



DIOCESE OF
SHREWSBURY

DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT:

**THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL
AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

School: St Raphael's Catholic Primary School
Address: Huddersfield Road
Stalybridge
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Tel No: 0161 338 4095

URN: 106242

Headteacher: Mrs L Lakner

Chair of Governors: Mrs C Bardsley

Date of Inspection: 2 February 2022

Inspectors: Mrs J Johnson
Mrs J Ward
Mrs N Kirkman (shadow)

St. Raphael's Catholic Primary School

Mission Statement

*"May God's love shine in our lives as we care,
share and learn together".*

At St. Raphael's Catholic Primary School God is at the heart of everything we do.

*God's love has made us unique. Each one of us is special.
In our daily lives we try to be followers of Jesus Christ.
Whatever we do in school we do for the glory of God.*

We work together as home, school and parish to be a welcoming Catholic community where all may realise their full potential.

SCHOOL: St Raphael's Catholic Primary School

DATE OF LAST INSPECTION: 30th June 2015

JUDGEMENT FROM PREVIOUS INSPECTION: Good

AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT FROM PREVIOUS INSPECTION

- Increase pupil involvement in, and response to, the many opportunities provided for Collective Worship
- Embed new initiatives and measure their impact on pupils' learning experiences and achievement
- Develop the profile given to professional development training, especially for less experienced staff.

PROGRESS MADE WITH AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT FROM THE PREVIOUS INSPECTION

- The school has worked extremely hard to develop pupil involvement in prayer and liturgy, and this is now a strength of the school
- School staff have had access to high quality Continuing Professional Development opportunities since the last Inspection and have made the most of them. This is particularly evident in the creative approaches used in the teaching of Religious Education
- Staffing in the school is now very stable, but nonetheless, school leaders have developed an induction programme for new and inexperienced staff, which covers the teaching of Religious Education, supporting the Catholic life of the school, and the delivery of prayer and liturgy.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS: how effective is the school in providing Catholic Education.

1

This is an outstanding Catholic school.

The above judgement on overall effectiveness is based on all the available evidence following the evaluation of:

CATHOLIC LIFE

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

1

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

1

- St Raphael's is an outstanding Catholic School where pupils fully appreciate, value, and actively participate in the Catholic life and mission of the school
- There is a strong sense of family and community in the school, and this is appreciated by all
- Relationships, at all levels, are a strength of the school
- The behaviour of pupils is exemplary, and pupils show a great respect and concern for each other
- The school's Mission Statement of 'May God's love shine in our lives as we care and share and learn together' is fully understood by everyone associated with the school
- Pupils know and understand the school's values, and the impact these have on their everyday lives
- The Head Teacher, Deputy Headteacher and Religious Education Coordinator, through witness to their personal faith, provide outstanding leadership
- The school's leaders, governors and staff are deeply committed to, and passionate about, the Church's mission in education
- School staff are very proud to work in the school, and it is true to say that staff, as well as pupils, flourish in this school
- The school works in close partnership with the Parish of St Peter's and St Raphael's and is well supported by the parish priest
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and recognise and appreciate the efforts the school has made to engage with them during the pandemic. As one parent wrote, 'It feels like a family, with community and faith at its heart'.

Summary of key findings:

What the school needs to do to improve further

- Develop rigorous monitoring and evaluation systems, in order to allow leaders and governors to make accurate judgements, and in turn, use these analyses to improve consistency across the school, and maintain the school's high standards
- Clarify expectations in marking and feedback across the school, and use the best practice within the school to bring about improvements and consistency.

Information about the Inspection

The Inspection of St Raphael's Catholic Primary School was carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Shrewsbury Diocesan Framework and Schedule for Denominational Inspections approved by the Bishop of Shrewsbury. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation and the inspection schedule follows the criteria set by the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers (NBRIA 2017).

