



THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF
ARUNDEL & BRIGHTON
EDUCATION SERVICE

Denominational Catholic School Inspection Report

St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School

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School Unique Reference Number: 126046

Headteacher:	Mr Tim Hallett
Chair of Governors:	Mr Sean Herbert
Lead Inspector:	Mrs Elizabeth Hargreaves
Associate Inspector:	Miss Fiona McGonigle
Inspection date:	23 rd March 2022
	Previous Inspection: 2
Overall Effectiveness	This Inspection: 1
Catholic Life:	1
Religious Education:	1
Collective Worship:	1

Summary of key findings for parents/carers and pupils/students

St Francis of Assisi is an Outstanding Catholic school because:

- The Headteacher provides inspirational leadership. He is supported by a strong governing body and staff team who share his drive for excellence in Catholic education.
- The mission statement has been updated by all stakeholders with 'God is at the heart of our school' as the key element.
- The school follows diocesan guidelines and policies and has positive links with other Catholic schools in the deanery and diocese.

- School self-evaluation is accurate and reflective and is strongly evidence based. It is focused on raising standards in religious education which was evidenced in lesson observations and the pupils' work.
- The school community embraces and nurtures all within it. Excellent relationships between staff, parents/carers and pupils is a feature of the school.
- The Chair of Governors is excellent in challenging the school in a supportive manner that places pupils at the centre of all decision making.

- Lessons are carefully planned to enable all groups of pupils to achieve well and pupils' workbooks are exemplary.
- Marking and feedback is consistently very good and as a result pupils make good progress.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and they are proud to belong to the St. Francis of Assisi school community.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School is a two-form entry, voluntary aided Catholic Primary School in the diocese of Arundel and Brighton. It is maintained by West Sussex Local Authority. There are currently 420 pupils on roll, 82% are Catholic.

The school serves Crawley and Horley parishes. 11.0% of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above the national average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. The school takes pupils from 4 – 11 years old.

Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is generally lower than expected levels. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to religious education is at least 10% in all Key Stages.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Continue to enable pupils to develop their skills in planning and leading liturgy and worship.
- Ensure that opportunities for staff development remain a high priority in addition to the spiritual development of all pupils.

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

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

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The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is Outstanding.

In St Francis of Assisi almost all pupils value and actively participate in shaping the Catholic life and mission of the school and this is reflected in the new mission statement.

The message 'God is at the heart of our school' is tangible and demonstrated by the respect shown to all members of the school community.

The behaviour of almost all pupils is exemplary and pupils are alert to the needs of others. This was observed in the pupils' spontaneous prayers in whole school worship and by the use of class prayer jars that contained prayers written by pupils and used as part of the liturgies in religious education lessons. The prayers demonstrated the pupils' awareness of the need to pray for wider world issues as well as other people within their school community.

The quality of provision of the Catholic life of the school is Outstanding.

The mission statement is a clear and inspiring expression of the educational mission of the church. It has been reviewed and updated by all stake holders and the pupils enjoyed receiving specially made bookmarks on which was printed their new mission statement.

Pastoral care is a high priority and the school has a designated mental health worker for the pupils. Pastoral programmes, including RSE and PSHE are consistently well planned and taught, and celebrate Catholic teaching and principles.

Commitment to those in need is clearly illustrated and charities supported by the school include Crawley Open House, Macmillan Cancer Trust, St Vincent de Paul Society, Missio, Oxygen for India, PLACE2BE and CAFOD.

Parent/carer questionnaires showed that almost all parents/carers strongly agreed that the school helped their children to build positive relationships and provide clear moral teaching. One parent said 'with the recent pandemic restricting our attendance at Mass, it has been wonderful to know that our daughter's religious education has continued to flourish. We are so fortunate that our child attends a school that chooses to live out the Gospel in all they do'.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school is Outstanding.

The Headteacher provides inspirational leadership and is supported by a strong governing body and staff team who share his drive for excellence in Catholic education.

The Chair of Governors is excellent in challenging the school in a supportive manner that places pupils at the centre of all decision making. The religious education link governor undertakes regular monitoring visits across all key stages.

Parent/carer voice shows that the school has highly successful strategies for engaging almost all parents/carers to the benefit of pupils, including those who might traditionally find working with the school difficult.

The Parent Friend Association support the school through welcoming new Reception parents/carers. In recent years St Francis of Assisi has had a greater influx of children with EAL, particularly Polish. Positive integration into the school community is encouraged, whilst still allowing for cultural diversity to flourish. As a result, all pupils and parents/carers have a strong sense of belonging to a community that celebrates difference and diversity. During the inspection one parent said how the school staff had gone out of their way to support her and enabled her to support her children, for whom English was not their first language.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.
- The quality of teaching and assessment in religious education.
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education.

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How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education is Outstanding.

Almost all pupils, from their varied starting points, make good progress in each key stage. The presentation of pupils' work is outstanding.

Most groups of pupils are actively engaged in lessons and try hard to improve. They can articulate how they have made progress and are proud of the work in their religious education books.

Inspectors observed lessons that had a variety of cross-curricular links and creative tasks designed to challenge, engage and support learners, especially for those pupils with additional needs.

Pupils evaluate their work and reflect on how religious ideas are integrated into their lives and across the curriculum. 'Driver' words are used to ensure tasks are focused and planned to allow pupils to make links. Attainment is at least in line with diocesan averages, based on previous moderation, although the last two years have shown some inconsistency due to the disruption to school life.

