance on how they can improve their work. School leaders have worked diligently to ensure parents are provided with information in order to support their children with their home learning. In a recent survey, 95% of parents who responded agreed that regular and appropriate homework is set.

The content of classroom religious education is outstanding

The content of classroom religious education fully meets all the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD). All areas of the RECD are carefully mapped across the key stages giving pupils excellent opportunities to build up and extend their knowledge and understanding. Religious education is creative and dynamic, well planned and well-resourced and teachers use a variety of techniques to engage pupils with their learning such as art, music, drama and class blogs. Topics are revisited regularly and there is clear evidence to show the excellent progress pupils make as well as how their knowledge and understanding grows and develops as they move through the school. Teachers plan lessons collaboratively and this enhances their own knowledge of the RECD. Pupils have the opportunity to learn about other world faiths in a variety of ways from inviting guest speakers into school, visiting places of worship to learning from their peers. A pupil in Year 2 enjoyed sharing with her class her experiences of Ramadan and how her family celebrated Eid al-Fitr.

Pupil achievement in religious education is outstanding

Outcomes for pupils in religious education are outstanding and in line with other core subjects. School leaders have worked diligently to ensure that tracking procedures check achievement levels in religious education against those in reading and writing. During pupil progress meetings, progress in religious education is given as high a priority as that in English and Mathematics. Pupils make rapid and sustained progress throughout their time at the school ensuring that they move on to the next stage of their educational journey well prepared to explain their ideas and opinions. A significant number of pupils achieved the higher levels at the end of Key Stage 2 in July 2018 and rigorous monitoring suggests that this will continue this year. The religious education coordinators ensure that teacher assessments are accurate through regular training opportunities and moderation with the local family of schools and by attending moderation events organised by the diocese. Pupils demonstrate highly positive attitudes to their learning and are keen to do well and this plays a significant part in their excellent progress. They take teacher advice and feedback on board to continually improve their work. They are able to discuss their work confidently, outlining their strengths and areas for further improvement. They make good use of peer and self assessment and confidently set appropriate and challenging targets using the 'I can' statements. Pupils use religious language confidently and articulately both in written work and discussions to explain their ideas and demonstrate knowledge and understanding. Pupils regularly tackle the more challenging tasks set by their teachers demonstrating a thirst for knowledge and a desire to produce the best work they can. Work books are well presented showing the great pride pupils take in their work and the respect they hold for religious education.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

Teaching of religious education across the school is outstanding and never less than good. Teachers plan collaboratively ensuring that lessons meet the needs of individual pupils very well. Lessons are creative and capture pupils' interests; as a result, pupils engage with their learning enthusiastically and make rapid and sustained progress. Creative use of 'Godly Play' in the Early Years Foundation Stage was used to great effect to impart religious knowledge. Children were actively involved in retelling scripture stories which resulted in them using puppets, representing Jesus' disciples, to spread the Good News. Relationships are highly positive and this creates an excellent caring environment where all groups of pupils can grow and flourish in the secure knowledge that they are respected and valued. Teachers' thorough subject knowledge and deeper questioning skills challenge pupils to explain their ideas fully and so develop further their own knowledge and understanding. In Year 6 pupils were given the opportunity to deepen their understanding and think critically by linking Rembrandt's painting of the Prodigal Son with the account in Luke's Gospel and Christian beliefs. Marking and feedback is consistent across the school. It is of a high quality and enables pupils to reflect on their work and the ways it can be further improved. Home learning tasks are well devised and contribute well to pupils' learning; one parent commented that 'The homework is of benefit to us as a family, and usually brings about some fairly thought provoking conversations.' Pupils are rightly proud of their work and were keen to share it with the inspection team. They comment that home learning '... is not easy. It is challenging but exciting.' High teacher expectations are modelled for pupils. As a result pupils are beginning to replicate this expectation in their own learning through peer assessment. Robust rigorous tracking and monitoring systems are firmly embedded and these allow teachers to evaluate pupil progress accurately. Regular training and moderation with other schools and the diocese ensure the accuracy of teacher judgements. Additional adults are deployed well to support learning. They reinforce learning and ask pertinent questions to check understanding and correct misconceptions.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education is outstanding

