

St. Augustine's Catholic Primary School

Riversmead, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire, EN11 8DP

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 11 February 2022



Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education is good

- Inspectors observed that attainment is at least as good as in other core subjects.
- Pupils are well behaved and their attitude to learning is consistently positive. This has an impact on the progress they make.
- Teaching is effective in ensuring pupils are consistently engaged in their learning. Good support is offered to ensure most pupils make good progress.
- Teachers use effective strategies that enable pupils to identify their next steps in learning.
- Leaders ensure staff are well supported and teaching is regularly monitored.
- There are good structures and systems in place to support teachers.
- The contribution of religious education to the Catholic life of the school is strong.
- The parish priest as link governor is actively involved in supporting religious education and contributes positively to pupils' learning.

Classroom religious education is not yet outstanding because

- Sometimes teacher subject knowledge is not yet strong enough to enhance deep learning experiences for pupils.
- The curriculum is not yet fully developed to ensure it is rich, relevant, and dynamic.

B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- St Augustine's excels at being a community based on Catholic tradition and practice.
- Religious education is at the heart of the school and is evident in the welcoming entrance hall and communal displays of pupils' work.
- Pupils lead prayer and worship on a regular basis. The celebration of the Eucharist is carefully planned, and other sacramental celebrations are offered at key times of the liturgical year.
- Pupils and their families are actively engaged in helping those in need. Partnerships with parents, school and parish are judged to be outstanding.
- This is an engaging and vibrant Catholic community that supports all staff to participate in and contribute to, the Catholic life of the school.
- The leadership team including governors is the driving force in the school's commitment to the education of young people with a vision for discipleship for life.
- Governors make a highly significant contribution to the work and Catholic dimension of the school.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

The focus of the last inspection was to continue monitoring the development of classroom religious education, in particular the maintenance of pace and challenge in lessons. Since the last inspection, St Augustine's has continued to improve. Leaders have developed structures and systems to address the pace of lessons resulting in more active pupil engagement in learning.

Creativity is evident in communal areas and planning also demonstrates cross curricular links. Planned visits and events enrich the religious education curriculum.

Pupils are engaged in religious education; they are articulate and demonstrate good religious literacy.

The content of classroom religious education is good

The *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* forms the basis of the content of religious education in St Augustine's Catholic Primary School. Leaders have included a study of other religions in the curriculum and have celebrated this work for all to see in the school hall where displays are vibrant and engaging. Leaders have sought to ensure the curriculum is creative and this is clearly visible in displays of religious education through artwork that enhance the communal areas. The valuable contribution by the parish priest ensures that pupils have many opportunities to engage with their faith and inspectors observed that these opportunities are planned effectively to maximise learning potential. Pupils' learning is further enhanced by relevant use of scripture. Bibles are readily available and used effectively in lessons. Leaders provide staff with training opportunities to ensure progression across year groups, however on occasion there are missed opportunities to utilise staff expertise, impacting on the effectiveness of these sessions.

Pupil achievement in religious education is good

Attainment in religious education is generally as good as in other core subjects. St Augustine's is using levels of attainment to measure progress and has engaged thoroughly in internal moderation to ensure consistency of approach. Prior to the pandemic the school also worked with other Catholic schools to benchmark. Progress is good and this is evidenced in high quality work in books. Pupils clearly take pride in their work and were keen to talk to inspectors about their progress. Pupils are religiously literate and can use scripture effectively to enhance discussion. In a Year 5 class observed, pupils looked at James 5:14-16 and discussed what James expected of his followers while making links with Jesus' healing miracles. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils were engaged in a lesson where they explored the symbols used in the sacrament of anointing of the sick. Further challenge was clearly planned and accessible for pupils; they enjoy their learning and know what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour supports effective learning in class. Pupils work well independently; they enjoy peer discussion and are challenged to improve their work. Those with additional needs are well supported by highly effective input from teaching assistants across all key stages. Learning is enhanced by the deployment of adults in the classroom. Teaching strategies are effective, there was evidence of effective questioning in an observed Year 6 lesson that really encouraged pupils to consider their responses in a meaningful way.

Good progress is made by most pupils, in some lessons however the theology underpinning teaching was not sufficiently developed to further extend and challenge pupils' learning in RE.

