



# ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

## INSPECTION REPORT

### ST AUSTIN'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

#### ST HELENS

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Inspection Date 11<sup>th</sup> February 2020

Inspectors Mrs. Denise Hegarty, Mrs. Angela Williams

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Acts 2005 and 2011

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Type of School Catholic Primary

Age range of pupils 3 - 11

Number on roll 212 including Nursery

Chair of Governors Mr. Mike Burke

Headteacher Mrs. Patsy Wade

School address Heath Street  
Thatto Heath  
St Helens  
WA9 5NJ

Telephone number 01744 678000

E-mail address [staustinrc@sthelens.org.uk](mailto:staustinrc@sthelens.org.uk)

Date of last inspection 26<sup>th</sup> November 2014

# Introduction

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Acts 2005 and 2011

The report of the inspection is produced for the Archbishop of Liverpool (Code of Canon Law 804 and 806) and for the governors of the school.

The inspectors are members of the Christian Education Team and their associates approved by the Archbishop of Liverpool for this purpose.

## Information about this school

- St. Austin's is an average sized Catholic Primary School situated in Thatto Heath in the St Helens area of the Archdiocese and serves the parish of St Austin's.
- The school is a strategic partner in the St Helens Teaching School Alliance and a member of WC7 network of schools.
- There are 212 children on roll of whom 173 are baptised Catholic, 4 come from other Christian denominations and 34 have no specified religious affiliation. There is 1 pupil at the school who comes from another faith or religious tradition.
- There are 10 teachers at the school, 8 of whom are baptised Catholic. Ten teachers and 1 Higher Level Teaching Assistant teach Religious Education. Eight teachers have a suitable qualification in Religious Education.
- Since the last inspection, a new Religious Education Co-ordinator is in post.

### Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires Improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

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# OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

St. Austin's is a good school in providing Catholic Education with some outstanding areas.

## CATHOLIC LIFE

### The extent to which the pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school

- The extent to which the pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.
- Pupils appreciate, value and actively participate in the Catholic Life and mission of the school.
- They reflect on the school's Mission Statement each year, participate in the evaluation of the Catholic Life and mission and help to plan improvements to it.
- Working with a photographic company, pupils have produced a representation of their school and its mission. This is proudly displayed in the main entrance of the school for the community to see and celebrate.
- Since the last inspection, pupils have helped to develop a grotto area and design a Marian trail with the local community. They have also produced a mosaic and prayer garden which is regularly visited by members of the local community.
- Pupils show a respect for themselves and others as made in the image and likeness of God. The behaviour of most pupils is excellent. At interview, children told the inspectors that, '...everyone is caring and kind' and 'they shine like a star'. Pupils are respectful and polite to each other. This excellent behaviour has been commented favourably on by others in the wider community.
- They have had the opportunity to write their class rules with the school motto as a basis. In the lower age groups, GIFT was the basis and in the older age groups, GIFT OF LOVE was used. Pupils clearly understand what the initials stand for, e.g. F = Follow in Jesus' ways, T = Treat others with respect, and strive to live out their rules on a daily basis.
- They show an understanding of the need to forgive, be forgiven and of how to make good choices. They recognise that they will be rewarded house points and certificates for good behaviour, effort and achievement and know that there are consequences for them if they do not behave appropriately.
- Pupils accept the responsibilities of living within a Catholic school community. As a result, they are regularly involved with those activities which promote the Catholic Life and mission of the school both within school and the wider community. Within the school, pupils are empowered to take up roles of responsibility e.g. as peer listeners, school councillors, eco councillors, road safety officers to name but a few, and do so willingly and enthusiastically.
- Pupils designated as 'Agony Aunts and Uncles' monitor the school *Worry Box* and empathetically suggest answers to anonymous problems from children around the school during assembly times. Other pupils appreciate the advice given by their peers.
- Pupils are aware of the needs of others and seek justice for others within and beyond the school community. They actively raise funds for and promote awareness of a number of charities including, Nugent's 'Good Shepherd' Fund, WaterAid UK, CAFOD etc. They often do this proactively by taking part in community sports and enterprise projects e.g. by organising football tournaments, cake sales etc. They have recently sold stationery items for the Roy Castle Cancer Appeal Fund. Pupils in Years Two and Five have adopted animals in danger of extinction instead of receiving end of term gifts from their teachers.

