

# St Agnes Catholic Primary School

Thorverton Road, Cricklewood, London, NW2 1RG

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 10 February 2022



## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### A. Classroom religious education is outstanding

- Pupils are provided with a stimulating and creative curriculum based on the effective delivery of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* which engages pupils and ensures excellent progress in religious literacy.
- Pupils are confident in the use of religious literacy; this was evident in lessons observed and is a significant strength of the curriculum.
- Pupil attainment and progress is consistently high. There has been an upward trend over the last three years of pupils' attainment at the end of both key stages.
- The teaching in all key stages is outstanding and never less than good. As a result, almost all pupils make rapid and sustained progress. Teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils.
- The use of questioning is exemplary in developing the thinking of pupils.
- Teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils. Lessons are thoroughly planned and are creative, engaging and challenging.
- The quality of the leadership and management of religious education is outstanding. There is a dynamic and creative vision for religious education in which staff and pupils strive consistently for excellence.
- Pupils are enthusiastic and display a thirst for learning new concepts. Behaviour is exemplary and is demonstrated in high levels of commitment to their learning. Pupils enjoy RE at this school.

### B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- RE is at the heart of the school and it is evident to all that RE is at the core of the curriculum through its status on the timetable, the allocation of curriculum time and the resources allocated to it.
- The school excels in offering daily opportunities for pupils to pray and reflect. Prayer is woven into the fabric of the school.
- Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school for pupils and staff. Engaging, innovative and creative experiences of the richness of the Catholic tradition are provided; the celebration of the Eucharist and other sacramental celebrations are offered at key times of the liturgical year, with pupils' actively participating in the preparation and planning.
- Not only do pupils actively engage in acts of service but they have an excellent understanding of the theology underpinning their actions.
- The school enjoys very high levels of parental support and satisfaction. Parents are very grateful for the work of staff as demonstrated in a recent survey, especially during the Covid lockdowns.
- The school's leadership team is fully committed to the Church's mission in education and demonstrates this in a dynamic and consistent way. The headteacher and leadership team are excellent role models as Catholic leaders committed to the Church's mission of education.
- This is an outstanding Catholic school that is not complacent but continually strives for excellence.

## A. Classroom Religious Education

### What has improved since the last inspection?

In the previous inspection the school was given three targets to improve the teaching and learning in RE. Firstly, 'building teachers' confidence, knowledge and accuracy of interpretation in respect of the new units of work'. This target has been successfully met. Prior to beginning a new unit of work, teachers have half termly planning sessions which have resulted in improved staff confidence in the delivery of the RE curriculum. Secondly, 'sharpening the focus of the assessment tasks in Years 5 and 6 so that pupils can more readily gain the highest available levels in Attainment Target 1'. This target has been successfully met. The school has worked hard to develop their assessment processes so that teachers can accurately identify age related standards. Thirdly, 'build in more opportunities to allow the pupils to access Attainment Target 2'. This target has been successfully met. The planning of the RE curriculum ensures that this aspect is included throughout the units of works. Big questions have been introduced within the RE classroom discussions, where pupils have the opportunity to articulate their views and have their thinking challenged.

### The content of classroom religious education is outstanding

Pupils are provided with a stimulating and creative curriculum based on the delivery of the Bishops' Conference Curriculum Directory in such a way as to engage pupils and ensure excellent progress in religious literacy. In an innovative Year 1 lesson exploring the concept of revelation, pupils wrote on the playground making links between how Christians see God in the lives of others. Another example of creative RE that engages and enthuses pupils in their learning was the use of song; pupils wrote their own lyrics and performed their songs demonstrating their theological understanding of Advent. Explicit links are made between the Curriculum Directory and the medium-term planning in such a way as to provide teachers with a clear guide for their lessons. The programmes of study and schemes of work provide a systematic study of God, the life and teaching of Jesus and the Church, the central beliefs that Catholics hold and the relationship between faith and life and illustrate where, when and how key aspects of the content are taught and assessed. The teaching of other faiths is covered well and the link with a local Jewish primary school is having a positive impact on pupil learning. There is a wide range of evidence of how topics are revisited throughout the delivery of the curriculum over all key stages to show progression and greater depth of provision. The resources for teaching RE are strong, for example the purchase of new Bibles has supported independent learning.