Leaders have a clear and dynamic vision for the school, they ensure that religious education has the highest profile. The religious education team is highly proactive in ensuring that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils in a creative and lively way so that all can engage with their learning and make excellent progress. Regular lesson observation and work scrutinies provide staff with individual support to develop their own practice. Systems to track and monitor pupil progress are robust, rigorous and regular. Pupil progress meetings ensure that appropriate measures are put in place to support or extend pupils as necessary. As a result staff are deployed to provide focused interventions. The school's self-evaluation document is exemplary. Leaders know their school very well and have identified areas of strength as well as areas which still need to be developed. The introduction of the 'Religion Handbook' to guide all staff is an excellent tool to support staff in developing their subject knowledge and religious literacy but in particular for non-Catholic and newly appointed staff. Opportunities for professional development are well managed and a significant number of staff have gained their Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS) while another member of staff is currently undertaking the course. The religious education coordinators along with the head teacher are passionate in their commitment to continued improvement and strive for excellence.

What should the school do to develop further in classroom religious education?

- Continue to work on assessment, with particular regard to developments in diocesan recommendations.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

The recommendations highlighted in the previous inspection have been fully addressed. A 'Religious Education and Catholic Life' leadership team has been developed and Catholic Social Teaching takes a prominent position in school life. Pupils are fully active in the call to serve others.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

is outstanding

The school fully recognises that RE is at the heart of the school and it is given the highest priority receiving at least 10% of curriculum time as required by the Bishops' Conference. School leaders, including governors, ensure that religious education is well resourced in budgetary terms and staff receive the training and induction they require in order to contribute fully to the ethos and distinctive nature of the school. The importance placed on RE is clearly seen in the wonderfully vibrant displays both in classrooms and around the school. Beautiful Stations of the Cross, designed by the pupils, hold prominent positions at the entrance to each classroom. A wonderful Pentecost display in the entrance hall invites people to choose one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and demonstrate it throughout the day. Lovely classroom prayer tables, the prayer garden and the calm and respectful prayer areas around the school are added testimony to the centrality of RE within the school. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about religious education commenting that St Adrian's is 'a very strong Catholic school' and that the school provides 'a good moral compass.'

The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community

is outstanding

Worship and prayer are central to life at St Adrian's and both are woven into the daily life of the school. Pupils are offered a variety of ways to celebrate their faith. They have opportunities to celebrate the Eucharist, plan and lead assemblies and acts of worship for their class and celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The 'Chaplaincy Team' is an integral part of daily school life organising and supporting their peers through a diverse range of activities including Bible group, Gospel group and the Rosary group. Pupils have the opportunity to enjoy a variety of prayer experiences. The prayer garden and prayer areas around the school offer pupils the chance to enjoy a calm and reflective space to meet God in a busy day and so develop their spirituality. Pupils enjoy taking home their class prayer books, writing their own prayers and then sharing these with their peers as well as learning the traditional prayers of the church. The introduction of praying the Angelus every day has proved very popular. 'Prayer Friday' is enjoyed by all in the school community with one parent commenting that 'The 'Prayer Friday' gives me and my daughter the chance to pray together in another place other than church or home. From early in their time at St Adrian's pupils are taught how to prepare and lead acts of worship for their peers. They take on this role very conscientiously demonstrating a well developed understanding of scripture and the meaning behind Bible stories.

The contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice –

is outstanding

Pupils have a solid understanding of the call to human flourishing and the theology underpinning their actions. They fully appreciate their responsibilities in being guardians of the world commenting that 'Jesus gave us the world and we all need to share it. We need to help the poor particularly with the things we take for granted.' Pupils recognise in the school mission statement the value of each individual and the respect everyone deserves. Pupils actively engage in supporting those in need and support through many fund raising activities. They support a number of local, national and

international organisations including Cafod, Children in Need, Vineyard Church, the Catholic Children's Society and HCPT. They do however understand that they can provide support in other ways too and act as peer mediators and lunch time helpers, as well as visiting the elderly in a local care home and looking after the school prayer garden. A new merit recording system acknowledges not only academic success but also this service to others. Pupils' understanding of Catholic Social Teaching is clearly evident in the school. They fully appreciate how their actions affect others, how, despite being different, everyone is equal and how they are all called to love one another.