The quality of teaching**is good**

Teaching is good resulting in pupils making good progress in religious education and achieving well over time. In an observed Year 6 lesson, pupils demonstrated good religious vocabulary and were adept at using Bibles to support their learning. As a result of very clear lesson structure, pupils were engaged and supported. It was evident that the teacher had high expectations of pupils. Inspectors observed a positive climate for learning in all year groups; pupils are interested, engaged and eager to do well. They are provided with effective feedback and know what to do to improve their work. Pupils enjoy receiving feedback and could explain to inspectors how they needed to respond to what the teacher had written. In some year groups knowledge organisers are used effectively and are of high quality. The use of these knowledge organisers clearly empowered learners and helped pupils understand the theology underpinning their learning, however there is a lack of consistency of approach to using knowledge organisers.

Assessment procedures are thorough, teachers plan different levels of challenge for pupils. Homework contributes well to pupils' learning; its enrichment focus is creative in approach and enables pupils to deepen their knowledge and understanding. Parents value religious education homework experiences.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education**is good**

The leadership of religious education is good, there is a commitment to ensure high standards. Leaders have a clear vision and commitment to the school's key role in the educational mission of the Church. Religious education influences all aspects of the school. Leaders have considered how to support early career teachers and those new to teaching in a Catholic school. St Augustine's has engaged with the diocesan Foundation Stones training programme as well as providing in-school weekly religious education training sessions. Staff appreciate the support of the religious education leader. The shared focus training before every unit of study, as well as the weekly training sessions, ensure staff engage in shared observations. As a result, there are opportunities for sharing ideas. Leadership actively supports staff training sessions. However, the subject knowledge of some staff is not strong enough to plan effectively and ensure pupils gain a deep theological understanding of the topic being taught. Teaching is monitored regularly over time and the leader of religious education provides concise and constructive feedback.

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

- Strengthen teacher subject knowledge by utilising the expertise of leaders and resources available.
- Further develop the curriculum for religious education to ensure it is relevant and inspiring for pupils.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

Since the last inspection, St Augustine's Catholic Primary has continued in its efforts to help pupils see the integrity of their life and faith. During this inspection it was clear from the religious literacy of pupils, the high-quality displays around the school and the welcoming entrance area that this has been achieved. The charism of the school is celebrated, and work is beautifully displayed both digitally and through artifacts, thereby addressing the second key focus of this area in the last inspection: to find out more about the school's history and display it, letting pupils, parents and visitors see who founded it, who the first headteacher was and the school's special charism and vision.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum is outstanding

Religious education receives 10% of curriculum time at all key stages as directed by the Bishops' Conference. It is clear to all who enter St Augustine's that religious education is at the heart of the school. Inspectors observed that the building was clean, bright, and attractive to enter. Displays draw the visitor in and beautiful religious artifacts create an environment that celebrates the high quality of Catholic education offered. It is evident to all that religious education is at the core of the curriculum in every classroom through the prominent displays around prayer tables. The displays speak to the visitor and tell a story of how pupils are engaged and celebrate moral issues, other faiths as well as their own work in class. The parish priest's visits are regular, well planned and highly effective in ensuring impact. The chair of governors explained that St Augustine's has recently joined with the Cardinal in his vision for Catholic education by becoming part of the St. Francis of Assisi Academy Trust. Governors and the leadership team offer outstanding support and guidance in reviewing the place of religious education in this school. The governing body is actively involved in self-evaluation processes and is highly supportive of the work the school is undertaking to ensure staff have opportunities to receive diocesan training.

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

Pupils take a lead in planning collective acts of worship and the pupil chaplaincy team regularly works with younger pupils to help with worship. Pupils experience a range of traditional prayer opportunities and incorporate meditative prayer as well as their own prayer into worship. St Augustine's offers daily opportunities for pupils to pray and reflect. The liturgical year is the foundation of all experiences. These opportunities as well as the very close links with the parish clearly demonstrate the school's understanding of itself as a Catholic worshipping community. So much so that some parents drive long distances to be part of this spiritual community. Some families have been attending St Augustine's for generations, such is the strong bond between home, school, and parish. Leaders in this school plan opportunities for pupils to ensure the widest possible experiences of the breadth and richness of the Catholic prayer tradition. Parents and pupils alike value working with the Wednesday Word seeing it as supporting prayer both in school and in the home. Recent lessons online were welcomed by parents who really appreciated the way pupils' spiritual development is enabled. They recognised that for the pupils, prayer is deeply embedded in their daily routine.

