



DIOCESAN CANONICAL INSPECTION REPORT

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL, RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

St Patrick's Catholic Voluntary Academy Harrison Road, Leicester, LE4 6QN

School URN:	146147
Inspection Date:	18 May 2022
Inspectors:	Mrs D Tibble and Mr A Harrison

Overall Effectiveness	Previous Inspection:	Good	2
	This Inspection:	Good	2
Catholic Life:		Outstanding	1
Religious Education:		Good	2
Collective Worship:		Good	2

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Patrick's Catholic Voluntary Academy is a good Catholic school.

- The headteacher is a passionate and inspirational leader, who is ambitious for the school. She works tirelessly to ensure the pupils at St Patrick's see Christ in all people. Parents appreciate the support which the school provided during the pandemic and are unanimous in their support for the school. One parent wrote, 'It feels like a blessing when my child brings home his knowledge and understanding of different scriptures from the Holy Bible'.
- Religious Education at St Patrick's is good. Pupils are religiously literate and engaged young people. They use their knowledge and skills effectively to reflect spiritually and think deeply, ethically and theologically, making links to a range of sources. Pupils make strong progress in their Religious Education. There are however, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, which should be addressed in order to maximise learning for all pupils.
- The Catholic Life of St Patrick's is outstanding. The mission statement, 'Christ with me wherever I go, Christ around, above, below,' is truly lived out by all stakeholders. The school is a missionary school which has inclusivity at its heart. As a result, pupils have a deep understanding and appreciation of the support which they receive within the school community.
- Opportunities for Collective Worship are richly valued throughout the school. The quality of communal singing is uplifting and enhanced through the use of signing. Praying together is a huge part of the daily, community experience. Staff now need to spend more time on finding ways to encourage greater pupil leadership within the variety of liturgies which take place throughout the school.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- St Patrick's Catholic Voluntary Academy became part of the St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi-Academy Trust on 1st September 2018. The school serves two parish communities: St Patrick's, Leicester, and Our Lady of Good Counsel, Leicester.
- St Patrick's is an average sized primary school, with 220 pupils on roll. 62% of pupils are baptised Catholics, 17% of pupils are from other Christian backgrounds and 20% of pupils are from other faith traditions.
- St Patrick's serves a diverse community, with 85% pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium (which provides the school with additional funding for pupils in local authority care, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for pupils from service families) is 15%, which is below the national average figure.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is 16%, which is higher than the national average. 2.3% of pupils have an education, health and care plan (EHP), which is slightly higher than the national average.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

■ Catholic Life:

Ensure the headteacher's inspirational vision is embraced by all staff so that the strong sense of community is further embedded and enhanced by:

- Ensuring the school mission and identity is reflected more obviously throughout the school environment.
- Strengthening the involvement and commitment of all staff in promoting the school's Catholic identity, particularly through participation in Acts of Worship.

■ Religious Education:

Provide greater consistency in the quality of teaching in terms of observing and questioning pupils and through the use of a wider range of appropriate strategies in order to adapt tasks and explanations which maximise learning for all pupils by:

- Strengthening systems for checking pupils' understanding within lessons so that teachers have a greater understanding of what all groups of pupils know and subsequently greater challenge can be provided.
- Ensure that independent learning is promoted, rather than over-scaffolding support.
- Strengthen the range of teaching strategies used in order to ensure greater active participation of all pupils within lessons

■ Collective Worship:

Further strengthen Collective Worship so that pupils grow in confidence and level of skill when planning and leading worship, so that their peers are engaged more by:

- Providing greater opportunities for all pupils to experience planning and leading aspects of whole school and wider community liturgies.
- Ensuring pupils regularly prepare and lead worship with more self-reliance and creativity.

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 for 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 – outstanding