The school has evidence files of a rigorous monitoring schedule.

The quality of teaching and assessment in religious education is Outstanding

Teachers employ a wide range of appropriate teaching strategies and tasks and are confident in their subject knowledge. Consequently, pupils are motivated and apply themselves diligently. Teachers manage time efficiently and lessons are extremely well resourced.

A range of cross-curricular activities were observed, including small world play, roleplay and other drama activities, music, art and sequencing. Tasks were structured to promote independent learning and the pupils expressed how much they enjoyed their religious education lessons.

Teachers made good use of the outside spaces and support staff demonstrated their skills as they assisted groups of pupils and encouraged the use of 'driver' words. One group of pupils were excited to share with inspectors the 'Easter Gardens' they were making outside. Success criteria is regularly shared in lessons to enable pupils to know what they have achieved and interactive marking and feedback is a strength.

Year 6 pupils were on a residential visit. However, inspectors were able to view many of their books, which were exemplary, and a 'zoom' meeting was arranged to include the Year 6 Liturgy Leaders in pupil voice interviews. These pupils spoke with enthusiasm about their role and how they helped other children in the school.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education is Outstanding.

Leaders and governors ensure that the religious education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops Conference in every respect and in each key stage.

The pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage were observed as receiving totally appropriate provision and one parent commented, 'we are incredibly happy with the religious education and opportunities the school is providing and look forward to more as my child grows in the school'.

The Headteacher has taken on the responsibility of religious education subject leader during the last year to cover a maternity leave. The Headteacher has an inspiring vision and a high level of expertise to improve teaching and learning, and a strong determination to ensure religious education teaching and learning continue to be a strength. Religious education was also given a high priority as a subject during the pandemic.

Lessons are imaginatively planned and taught and are consistently good with many being outstanding across all key stages, based on the 'Come and See' programme.

Leaders and governors ensure that at least the required amount of curriculum time is given to religious education in each key stage and that there is full parity with other core curriculum subjects including professional development and resourcing.

Assessment is used effectively and leaders and managers use a rigorous monitoring schedule for evaluation. Internal and external moderation is planned to ensure consistency in judgement. This year, moderation was organised out of the local deanery to evidence best practice.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP / PRAYER AND PRAYER LIFE

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP AND PRAYER LIFE

- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's collective worship and prayer life.
- The quality of provision for collective worship and prayer life.
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship and prayer life.

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How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's collective worship and prayer life is Outstanding.

The whole school act of worship observed was linked to Lent and the Stations of the Cross with the message 'let us reflect, let us pray, let us act'. Pupils came into the space calmly to music being sung by the school choir, which sang beautifully and created a prayerful atmosphere. Both traditional and spontaneous prayers were prayed with reverence.

Pupils led the reading and acting of three of the stations with reverence and everyone participated with a sung response. Key Stage 2 pupils also sang in harmony during one of the hymns observed.

Pupils are encouraged by the Year 6 Liturgy Leaders to plan their own class liturgies and some pupils told the inspectors how they liked being helped by Year 6. When asked, the pupils were able to explain some of the key elements needed for a liturgy and the importance of the liturgically coloured cloths on prayer tables for the different times in the liturgical year of the Church.

Class liturgies happen regularly and parents/carers said they were invited to these and enjoyed sharing the liturgies with their children. Pupils were able to say what different religious signs and symbols were used and how some of these helped them to pray. Pupils are encouraged to engage in whole class meditation and all pupils who participated did so fully.

There is a deep respect for different faiths and this is reflected in the inclusive manner in which pupils prepare and share the liturgy.

The quality of provision for collective worship and prayer life is Outstanding.

Praying together is part of all school activities, this includes staff who pray together regularly. These experiences have a significant impact on the school's sense of community.

Collective worship has a clear purpose, message and direction and the themes chosen for worship reflect a deep understanding of the liturgical season.

Parents/carers are regularly invited to share feast days, Masses and class liturgies.

Pupils confidently and clearly led a 'Mission Together' class liturgy. They invited responses from their peers on the Gospel reading, showing sensitivity and inclusion. Pupil responses showed real depth, understanding and empathy. One pupil shared how the Prodigal Son felt 'low, devastated; his heart felt empty'.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is Outstanding.

Leaders and governors know how to plan and deliver quality experiences of collective worship. Liturgical and spiritual development is part of the professional development cycle for all leaders. They also ensure that all staff in the school receive formation in the development of spiritual and liturgical understanding as a staff training priority. Due to the culture of receptivity that leaders have created, response to this training is wholehearted and enthusiastic.

Leaders and governors are highly visible as leaders of collective worship within school. They are models of good practice for staff and pupils.

Collective worship is regularly reviewed as part of the school's self-evaluation processes. Leaders and governors seek the views of pupils, staff and parents/carers regarding the quality and significance of collective worship in school and respond to these findings appropriately.

Summary of Inspection Judgements

Catholic Life

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

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The quality of provision for the Catholic life of the school.

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How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school.

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Religious Education

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How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.

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The quality of teaching and assessment in religious education.

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How well leaders and governors monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education.

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Collective Worship and Prayer Life

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How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's collective worship and prayer life.

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The quality of provision for collective worship and prayer life.

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How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship and prayer life.

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