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

As demonstrated in a celebration assembly observed, pupils are offered opportunities to celebrate their gifts and talents as individuals as well as a class community. Pupils have an in-depth understanding of the call to serve and could articulate how they worked to raise funds for CAFOD, the British Heart Foundation and Children in Need. There is also a long-standing tradition of contributing to the local food bank. Pupils are actively engaged in supporting those in need and understand the theology underpinning their actions. They are aware of their role in the world and can clearly express issues around action for justice. Pupils were keen to discuss with inspectors how they plan and deliver presentations on moral issues in society for the Gospel assembly and were delighted to inform inspectors that the chair of governors is usually in attendance.

Inspectors observed that pupils have very strong relationships with each other and with staff. Staff also demonstrate strong and supportive relationships with each other as well as with pupils. Staff who are Christians from other denominations feel well supported as do early career teachers. It is clear that respect for each other and value of the individual is a strength in this school.

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

Inspectors met with parents outside school, participated in a meeting during the inspection and had analysis via a very well responded parent survey. As a result, partnerships are judged to be outstanding. Parents are very supportive of St Augustine's Catholic Primary School and explained how they value the work of the parish priest and the staff in school. Parents are pleased to support the school in its fundraising efforts and mentioned that this continued through the pandemic. In particular, they were delighted how the parent body responded to the "Giving Tree" at Christmas as they took an active role in organising this event. Parents also support each other and the school by selling 'almost new' uniform. Parents appreciate the school open door policy; they value how approachable leaders are and the support offered at times of struggle and bereavement. Parents' appreciation of the work done in school demonstrates in an outstanding way that key relationships are both meaningful and have a positive impact on this community. The parish priest is working with the school to encourage families back to Mass after the pandemic; they are working together on Mass responses so parents and carers can assist in helping pupils participate fully in the Mass. As a member of St. Francis of Assisi Trust since 2021 the school has developed close links with other Catholic schools; governors and school leaders are very keen to ensure St Augustine's commitment to being part of a diocesan community of schools. They value being part of this trust and look forward to building strong impactful relationships in the future.

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

Pupils proudly demonstrated that they understand the school mission statement, 'We come to school to live and learn happily together, by loving ourselves and each other, as Jesus teaches us'. and they explained to inspectors that that this impacts on their behaviour in school. It is a meaningful statement for pupils, they identify with it and strive to live up to its expectations. The leadership of St Augustine's is fully committed to the Church's mission as is evidenced in their commitment to supporting the St. Francis of Assisi Trust. This recent development is viewed as a means for everyone in the school community to experience the richness of opportunities of a Catholic way of living. Leaders are committed to ensuring that there are excellent systems in place to support the induction of new staff as well as staff from other Christian traditions. One staff member from another Christian tradition

explained to inspectors that she felt a sense of belonging in St Augustine's school community; she explained that her contributions are valued, and she is actively able to participate in the Catholic life of the school. An early career teacher articulated that she feels very well supported by the leader of religious education.

Governors are fully involved in the strategic leadership of St Augustine's, they support the school with energy and enthusiasm, are keenly aware of issues facing the school and have a strong plan in place to move the school forward. There are clear systems in place for receiving the views of staff, parents and pupils. Leaders are reflective and constantly challenge themselves to ensure that no aspect of the school's daily life is left unobserved as they find ways to enable pupils to express their Catholic identity.

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

- Plan for progression in prayer in all its forms across key stages.

Information about this school

- The school is a single form entry Catholic voluntary aided school in the locality of Hoddesdon.
- The school serves the parish of St Augustine's Hoddesdon.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 212 (90%).
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 14 (6%) and from other faiths is 9 (4%).
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 30%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 2.
- There are 3 (1.3%) of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 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 (55 = 23.2%).
- There is a well below average rate of families claiming free school meals (17 children).
- 17 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (7%).

Department for Education Number

9193345

URN

117438

Local Authority

Hertfordshire

Type of school

Primary

School category

Voluntary Aided Academy

Age range of pupils

3-11

Gender of pupils

Mixed

Number of pupils on roll

237

The appropriate authority

The Local Governing Body

Chair

Mrs Norah Flatley

Headteacher

Mrs Gillian Napier

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Date of previous inspection

26 November 2015

Grades from previous inspection:

Classroom religious education

Outstanding

The Catholic life of the school

Outstanding

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 1 assembly and 3 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.

Ms Evelyn Ward

Lead Inspector

Mrs Carol Ransom

Associate Inspector

Miss Aisling Meehan

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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