- Pupils appreciate, value and actively participate in the Catholic Life of the school. There has been a sharp focus on virtues to live by, which has resulted in Catholic virtues permeating all aspects of school life. Consequently, the behaviour of pupils is exemplary; pupils show respect for each other's views, demonstrate forgiveness and have a strong sense of belonging.
- All pupils have a strong understanding of Catholic social teaching; their strong sense of justice has inspired them to take ownership of a wide range of fundraising initiatives. The school truly serves its community and pupils clearly recognise that they have gifts which can be used for the service of others.
- The school has many opportunities for pupils to demonstrate *Missionary Discipleship*. Pupils enjoy being members of: the eco team, taking care of God's creation; the chaplaincy team, leading younger pupils in prayer and helping to develop Collective Worship; the mini vinnies, who meet regularly to pray, support and discuss how they can to help make a difference in the community.
- Pupils value the provision of chaplaincy within the school. This is well supported by the expertise of senior leaders in school, the parish priest, lay chaplain and lead lay chaplain for the St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi-Academy Trust. Pupils appreciate the range of worship available to them. Pupils report that they find the regular opportunities to go to the prayer room 'peaceful and spiritual'. The experience of *Lectio Divina* helps to enrich the theological literacy of Key Stage 2 pupils, allowing them to link the impact of this worship with both their relationships and their Religious Education.
- Almost all pupils show a deep respect for Catholic traditions, which are manifested in the rich experiences strategically planned and offered by the school. Pupils benefit hugely from the positive links between school, home and parish. The school has strong links with the St Thomas Aquinas Multi-Academy Trust and the diocese and, as a result, pupils respond enthusiastically to joint celebrations, irrespective of their own faith backgrounds.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school – outstanding

- The leadership and management, through the drive of the headteacher and supported wholeheartedly by the governing body, is deeply committed to the Church's mission in education. Together with the teaching staff, all are highly ambitious for the Catholic Life of the school.
- The strong sense of community at St Patrick's is tangible. Staff and pupils are inspired by the school's mission statement, 'Christ with me wherever I go, Christ around, above, below'. This is lived out by staff and pupils alike and is evident in the strong relationships which exist within the school. The mission statement is central to all that takes place in the school.
- St Patrick's school prioritises the provision of Catholic Life. All classrooms have well organised prayer spaces, which are updated regularly; the school benefits from a newly developed prayer room which provides a safe space for pupils to reflect spiritually. The Catholic Life of the school is visible and reflects the school's Catholic character. However, this could be further strengthened by ensuring consistency of approach, so that all liturgical displays are attractive, informative and inviting.
- The behaviour policy is closely adhered to, supporting pupils always to be 'Ready, Safe and Kind'. The written policy reflects the core Catholic values of forgiveness and reconciliation. Pupils feel safe, saying 'Jesus is in our hearts' as a clear indication that members of the school community are living out the mission to follow their faith. Pupils are able to talk about using resources such as 'head, heart and cloud' as a way of developing a personal relationship with God to guide them in their thoughts and actions.
- The school's systems and policies for pastoral care are fully evident with an outstanding commitment to the most needy and vulnerable. The school encourages and promotes parental involvement in the implementation of the Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) programmes which celebrate Catholic teaching and principles.
- The high standards of moral and ethical behaviour are evident in both adult and pupil relationships within the school community. Personal responsibility and justice, along with healing and reconciliation, are promoted through the school's planning of Catholic social teaching.

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

- The school mission statement is clearly linked to the educational mission of the Church. Since her appointment, the headteacher has had a major impact on the school's Catholic Life. Through her vision, she is passionate about the promotion of good relationships giving the school drive and direction in order to empower all stakeholders within the St Patrick's parish-school community.
- The local governing body is ambitious for the school and acts as a critical friend, supporting, encouraging and questioning senior leaders, thereby ensuring that the school is focused on 'leading people into a personal relationship with God'.
- Governors have many opportunities to monitor the Catholic Life of the school, attending worship, including Mass, and speaking to pupils. They are passionate about the development of the Catholic Life of St Patrick's, ensuring that it centres itself on Catholic values and virtues.
- A range of stakeholders contribute in a planned and systematic way to the evaluation of the Catholic Life and mission of the school and take a lead in planning improvements to it. For example, pupils have ownership of the charities for which the school fundraises and the activities they undertake.
- The school is promoted by a small team of active and knowledgeable governors who are keen to ensure the quality of Catholic Life. They discharge this duty through formal monitoring systems which are effective in helping the school continually improve in this most important aspect of school life. The school would now benefit from additional governors becoming involved in this work in order to ensure that the monitoring and evaluation tasks do not become too arduous.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION	2
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- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.
- The quality of teaching, learning 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 – good

- Overall, pupils make strong progress in learning from their starting points. Pupils are well supported in school and make gains in their religious literacy, so that by the time they reach Year 6, pupils are confident and passionate in discussing scripture and can make excellent links between a wide range of sources. As a result, pupils are able to think ethically and theologically. This enables them to have a strong sense of commitment and responsibility in living out the Catholic faith, particularly to support those less fortunate than themselves.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about their Religious Education lessons. They articulate their learning with increasing confidence and are expected to work hard. In the most successful lessons, pupils are actively involved in their learning and are able to write at length.
- Pupils have a growing understanding of their next steps in learning. They are provided with differentiated success criteria, linked to driver words, which they use to good effect. Pupils understand the level at which they are working and many pupils use these to further challenge themselves.
- Behaviour for learning is strong in lessons. Pupils listen carefully to each other and are respectful of each other's views; they enjoy their Religious Education lessons and demonstrate high levels of concentration, working hard to ensure they meet the expectations set for them. Pupils understand what they need to do to complete tasks and are keen to discuss and share their learning.
- Pupils with additional needs are very well supported across school and have their needs well met; inclusion is a real strength of St Patrick's.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education – good