The inspector reviewed in detail the following aspects:

- 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 pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education
- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship
- The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for Religious Education, Collective Worship and the Catholic Life of the school

The inspection was carried out by two Inspectors, and an Inspector in training over one day:

- The Inspectors observed teaching and learning in the six classes
- Four Acts of Collective Worship (Liturgical Prayer) were observed: one was led by the teacher; three were led by pupils from Y2 and Y6
- Discussions were held with the Headteacher, the Deputy Headteacher, Religious Education Coordinator, the Parish Priest, the Chair of Governors who is also the RE link governor, a group of pupils, and 5 members of staff (support staff, teaching support staff and teachers)
- A sample of pupils' Religious Education workbooks was scrutinised from every class from the current school year, along with a wide range of documents evidencing the school's Catholic Life and Collective Worship
- RE Coordinators' files, Denominational Inspection files, the Headteacher's reports to governors and Minutes of governing body meetings were also scrutinised
- Pupil, parent and staff questionnaires were reviewed

- A range of documents was made available and scrutinised including the Diocesan Self Evaluation Form (DSEF), the Religious Education Action Plan which is within the School Improvement Plan, and a range of school policies
- The school's website was checked for further evidence
- Displays around the school and in classrooms were also noted
- A range of photobooks, floor books and video evidence showing the celebrations, events, and prayer life of the school.

Information about this school

- St Raphael's Catholic Primary School is a one form entry primary school, which is made up of 8 single age classes, including the Nursery. There are currently 217 pupils on roll, 45% of whom are baptised Catholics
- The school serves St Peter's and St Raphael's Parish, Stalybridge
- The school has a chapel on site, for school and parish use
- The leadership team is established and stable
- Staffing is stable, and there is the equivalent of 9.8 teachers and 10 teaching assistants in the school
- Out of the 11 teachers in the school, 7 of them are Catholic
- Four teachers hold the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies (CCRS) qualification
- The percentage of pupils with SEND, and for those who are disadvantaged are both below the national average.

Full report – inspection judgments

CATHOLIC LIFE

The Catholic Life of the school is outstanding

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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 of the Catholic Life of the school	1

- The school's Mission Statement of "May God's love shine in our lives as we care and share and learn together" is central to the life of the school, and the acknowledgement that each person is unique and loved by God is at the heart of every decision made by the school
- The school's values of endurance, community, forgiveness, hope, peace, wisdom, compassion, reverence, humility, thankfulness, service, creation, and justice permeate all aspects of the school and pupils have a deep understanding of them and are able to articulate the influence these have on their daily lives. As one pupil said, 'We are all a community. We are friends and we work together.'
- The dedicated Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Religious Education Coordinator, the Parish Priest and governors are all deeply committed to the Catholic Life of the school and give daily witness through their welcome, care, concern and support for all involved with the school
- Adults in the school are exemplary role models for its pupils, and they value and respect the school's Catholic tradition and ethos. They all agree that St Raphael's is a special place to work in, and that the Headteacher leads the school with humility, empathy, and compassion. As one member of staff said, 'I am with family' is at the heart of the school's values
- Parents appreciate the impact the school's Catholic Life has on their children and are looking forward to the time when they will be able to participate fully in it again. They value the care, compassion, and sense of belonging that the school gives to their children
- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding, and pupils, from the earliest years and throughout the school, show deep respect and care for each other. In proportion to their years, they show an ability to listen, to give thanks, to forgive and be forgiven. Older pupils can articulate clearly how their school is different from schools that are not Catholic
- The school environment is rich in its mission and identity through the many concrete and effective signs of the school's distinctive Catholic character. Considerable funds have been made available in recent years to enhance the school's environment, including working with a professional artist to create a display celebrating the school's values
- Pupils are fully engaged in the many opportunities the school provides for their personal support and emotional development. They are treated as unique individuals who are special to God. As a result, they are content, confident, and secure in their own stage of spiritual, physical, and emotional growth