- Year Six pupils attend an annual Careers Fair where they have opportunities to ask questions about different jobs and roles in the community. This enables them to develop aspirations for the future.
- Pupils are aware of the importance of their health and well-being and are producing a book to show how they can improve this aspect of their lives.
- They value and appreciate the presence of the parish priest. They enthusiastically and willingly participate in opportunities provided by the school, such as visits to church and the cathedral.
- Pupils respond very well to the opportunities the school provides for their personal support and development. They are secure in their own stage of physical, emotional and spiritual growth. As a result, they are happy, resilient and confident.
- The pupils appreciate the number and variety of extra-curricular activities on offer and enjoy participating in seasonal sport, music etc. They also benefit from educational visits including e.g. visits to the art gallery, museum visits to see the Terracotta Army. They have also enjoyed listening to the stories of visitors to school e.g. during the 'Meet Your Muslim Neighbour' project. These experiences help to widen their horizons and often contribute significantly to their spiritual development.
- Pupils in Years Four Five and Six benefit greatly from residential opportunities at Plas Caerdeon Outdoor Education Centre in North Wales. These enable pupils to develop self-confidence, esteem and to develop the ability to work in teams for the good of all. They are also able to appreciate, with awe and wonder, the beautiful scenery and history that surround them in that area.
- Pupils, appropriate to their age and capability, have a good understanding of loving relationships within the context of a Christian understanding.
- Pupils embrace a holistic approach to education, understand what it means to have a vocation and recognise the importance of using their gifts in the service of others. The choir, for example, enjoy singing at local residential homes for the elderly several times during the year.
- At Christmas time, pupils use their linguistic skills to write and perform Nativity plays in French. They proudly perform them for other local schools and community members.
- Pupils value and respect the Catholic tradition of the school and its links with the parish community and the Archdiocese. As a result, they respect and are involved willingly and loyally with parish and Archdiocesan celebrations and activities.
- Pupils are very proud of their culture and heritage as evident in their depictions on the A-Z wall which shows what the curriculum means to them in their school and community context. This is linked to critical thinking and the values they hold close to them. Many other displays around the school support pupils' spiritual development and enable them to reflect on their life choices.

## **The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school**

- The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.
- The school Mission Statement and school motto, 'Grow in Faith Together', alongside their aims and objectives clearly express the educational mission of the Church.
- The school's mission is proudly displayed across the school in classrooms, on exercise books and is written on the pathway in the school meadow.
- Staff are committed to its implementation across the curriculum and the whole of school life. They participate in school activities which reflect the Catholic Life and mission of the school, such as staff prayer, Continuous Professional Development on Catholic Life. They place an emphasis on the Growth Mindset Learning which also helps to create a positive learning environment.

- The ethos of the school is tangible and evident in the excellent relationships that exist and in the wonderful school environment that truly reflects its mission and identity through obvious signs of its Catholic character. Many beautiful displays grace the walls and corridors and indicate the great work that is undertaken in caring for the environment and how the school celebrates its Catholic Life and pupils' achievements.
- There is a clear sense of community at all levels, evident in the high quality of relationships and the centrality of prayer to the whole community.
- Staff promote high standards of behaviour and are very good role models of mutual respect and forgiveness for pupils. In following the Mission Statement, staff promote a positive atmosphere through their use of praise and encouragement. This contributes to good relationships where children take an increasing responsibility for their own learning and behaviour, are encouraged to learn from mistakes and put them right when possible. This contributes to the calm, purposeful and happy atmosphere that prevails across the school.
- The school has four Houses named Faith, Love, Hope and Peace. Pupils are awarded house points for positive behaviour and good work ethic etc. Each House has its own House Captain.
- The curriculum reflects a commitment to Catholic Social Teaching, to care for our common home and to the dignity of every human person. The school has achieved an Eco Award.
- The school provides many opportunities for the spiritual and moral development of pupils and staff.
- Children take turns to take home a Travelling Crib during Advent and a Easter Mystery pack during Lent to share with their families at home and to support home / school links.
- The parish priest is a regular and popular visitor who is highly effective in supporting and promoting the Catholic Life of the school.
- Excellent policies and structures are in place, which provide outstanding pastoral care to pupils, and there is a commitment to the most vulnerable and needy in both policy and practice. Pupils' well-being is a priority for the school and it is proactive in helping all pupils, parents and staff to achieve their personal best and build their emotional, social, mental and physical wellbeing. Vulnerable pupils and those in need of extra support have access to social skills groups, play therapy sessions and outside agencies e.g. CAMHS etc. if necessary.
- The school has achieved a Mental Health and Well-Being Award and an Anti-Bullying Award. There is a 'Well-Being Champion' responsible for co-ordinating and delivering the school's mental health and well-being strategy.
- The school has a regard for the pastoral needs of staff and members' needs are understood and catered for. The school uses a specialist software package for monitoring safeguarding, wellbeing and all pastoral issues which helps to ensure that both children and adults in school are safe and fully supported. All are encouraged to speak out and ask for help if necessary.
- Personal, Social and Health Education and Relationships and Sex Education are planned, well taught and reflect Catholic teachings and principles.