- Across the school, teachers demonstrate confidence in their subject knowledge. In the best lessons, teachers use this strong subject knowledge, combined with careful observation and probing questioning, to provide additional challenge for pupils, encouraging them to think more deeply: for example, open-ended questioning was used to good effect to deepen pupils' understanding of why Moses asked for help from God to free the Israelites.
- In the best lessons, pupils are actively involved, as teachers utilise a range of teaching strategies, for example 'hot seating', therefore reducing their own teacher-talk. Where teaching is less successful, an over-reliance on teacher-talk and dependence on PowerPoint presentations results in pupils becoming increasingly passive learners.
- Where teaching is most successful, tasks are well matched to pupils' abilities, providing pupils with independence when recording their work: this enables them to achieve the learning objective. In other lessons, an over-reliance on work sheets and heavily scaffolded tasks, limits pupils.
- Good quality feedback has ensured that pupils understand their next steps in learning. Pupils understand the school's marking policy and are actively involved in responding to feedback, which supports them to further develop their understanding of the improvements which they need to make.
- Presentation in pupils' workbooks is inconsistent. There is often a reliance on worksheets, particularly in Key Stage 1. Attention should now be given to provide pupils with greater opportunities to write at length, without being limited by the over-use of writing frames.

The extent to which leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education – good

- Leaders and governors ensure that the Religious Education curriculum meets the requirement of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. The curriculum also provides appropriate opportunities for the teaching of Relationships and Sex Education through the *'Journey in Love'* scheme.
- The headteacher has an accurate view of the strengths and areas for development in Religious Education. These have been shared with the local governing body and included as a priority on the school development plan.
- Leaders and governors have ensured that Religious Education is comparable to other core subjects in terms of budget, resourcing and professional development. Leaders are fully committed to diocesan initiatives, ensuring full engagement in diocesan training events. Where inconsistencies have been identified through monitoring, a robust package of training has been provided.
- Governors have had opportunities to monitor Religious Education through reports from the headteacher, data reports, monitoring of pupils' workbooks and also through opportunities to visit lessons, including monitoring online learning during the Covid pandemic. Consequently, governors have an accurate view of strengths and areas for further development in Religious Education. Whilst governors have received data reports, impact could be further strengthened by enabling governors to articulate how pupil outcomes compare to diocesan averages.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP	2
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- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.
- The quality of provision for the Collective Worship.
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

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How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship – good

- Pupils at St Patrick's act with reverence and respect within a range of Collective Worship. They pray in a variety of ways, from traditional prayer to moments of silence and reflection. For example, a Year 2 celebration showed that pupils were comfortable praying using, as a guide, a selection of religious artefacts and a vocabulary plan. During whole school Collective Worship, the sense of occasion and spirituality experienced is further enriched by all the pupils singing enthusiastically.
- Pupils use '*Let us pray 2gether*' resources to prepare and organise their own liturgies in classes. They have a good understanding of the 'gather, Word, response and mission' aspects of liturgy and are comfortable to express the mission. They have regular opportunities to worship within class, including at the end of each Religious Education unit of work.
- Prayer focus areas are well resourced, with pupils able to use artefacts appropriately to enhance their liturgical experiences. Pupils speak positively about the opportunities to worship and the experiences that help enrich their lives. However, this aspect of Collective Worship can be further enhanced with a greater emphasis being given to pupils regularly preparing and leading worship with more confidence and creativity.
- The variety of prayer opportunities is developing at St Patrick's, with Lectio Divina helping to develop a deeper understanding of the Word. This aspect of prayer life lends itself to including times for contemplation and reflection through meditation and silence. Pupils say, 'It helps us reflect on how the Word of God makes us feel inside'.
- By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are able to express a deeper understanding of prayer and how it guides all aspects and moments of a person's life. They share the view that they can pray at any time, in any place, but especially enjoy praying in church and in the school's prayer room. Pupils have an understanding of the Church's liturgical year, although greater emphasis on this would result in pupils being able to talk freely about the Church's seasons and feasts.
- Pupils are respectful of each other during child-led liturgical experiences. They listen carefully and respond appropriately. All pupils are provided with the opportunity to lead liturgy in their classrooms; however, more opportunities for all pupils to experience planning and leading aspects of whole school and wider community liturgies now need to be developed.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship – good