### Pupil achievement in religious education is outstanding

Pupils are confident in the use of religious literacy; this was evident in lessons observed and is a significant strength of the curriculum. There is a whole school approach to the learning of specialist RE words and the RE newsletter to parents promotes religious literacy with parents. Pupil attainment and progress is consistently high - there has been an upward trend over the last three years of pupils' attainment at the end of both key stages. Pupils excel through high expectations and engagement in their own learning. All groups of pupils make excellent progress in religious education. Staff are attentive to the needs of all pupils. The moderation of pupil work, both internally and externally, provides a confident basis for making judgements about pupil learning. Pupils are enthusiastic and display a thirst for learning new concepts; behaviour is exemplary and is demonstrated in high levels of commitment to their learning. Pupils enjoy RE at this school.

### The quality of teaching is outstanding

The teaching in all key stages is outstanding and never less than good. As a result, almost all pupils make rapid and sustained progress. Teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils. Lessons

are thoroughly planned and are creative, engaging and challenging. The learning is made visible to pupils through the sharing of lesson success criteria. Teachers are confident of their subject knowledge enabling them to develop exciting and engaging resources for their pupils. In a lesson that developed the concepts of the sin of omission and the sin of commission, the teacher skilfully guided pupils in consolidating their understanding. The use of questioning is exemplary in developing the thinking of pupils. In a lesson on identifying and explaining the seven sacraments, questioning was used to correct misconceptions and thus rapidly secure pupil understanding. Teachers systematically and effectively check pupils' understanding throughout lessons. Time is well used, and every opportunity is taken to develop skills. In a lesson on the sacraments, the teacher's use of modelling their expectations enabled pupils to make effective progress in making links to scripture. Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent. Teachers' marking is strong and pupils respond well to questions which extend their thinking and aid progression. Homework is regularly set and includes setting verbal discussions with parents about RE topics which are captured through IT. The use of teaching assistants to support pupil learning is very effective. For example, in a lesson on the links between the Mass and the Last Supper, there was clear evidence that the teaching assistant collaborated with the class teacher in the planning of the lesson and this had a positive impact on pupil learning.

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

The quality of the leadership and management of religious education is outstanding. There is a dynamic and creative vision for religious education in which staff and pupils strive consistently for excellence. The subject leader has a passion for RE and a strong understanding of the centrality of RE in the mission of the Church. Systems in place to monitor the work of teachers and track the progress of pupils are highly effective. The subject leader relentlessly focuses on improving teaching and learning, resulting in teaching that is generally outstanding and never less than good. Planning in phases each half term develops teachers' understanding of the subject content and enables progression and creativity across the key stages. Teacher subject knowledge is developed through continuing professional development. Induction of new staff is very strong. Teachers who demonstrate outstanding practice are encouraged to model, lead and support others in sharing good practice and improving standards in RE. There is targeted support and training for teachers based on the outcome of monitoring. Lesson observations carried out by members of the leadership team and with accompanying class teachers is very effective in sharing good practice. This is an example of excellent practice. The self-evaluation form was judged to be accurate and inspectors were able to validate the judgements of the school. The subject leader has an excellent understanding of the strengths and areas for development in RE.

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

- Further embed assessment processes in line with the Age Related Standards in RE.

## B. The Catholic life of the school

### What has improved since the last inspection?

In the last inspection the school was given the single target to 'develop even further the opportunities for and the practice of the pupils in contributing their talents in the celebration of the liturgy'. This target has been successfully met. There has been regular staff training on prayer and liturgy which has resulted in more opportunities for pupils to take an active participation in preparation and planning. For example, in Key Stage 2 pupils work collaboratively to plan and prepare their class Mass choosing the theme, readings and hymns.

### The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

**is outstanding**

RE is at the heart of the school and it is evident to all that RE is at the core of the curriculum through its status on the timetable, the allocation of curriculum time and the resources allocated to it. All classes receive the 10% curriculum time as required by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. Every classroom has a dedicated display that supports pupil learning in RE and celebrates their achievements. Senior leaders and governors are fully committed to supporting and developing RE within the school. They offer excellent guidance and challenge to the RE leader. The parental survey demonstrated that the vast majority of parents recognise the importance of RE in the school. The induction programme for new staff ensures that they are aware of the significance of RE within the school.