### **How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school**

- Leaders and governors are outstanding in promoting, monitoring and evaluating the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.
- Leaders and governors demonstrate a deep commitment to the Church's mission in Education. They are well regarded as models of Catholic leadership by both staff and pupils. The development of the Catholic Life of the school is viewed by leaders and governors as a core leadership responsibility.
- The provision for the Catholic Life of the school is given a high priority by leaders. This is reflected in the school's self-evaluation which involves monitoring, analysis and self-challenge and is clearly focused on the Catholic Life of the school and the Mission Statement.

- The motto, 'Growing in Faith Together', that emanates from the Mission Statement permeates every aspect of school life. Leaders encourage pupils to have faith in God, in those around them and in themselves.
- This leads to planned improvements to further enhance the Catholic Life of the school. The Mission Statement and all related policies are regularly reviewed and updated.
- The head teacher is a mentor for the North West Catholic Dioceses Training Partnership's Catholic Leadership Programme and has supported aspiring Catholic leaders from across the Archdiocese. She has also supported a local Catholic school as executive head teacher.
- Continuous Professional Development focusing on the Catholic Life of the school occurs and is very effective. Consequently, staff have an excellent understanding of the school's mission and are involved in shaping and supporting it.
- The school has successful strategies for engaging with parents and carers to the benefit of pupils, including those who might traditionally find working with the school difficult. As a result, they have a good understanding of the school's mission and are supportive of it. The school website and weekly newsletters share a wealth of information pertaining to the Catholic Life of the school. The school also provides learning sessions for parents.
- Parental questionnaires are analysed, concerns considered, and improvements planned accordingly by leaders and governors
- There are strong links with local high schools including the provision of suitable transition programmes for all pupils in Years Five and Six.
- The school places great emphasis on its links with other countries around the world including France, Zimbabwe and China. It has achieved many national accreditations including the International School Award for the fifth time. Feedback from the British Council was complimentary. This gives the community a global perspective through international and intercultural experiences.
- There are very close links with the parish and both the deacon and parish priest are regular and active visitors within the school. Together with other governors, they attend the weekly awards assembly and annual awards evening when possible.
- Leaders provide governors with regular, up-to-date reports of the Catholic Life of the school.
- The governing body is ambitious for the Catholic Life of the school and leads by example in the way it emphasises Catholic Life as a school improvement priority. Governors make a very good contribution to the Catholic Life of the school. They are committed to the school's mission, are involved in its evaluation and are ready to challenge as well as support where necessary.
- Staff and governors experience spirituality days together at Christmas, Easter and at the start of each term.
- The school responds very well to Archdiocesan policies and initiatives and promotes the Archdiocesan vision throughout the school. The school supports the parish *With You Always* sacramental preparation programme well. It regularly attends services and celebrations at the Metropolitan Cathedral e.g. Schools' Advent Service, Good Shepherd Lenten Service

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

### How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

- The extent to which pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is good.
- From their varied starting points, pupils make good progress in each key stage.
- Groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs, are also making progress comparable to the progress of other pupils.

- Pupils, relative to their age and capacity, are religiously literate and engaged young people who use their knowledge, understanding and skills, to reflect spiritually and to think ethically and theologically. Consequently, pupils are aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. At interview on the day of inspection, the children cited many examples of how what they had learned in their Religious Education lessons had practical application for the way they lived their lives.
- Pupils are actively engaged in lessons and are committed to improving their knowledge, understanding and skills, in order to further develop as competent learners. They work very well in groups or independently and remain on task throughout.
- Pupils concentrate well, understand how well they are doing, know what they need to do to improve, and can articulate how they have made progress.
- Pupils approach their lessons with interest, enjoyment and enthusiasm. In lessons observed, it was evident that pupils enjoyed their various activities and responded enthusiastically to any opportunities which extended their learning.
- Behaviour in lessons is generally excellent because pupils enjoy Religious Education and disruptions in lessons are unusual.
- Pupils' attainment, as indicated by teacher assessment and formal assessment, is good. On the whole, pupils achieve age expected standards.
- The quality of pupils' current work, both in class and in written work, is good. They present their work well and proudly and articulately discussed it with inspectors.