- The school day is punctuated with prayer, at the start and end of the day and before meal times. Prayer is valued by the wider school community. Governor and staff meetings open with a prayer. Members of staff are provided with regular opportunities to pray together. Mass takes place every two weeks.
- Collective Worship is central to the life of the school for all pupils, whatever their own particular faith background, and forms the heart of every school celebration. Praying together is a huge part of the daily experience for pupils and staff. Staff readily accept responsibility for leading worship, and through involving pupils, but they need to spend more time on innovation by encouraging greater pupil leadership.
- Collective Worship reflects the distinctive Catholic ethos of the school. All acts of worship have a distinct theme and are linked to the Gospel, feast days and seasons of the Church's year. At every opportunity, virtues are woven into Collective Worship. For example, whole school worship based on devotion to Our Lady was used well to help enhance pupils' sense of mission linked to the 'Virtues to Live By' liturgy, which is held at the beginning of each week; this is having a positive impact on pupils' moral and spiritual development.
- Parishioners and parents are warmly welcome to attend Mass. They appreciate the warmth of the welcome received and enjoy taking part. The school should try to find ways for a greater uptake from the invitation to join and attend other types of worship, so that these too can have just as good an impact on the community.
- The parish priest works closely with the teaching staff to develop liturgical worship. He acts as a point of reference when planning Masses and he supports the members of staff in their development and understanding. Through bi-weekly contact with the pupils at Masses, the parish priest helps oversee pupils' response to these opportunities, affirming that pupils are engaged and well prepared. There is strong evidence of good interaction between pupils, the parish priest, parishioners, parents and members of staff at school Masses.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship – good

- Through his fortnightly Masses, the parish priest works closely with the leader for Collective Worship to evaluate pupils' responses and engagement in Collective Worship. Pupils are clearly enthused by the parish priest and value his contributions dearly.
- Leaders ensure that resourcing, staffing and accommodation have parity with other core curriculum subjects. Planning and purchasing are thoughtfully considered and governors are kept updated.
- Leaders and local governors are keen to receive regular responses, both verbally and in questionnaire form, from both parents and pupils. The majority of responses are overwhelmingly positive and leaders continue to be proactive in dealing with any perceived issues. The good level of communication enables pupils and parents to feel cared for and valued.
- Leaders and local governors follow a timetable of monitoring. As a result of this monitoring, action points have been identified. As part of the school's current self-evaluation, the leadership team has correctly identified that the school must work towards all pupils having the confidence to be creative and to take risks when developing prayer opportunities for others.

SCHOOL DETAILS

School Name	St Patrick's Catholic Voluntary Academy
Unique Reference Number	146147
CMAT	St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi-Academy Trust

The inspection of this school was carried out on behalf of the Bishop of Nottingham under Canon 806 of Canon Law in accordance with the *evaluation schedule* for diocesan canonical inspections in the Diocese of Nottingham. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. The process begins with the school's own self-evaluation and the inspection schedule is in line with the criteria set by the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers (NBRIA).

During the inspection, the inspectors observed 7 Religious Education lessons and 3 Acts of Collective Worship.

Meetings were held with the headteacher, the subject leader for Religious Education, the chair of governors and the parish priest, the lay chaplain and the lead lay chaplain for the St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi-Academy Trust. Discussions were also held with pupils and parents.

The inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including reports of the governing body, action plans, the school development plan, monitoring forms, assessment information and parental response forms. Inspectors also examined the work in pupils' Religious Education books.

Chair of Governors:	Mr Dirk George
Headteacher:	Mrs Charlotte Lynch
Date of Previous School Inspection:	01 July 2015
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WHAT INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS MEAN

Within the report, the following grades are used:

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

In the context of the whole school, the overall effectiveness grades have the following meaning:

Grade 1	Outstanding	The school is a highly effective Catholic school. Pupils' needs are exceptionally well met.
Grade 2	Good	The school is an effective Catholic school. Pupils' needs are met well.
Grade 3	Requires Improvement	The school is not yet a good Catholic school, it is not inadequate however, and there are aspects that require improvement. There will be a monitoring visit within the next 18 months and the school will be re-inspected within 3 years.
Grade 4	Inadequate	There are features in need of urgent and immediate attention. The school is not meeting the basic minimum requirement for adequacy as a Catholic school. The school will receive an annual monitoring visit and will be re-inspected within 3 years.