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

**is outstanding**

Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school for pupils and staff. Engaging, innovative and creative experiences of the richness of the Catholic tradition are provided; the celebration of the Eucharist and other sacramental celebrations are offered at key times of the liturgical year, with pupils' actively participating in the preparation and planning. The school excels in offering daily opportunities for pupils to pray and reflect. Prayer is woven into the fabric of the school; pupils experience prayer at the start of the day, before lunch, after lunch and at the end of the day. After lunch pupils experience a short period of meditation that provides an excellent opportunity for spiritual development. Pupils appreciate this part of their day; a pupil in Key Stage I stated that in the daily meditation they 'feel closer to God'. Pupils' liturgical formation is well planned to ensure the widest possible experience of the breadth and richness of the Catholic tradition of prayer and liturgy. The introduction of Christian meditation across the school is an example of expanding the experiences of pupils. A school assembly on the theme of St Valentine demonstrated creative ways in which the lives of saints can provide a model of living in today's world. The outdoor prayer garden is used well by pupils. During various Covid lockdowns, the school worked hard to support the spiritual development of pupils with virtual assemblies and liturgies, providing guided opportunities for prayer. This was appreciated by parents and demonstrated the school's ability to foster parental support. Prayer and liturgy class books effectively record pupil engagement in the prayer life of the school. These class books celebrate high levels of pupil engagement and demonstrate the excellent opportunities they have for quiet, reflection, sharing and discussion.

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

The school has a dynamic and creative understanding of the call to ‘human flourishing’ and provides excellent opportunities for pupils to develop and celebrate their gifts and talents as individuals and as a community. The school council along with other positions of responsibility ensure that pupil leadership is a key feature of the school. All gifts are recognised and celebrated, and pupils are encouraged to share with others, which illustrates their understanding of the call to serve. The Friday celebration assembly ensures that pupils are regularly recognised for their achievements. Pupils have a deep sense of their duty to others and are actively engaged in supporting those in need, such as the Trussell Trust Food Bank, Cricklewood Homeless and CAFOD. Not only do pupils actively engage in acts of service but they have an excellent understanding of the theology underpinning their actions. This has been achieved through innovative cross curriculum planning. In each topic unit (not RE lessons), there is an explicit link made to Catholic Social Teaching. For example, in a topic on the Somerset level flooding, the principle of solidarity is woven into the lessons. This is an example of excellent practice that could be widely shared in the Diocese. The development of pupil positions of responsibility such as the ‘social action leaders’ is a good initiative.

**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 very high levels of parental support and satisfaction. Parents are very grateful of the work of staff as demonstrated in a recent survey, especially during the Covid lockdowns. Parents are encouraged to join school events as appropriate. Parish links are very good and the foundation for further development is there. The school uses the parish church for Mass. The school serves the diocese by providing support to other Catholic schools, with the headteacher supporting leaders in other schools.

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

The mission statement is a strong expression of intent and informs all policies. The statement, ‘The family of St Agnes loves, learns and grows together as followers of Jesus’ is understood by pupils. The school’s leadership team is fully committed to the Church’s mission in education and demonstrates this in a dynamic and consistent way. The headteacher and leadership team, are excellent role models as Catholic leaders committed to the Church’s mission of education. As a result, high standards are consistently maintained across the school; staff are invested in ensuring that the distinctive Catholic nature of the school is retained and enhanced. The school’s self-evaluation is a coherent and highly accurate reflection of the school and inspectors were able to validate the judgements made. There are excellent systems in place to support the induction of new staff. The governors give excellent support in terms of their effective scrutiny of the Catholic life of St Agnes, and they provide energy and enthusiasm in supporting the strategic leadership of the school. This is an outstanding Catholic school that is not complacent but continually strives for excellence.

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

- Further develop home, school and parish links through innovative strategies.

## Information about this school

- The school is a two form entry Catholic primary school in the locality of Barnet.
- The school serves the parish of St Agnes, Cricklewood.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 81%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 6% and from other faiths is 5%. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 83%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 12.
- There are 17% of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 13 have statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average.
- There is a well above average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 111 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (27%).

<b>Department for Education Number</b>	305/3502
<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	101332
<b>Local Authority</b>	Barnet

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary Aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 -11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	418
<b>The appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Gill Abbott
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Susan O'Reilly
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8452 4565
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stagnesnw2.co.uk">www.stagnesnw2.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:office@stagnes.barnetmail.net">office@stagnes.barnetmail.net</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	10 December 2015
<b>Grades from previous inspection:</b>	
<b>Classroom religious education</b>	Good
<b>The Catholic life of the school</b>	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 12 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.

Mr Matthew Dell

Lead Inspector

Miss Tracey Peters

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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