### **The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education**

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education is good.
- Most teachers plan lessons linked to pupils' current assessment so that pupils learn well. As a result of this, teaching is at least good.
- Teachers are confident in their subject expertise and have a very good understanding of how pupils learn. As a consequence, pupils apply themselves well and make good progress in lessons and over time.
- Teachers employ a range of appropriate strategies, including individual and collaborative work. This helps pupils to concentrate in lessons and motivates them to learn.
- Teachers ensure pupils are involved in evaluating how well they are achieving. This contributes to their good progress and increases their confidence in making further improvements.
- Teachers manage time well to secure learning in lessons and across sequences of lessons.
- They use observation and questioning during lessons in order to adapt tasks and explanations, so improving learning for pupils.
- High quality resources, including Information and Communication Technology are used effectively to optimise learning for pupils. Additional adults in the classroom make a significant contribution to learning.
- Teachers communicate high expectations about behaviour and attitude to work in Religious Education to their pupils, and they respond positively.
- Curriculum plans are inclusive to all pupils and take into account and cater for differing learning styles. However, teachers must consistently offer achievable learning outcomes linked to tasks provided.
- Differentiation is generally by outcome, grouping and support. The 'driver words' (skills levels) contained in the draft *Standards of Attainment in Religious Education* should be used more effectively and consistently across the school to pitch work at the appropriate level. This would ensure that tasks are more successfully differentiated to challenge pupils and ensure the needs of all are met.

- Assessments are undertaken in line with Archdiocesan expectations and kept in individual books which are passed up the school. In this way, their development can clearly be seen. Progress is tracked on the school's tracking system and indicates that standards achieved by pupils are generally in line with national expectations.
- Good feedback leads to the engagement, interest, achievement and progress of pupils. Pupils are given the opportunity to respond, which improves their understanding of what they need to do to improve further.
- Praise and affirmation are used very well across the school. Achievement and effort are celebrated leading to high levels of motivation from pupils. They are very eager to please their teachers.

## **How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education**

- Leaders and governors are good in promoting, monitoring and evaluating the provision for Religious Education.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the Religious Education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference in every respect and in each key stage.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the required amount of curriculum time is given to Religious Education in each key stage. Timetables are scrutinised to safeguard the 10% provision.
- Leaders and governors ensure that Religious Education is comparable to other core curriculum subjects, in terms of professional development, resourcing, staffing and accommodation. A suitable budget is provided for the subject and spending priorities are outlined in the subject action plan.
- Any additional requirements and policies of the Archdiocese regarding the Religious Education curriculum are fully implemented.
- Leaders' and governors' self-evaluation of Religious Education reflects frequent assessment, tracking, monitoring, analysis and self-challenge which is informed by current best practice in Religious Education. This results in strategic action taken by the school which leads to at least good outcomes in Religious Education. Action plans are carefully monitored by leaders and governors.
- A monitoring and evaluation schedule is in place which includes lesson observations and drop in sessions undertaken by senior leaders. The learning environment is monitored regularly and indicates that displays are of a high standard. A co-coaching approach is taken to feedback sessions.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge has been developed through in-service training and the sharing of ideas within the school, the local cluster group and opportunities provided by the Archdiocese. Newly qualified teachers and teachers new to the school receive good support and have access to a staff induction handbook.
- The curriculum leader for Religious Education has a clear vision for teaching and learning and a good level of expertise in securing this vision. These are used to improve teaching and learning in Religious Education, resulting in teaching that is likely to be at least consistently good. She attends local cluster group meetings which help with moderation and the sharing of good practice. Good documentation has been produced which guides the staff in their delivery of the subject. Newsletters are provided for parents and carers to keep them informed about what their children are learning and enable them to support their Religious Education.
- The link governor for Religious Education meets termly with the subject co-ordinator to monitor progress towards action plans. Governor reports are completed termly for each governors' meeting.



- There are strong links with the parish clergy who support the Religious Education programme extremely well. The parish priest is very generous with his time to enhance the curriculum. The school frequently uses the church as a learning resource as well as a place of worship.
- Leaders and governors ensure that Religious Education is planned to meet the needs of different groups of pupils and to secure coherence across different key stages and phases.