- Pupils relish the chance to take on responsibilities, and the oldest pupils are very proud to hold a wide range of responsibilities which enhance the life of the school. These include: Head Boy and Head Girl, Worship Leaders, Mini Vinnies, Eco Warriors, Librarians, Y6 Buddies, Sports and House Captains. Pupils like the fact that they have to apply for their roles, and therefore, take these seriously
- The school has developed a rich programme of opportunities to enhance the pupils' spiritual development and the wider development of the Catholic Life of the school, such as Retreat Days, Feast Days and Deanery Days, although some of these have been curtailed somewhat, due to the pandemic
- During the pandemic, school staff worked very hard to continue to interact with pupils and their families through their use of social media and the school's Seesaw Classroom and Tapestry Apps. The parental questionnaire responses show their appreciation of the school recording events such as Nativity plays and Carol Services
- The school has strong links with the parish of St Peter and St Raphael's, and the parish priest knows the school very well. School staff play their part in supporting the work of the parish, including the Sacramental Programme
- Pupils have a strong sense of justice, and a social conscience, and they are developing a good understanding of Catholic Social Teaching. They are proud of their work for charities, including Reuben's Retreat, CAFOD, the local Foodbank and Willow Wood Hospice to name a few
- School leaders and governors ensure that Diocesan policies and initiatives are implemented fully. Governors recognise the need to attend Diocesan training in order to keep abreast of developments
- Following consultations with parents, and CPD for all staff, leaders and governors have implemented the scheme 'Life to the Full' for teaching Relationships and Sex Education. Each class has a floor book to evidence their work in this area. Pupils enjoy the RSE curriculum provided by the school and, appropriate to their age and ability, have a good understanding of loving relationships within a Christian context. The RSE Coordinator is fully committed to ensuring that RSE is taught in line with the Catholic faith
- School leaders have prepared the school's self-evaluation document, in consultation with governors and staff, but have underestimated their judgements in relation to the school's Catholic Life
- School leaders keep governors well informed about the Catholic Life of the school, but as yet, there are not robust systems in place to monitor and evaluate the school's Catholic Life.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Religious Education is outstanding

1

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	1
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education	1

- The school has developed its own, very successful, way of teaching lessons, which is called the 'fluid method'. This method is applied consistently across the curriculum, including in Religious Education, and across the age ranges. This means that teaching is pacy and well matched to the needs of the pupils, and it also gives pupils many opportunities to know more and remember more
- Teaching is very effective and in all the lessons observed, teaching was at least good, and much was outstanding. In the best lessons, teachers had very high expectations, and pupils were actively engaged in a variety of activities that supported them and encouraged them in developing their thinking and extending their learning. Skillful Teaching Assistants supported learning very well during all lessons observed during the Inspection
- Pupils get off to a flying start in the Early Years Unit, and this is maintained throughout the school so that outcomes in Religious Education are high at the end of the each of the three Key Stages in the school
- The school's website celebrates the school's work in delivering high quality Religious Education throughout the school, including some examples from during the recent school closures due to the pandemic
- On the day of the Inspection, almost all pupils were actively engaged in their Religious Education lessons and all pupils who were asked, said that they enjoy their learning in the subject. Older pupils are able to suggest ways in which their learning in Religious Education has an impact on their daily lives
- In the Parental questionnaire, all parents agreed that the school provides a high-quality Religious Education curriculum which is engaging and promotes high standards
- Almost all pupils make good or better progress in Religious Education, and this is reflected in the high standards they display in discussions and in most classes, in their books
- The behaviour of pupils throughout the Inspection was exemplary and this means that lessons were never interrupted and could move at a fast pace, covering much ground
- Since the time of the last Inspection, and thanks to high quality Professional Development for staff, the school has worked with considerable success to introduce creative activities into Religious Education lessons. As a result, pupils feel challenged in their lessons, and can make links between what they learn in these lessons, with lessons in other subjects. In addition, learning is made memorable, and so pupils are able to remember more over time
- In almost all classes, pupils are rarely off task in Religious Education lessons, and they are able to work extremely well independently, as well as collaboratively. Teachers are also very confident in their subject knowledge in Religious Education, and so are able to use the school's way of teaching, the 'fluid method' to its best effect