The partnership with parents, school and parish, and collaboration as an integral part of the diocese through its relationship with the diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf

is outstanding

The school enjoys excellent relationships with parents who speak very positively about their partnership with the school. In a recent survey, 98% of those who responded agreed that the school promotes strong partnerships saying 'I feel privileged that my children are educated at St Adrian's...' Class blogs, weekly bulletins, half termly newsletters, the 'Wednesday Word', 'Prayer Friday' and Parent Forum actively engage parents with their children's education and keep them abreast of what is happening in school. Parents are welcomed to celebrate Mass, assemblies, prayer and concerts with the school with one parent saying she was 'Thrilled with the introduction of Prayer Friday, my eldest daughter explains everything to her younger sister building her knowledge of her faith.' The arrival of the new parish priest along with the new leadership team has enabled a strong working relationship to be built up with the parish. The parish priest is regular visitor to school, celebrating the Eucharist, chatting with pupils in their classes, celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament during some 'Prayer Friday' celebrations. Pupils also have the opportunity to attend Mass in the church along with members of the parish community. Staff are well supported in their practice by attending training events and forging links with a family of local schools to ensure all opportunities are explored to contribute to the school's quest to provide the best experience for all in the school community. Former pupils welcome the opportunity to return to St Adrian's to share their experience of life at secondary school. The school takes full advantage of the opportunities offered by the diocese, senior leaders and the religious education team have engaged in professional development opportunities and conferences to further extend their practice.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school

is outstanding

All leaders share a common vision that St Adrian's should continue to build on the legacy of their founders, the Sisters of Mercy, and for the school Mission Statement 'To learn, to love, to live as a community of God with Christ as our teacher' to be fully present and lived by all in the school community. Leaders are passionate in ensuring that all pupils have a plethora of rich opportunities in which to grow and develop their spiritual life so that they can grow and flourish into well grounded young people ready to take their place on the next step of their life journey. St Adrian's is a vibrant, lively and engaging Catholic community where Gospel values are interwoven into the fabric of daily life. There are firmly embedded systems in place to support new staff and those from other Christian traditions. Governors are highly committed to their role in supporting the school and are regular welcome visitors. They share in the vision, are well informed and think and act strategically for the good of the whole school and the interests of every child.

What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?

- For the 'Chaplaincy Team', along with the 'Caritas Ambassadors', to plan and lead pupil initiatives to support the Common Good.

Information about this school

- The school is a one form entry Catholic primary school in the locality of St Albans, Herts.
- The school serves the parishes of St Bartholomew's, St Albans.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 95%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 2% and from other faiths is 0.5%. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 61%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is five with one teacher currently attending the CCRS course.
- There are 6% of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 2 have statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is below average.
- There is a below rate of families claiming free school meals.
- Twenty three pupils receive the Pupil Premium (10%).

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| Department for Education Number | 9193389 |
| Unique Reference Number | 117470 |
| Local Authority | Hertfordshire |

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary Aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4 -11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on roll | 232 |
| The appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Richard Belt |
| Headteacher | Mr Dominic Bedford |
| Telephone number | 01727 852687 |
| Website | www.stadrians.herts.sch.uk |
| Email address | head@stadrians.herts.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 1 st May 2014 |
| Grades from previous inspection: | |
| Classroom religious education | Very good |
| The Catholic life of the school | Very good |

Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out (i) under the requirements of the Canon 806 and (ii) in accordance with the Framework for Diocesan Inspections 2015 approved by the Archbishop of Westminster and (iii) under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

- The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection.
- During the inspection 8 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended one assembly and a number of acts of worship.
- Meetings were held with school staff, pupils and governors.
- Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

Mrs Angela Podmore

Lead Inspector

Mrs Cynthia Ni Loingsigh

Associate Inspector

Ms Carol Maguire

Associate Inspector

Information about inspection

The purpose of Diocesan inspection is to report to and advise the Archbishop on the quality of classroom religious education and the Catholic life of the school. The inspection report is also used to inform parents and carers, and the wider Catholic community. Inspection provides an opportunity to support, challenge, evaluate and promote the work of Catholic schools. It also assists schools in the work of self-evaluation and improvement, and enables the Diocese to celebrate with schools their sense of identity and their strengths as Catholic schools.

Inspection Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

This report is published by the Diocese of Westminster and is available at:

<http://rcdow.org.uk/education/schools>

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