## **COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

### **How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship**

- Pupils' response to and participation in the school's Collective Worship is good.
- They act with reverence and are keen to participate in Collective Worship. They sing joyfully, reflect in silence and join in community prayer appropriately and with confidence.
- Pupils, particularly those in Years Five and Six, regularly prepare and lead worship with confidence, enthusiasm and a degree of independence. They are thoughtful in their planning of liturgy. Other pupils are engaged by the worship opportunities planned by their peers.
- Pupils in all classes help to prepare for their class Masses. They write, read and often sign their prayers. They lead Christmas and Easter services and reflections in Church and Advent and Lent assemblies in school to which parents and carers are invited. Pupils in Key Stage Two prepare readings, meditations and prayers for their Stations of the Cross services during Lent. They lead the annual ecumenical carol service in one of the churches.
- Pupils reported that they found their times of worship peaceful and calm. One said, 'It gives us time to think how we can relate it to our lives'.
- Pupils use a variety of approaches to prayer which includes scripture, religious artefacts, liturgical music and other forms of prayer both traditional and contemporary. Dance, role play, music and art are often included in worship sessions.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of the Church's liturgical year, its seasons and feasts and the approaches this requires in the planning of appropriate worship opportunities.
- The experience of living and working in a faithful, praying community has a positive impact on the spiritual and moral development of pupils, irrespective of ability or faith background. They have a well-developed sense of respect for those of other faiths. This is reflected in the way many pupils participate in prayer and liturgy.

### **The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school**

- The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is good.
- Collective Worship is part of the life of the school and prayer is included in all school celebrations. Praying together is part of the daily experience for pupils and staff.
- Collective Worship has a purpose, message and direction. The themes chosen for worship reflect a good understanding of the liturgical seasons and the Catholic character of the school. It is important that a passage from scripture forms the heart of each Collective Worship.
- Collective Worship is given a high priority in terms of planning, evaluating and resourcing; as a result, experience of Collective Worship is engaging and all members of the community speak positively about these opportunities. A wide range of materials is available to enhance worship.
- Relevant staff have a very good understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts and ensure that pupils have suitable and extensive experiences of the Church's liturgical life.
- Staff are skilled in helping pupils to plan and deliver quality worship when appropriate. They have a good understanding of the purpose of Collective Worship and the variety of methods and styles of prayer.

- Worship takes place in a variety of places including church, classrooms, the school hall and in the prayer space at the grotto in the school's meadow area.
- The school's international dimension and global learning are often celebrated through Collective Worship and assemblies.
- Opportunities are planned in a manner that facilitates attendance by other adults associated with the pupils and school.

### **How well leaders, governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship**

- Leaders and governors are good in promoting, monitoring and evaluating the provision for Collective Worship.
- Leaders know how to provide policies and guidelines to plan and deliver quality Collective Worship and they ensure requirements are met. The policy needs to be updated to reflect the school's current practice.
- They have an excellent knowledge and understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts and have forged strong links with the parish and parish clergy. Senior leaders regularly lead and model Collective Worship often alongside the parish priest.
- They make times of the Church's liturgical year fully accessible to the pupils in a contemporary context.
- Leaders and governors promote pupils' planning and leading of Collective Worship.
- It is a while since leaders have offered professional development of staff incorporating liturgical formation and the planning for Collective Worship and it is recommended that in-service is provided to ensure all staff fully understand the purpose of worship and the liturgical structure used.
- Leaders and governors regularly review Collective Worship as part of their self-evaluation processes.
- Governors are regular visitors to school assemblies, Collective Worship, Masses and services throughout the year. They fully appreciate the provision that is made.

## What the school needs to do to improve further

- Raise the standards of attainment in Religious Education further by:
  - ensuring all staff members fully understand the language of the standard descriptors and use the driver words (skill levels) from the draft *Standards in Religious Education* in their planning, questioning, teaching, marking and feedback so pitching work at the appropriate level to challenge all pupils;
  - ensuring that the activities provided for pupils to undertake enable them to meet an appropriate learning outcome for each lesson;
  - using the class learning journals to record the 'Respond' part of the process in *Come and See*.
- Further develop the work being undertaken in Catholic Life by:
  - continuing to develop a curriculum map for Relationships and Sex Education;
  - continuing to embed *Journey In Love* into lessons to support Relationships and Sex Education and keeping evidence of children's work in this area.
- Further develop the provision for Collective Worship so improving pupils' experiences by:
  - updating the policy to reflect current practice and give clear directions for staff to follow;
  - ensuring that Scripture forms the heart of all Collective Acts of Worship sessions and all parts of the structure are connected to the chosen Scripture passage;
  - providing in-service training for all staff to ensure they have a clear understanding of the liturgical structure for worship;
  - continue to develop children's leadership skills in planning and delivering Collective Worship in an age appropriate manner.
- Continue to address the areas identified on the Self Evaluation Document and the Religious Education Action Plan.

# INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

## OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education	2
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## CATHOLIC LIFE

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	1
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school	1

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education	2
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education	2

## COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	2
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	2
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship	2

***Key to judgements: Grade 1 is Outstanding, Grade 2 Good, Grade 3 Requires Improvement and Grade 4 Inadequate***