- Pupils can explain the school's marking policy, and older pupils are able to explain how they know when they have done well in their Religious Education lessons. However, the school's marking and feedback policy is not consistently followed in all classes, and there was some work which was not marked in a small number of classes. This means that some pupils' learning is not taken as far as it could be. In some classes, marking and feedback are very good, and pupils in these classes are challenged to think more deeply and take next steps in their learning, which in turn, result in higher outcomes for pupils. Where pupils are expected to respond to marking, they have an opportunity to explain and explore deeper understanding, often very successfully
- The Religious Education Coordinator is an exemplary role model, and she is extremely well respected by all. School staff are willing to try out new things, and new initiatives are welcomed
- Although less than half the pupils in the school are Baptised Catholics, all pupils approach their Religious Education lessons with interest and enthusiasm
- The Religious Education Link Governor, who is also the Chair of Governors, knows the school very well, and is a frequent visitor to the school. She gives regular updates to the Governing Body about what she has experienced in the school
- Prior to the pandemic, the school had a programme in place to monitor and evaluate the school's provision in Religious Education. However, it is not rigorous or frequent enough for leaders and governors to be able to carry out searching analyses which would result in accurate self-evaluation, and in outcomes being even higher
- Leaders and governors fully comply with the Bishops' Conference Requirements and Religious Education is particularly well resourced to support the high priority given to it. At least 10% is clearly identified in the timetable dedicated to specific Religious Education teaching in the three key stages in the school.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Collective Worship is outstanding.

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How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	1
The quality of provision for Collective Worship	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship	1

- The school has invested a great deal of time, energy, and resources in developing high quality prayer and liturgy since the time of the last Inspection, and Collective Worship is now a strength of the school
- The quality of prayer, liturgy and liturgical prayer in the school is outstanding, and is central to the life and work of the school, for pupils, staff, parents, and the wider community
- Y6 Worship Leaders take great pride in their role, and with minimal adult support, they are able to plan and lead prayer across the school. During the pandemic, when large groups of pupils were unable to gather together, they filmed their sessions for the classes
- During the pandemic, the whole school community has missed coming together to worship, praise and celebrate, and all are eagerly looking forward to the time when this is again possible. Parents have appreciated the lengths the school has gone to in order to involve them - for instance, during Advent, by filming the Nativity Plays and Carol Concerts, and sending home the Travelling Cribs
- Even in the Early Years, pupils are involved in preparing for liturgical prayer. They are encouraged to choose appropriate activities to gather as well as a suitable hymn, and as they progress through the school, to choose readings, symbolic actions, and the Mission. By the time the pupils are at the end of Key Stage 2, they are planning and leading liturgical prayer with confidence and skill. All classes also have opportunities to write their own prayers and keep these in a class book
- The deeply committed Headteacher and the Religious Education Coordinator are visible as leaders of Collective Worship in the school, and they are knowledgeable and supportive of colleagues
- Pupils have a good understanding of the Church's Liturgical Year, seasons, and feast days and this was evident in many high-quality displays in the classes, in communal areas, and on the school's website
- Over recent years, the school has built up a range of high-quality resources to enhance liturgical prayer in the classes, and these are used effectively throughout the school. Pupils are able to choose appropriate religious artefacts for their focus tables, and they are keen to take on responsibility for setting these up
- During the four Acts of Collective Worship observed, behaviour of pupils was excellent, and pupils were fully engaged, including when pupils were leading the prayer. Pupils were extremely reverent and respectful, and they made thoughtful and prayerful responses. Even the youngest pupils are able to make simple extempore (spontaneous) prayers, and in all classes observed, pupils did not shy away from making appropriate contributions
- Pupils have a deep respect for those of other faiths, and older pupils have a deep regard for and understanding of difference and diversity

- Leaders and governors give a high priority to the professional development of staff in relation to Collective Worship, and the school engages extremely well with the opportunities provided by the Diocese
- Although the Collective Worship provision at the school is outstanding, there is not yet a robust system for monitoring and evaluating Collective Worship in the school. This means that leaders and governors do not have an accurate view of Collective Worship in the school.