



THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF
ARUNDEL & BRIGHTON
EDUCATION SERVICE

Denominational Catholic School Inspection Report

St Alban's Catholic Primary School

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School Unique Reference Number: 143366

Headteacher:	Mr Martin Brannigan
Chair of Governors:	Mrs Polly Narcisi
Lead Inspector:	Mrs Sarah Conrad
Associate Inspector:	Mrs Gill Askham
Inspection date:	18 th March 2022
	Previous Inspection: 1
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 Alban's is an Outstanding Catholic school because:

- The school has a rich and vibrant Catholic life and the mission statement is at the heart of the school community. A wealth of celebrations and activities take place throughout the school year; parents, carers and parishioners are warmly welcomed to many of these.
- The Headteacher, governors, senior team and all staff are committed to ensuring the wellbeing, personal and spiritual care of each pupil. Pastoral care is excellent.
- Pupils are exceptionally well behaved. They are courteous and polite to each other and to adults. They are proud of their school and know that they have a personal responsibility to contribute to making it a happy and harmonious place to be.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The standard of religious education offered by the school is high. All groups of pupils make good progress and achieve well.• High quality teaching and learning makes excellent use of cross-curricular links and creative activities to enhance provision.• Pupils' work is beautifully presented, reflecting pride in their work. Pupils enjoy religious education and appreciate its importance in the school and to their own lives. Leaders and governors provide excellent monitoring and evaluation of religious education to maintain and develop the school's high standards. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school offers a wide range of prayer and worship opportunities. These reflect the traditions of the Catholic church and encourage pupils to develop their relationship with God.• Prayer is skilfully woven into the fabric of the school day and is an essential part of school life.• The school environment provides opportunity and inspiration with: a prayer garden, a wellbeing garden, displays, artefacts and prayer tables inviting the school community to participate in reflection and prayer. |
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FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. Alban's is a 2-form entry, voluntary-aided, maintained Catholic primary school, located in East Molesey, Surrey. The school is in the trusteeship of the Diocese of Arundel & Brighton, and is a part of the expanding Xavier Catholic Education Trust (CET). The principal parish which the school serves is St Barnabas, and it is located in the Weybridge Deanery. 53% of pupils are recognised as baptised Catholics. The religious character of the school underpins all aspects of its work and supports the strategic direction of the school as identified in the mission statement and School Development Plan.

St. Alban's is a mixed school with 406 pupils on roll aged 4-11. Data indicates that 7.6% of pupils are eligible for SEND support – of which 1.97% qualify for an Education & Health Care Plan (EHCP); this places St. Alban's with a lower than average proportion of pupils who require additional support. 31.8% of pupils do not regard English as their first language (EAL), placing St. Alban's above the national average. The school is located in a relatively affluent area, with only 4.7% of pupils qualifying for Free School Meals (FSM) which is significantly below national average. The school is historically oversubscribed and the catchment area includes families from a range of diverse backgrounds.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

Recommendations for further development:

- Roll out the use of 'driver word' actions across the school as planned by the Mini Vinnies.
- Share excellent practice and provision with other schools in the diocese through outreach and welcoming visitors.

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

- 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

Pupils appreciate and value being members of the St Alban's school community. They embrace the demands that membership of a community entails, for example. They embrace the demands that membership of a community entails and leadership amongst the pupils is strong, enabling them to contribute to overall school improvement. They are inspired by their school motto, 'Lead the Way' and one pupil commented, 'Instead of being a follower, we learn to lead others and show them the right path, not just a physical path but also a mental path'. They feel happy and safe and know they have a responsibility to care for each other.

Pupils respect and value each other's cultures which is demonstrated by the Diversity Champions and World Faith Week. They understand that other children in the world are their brothers and sisters in Christ. This gives pupils from different backgrounds a chance to be proud of their heritage. One pupil commented, 'If you're not Catholic you are still really welcomed at our school'.

Pupils play a significant part in shaping the Catholic life of the school. They are keen to be part of one of the ministerial groups, who meet weekly and play a key role in the life of the school for instance: planning liturgies, designing the prayer garden, writing the mission statement. Suggestion boxes are easily accessible to all pupils and invite feedback from them on how to develop the Catholic life of the school.

The Religious Education Council and Prayer Table Monitors are keen to ensure that their classroom prayer tables are beautifully set up.

Pupils take their responsibilities seriously, understanding that this is part of their vocation to serve others and to contribute to the harmonious and supportive atmosphere of the school as well as developing its strong Catholic identity.

Pupils have a strong understanding of the school's Catholic life and mission to the wider community. They are enthusiastically and regularly involved with the parish as altar servers or readers and take part in the deanery RE day and attend the diocesan Good Shepherd Celebration.

They are alert to the needs of others and the Mini Vinnies lead many charity initiatives such as pancake day for Children Change Colombia, Christmas shoe boxes and CAFOD. One parent commented, "Faith and charity are at the centre of everything they do".

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 and informs all policies and practice. It is displayed prominently around the school and pupils can quote it and sing it.

The Catholic character of St Alban's permeates all aspects of the school from the website and prospectus through to the displays and atmosphere of the classrooms. One parent commented that a strength of the school was that they were, 'unapologetically Catholic'.

A Prayer Tree in the school hall stands in a prominent position; rooms are named after a wide variety of saints and have been chosen to reflect diversity; there are prayer tables in every class which are in keeping with the liturgical colours of the Church and many provide opportunity for pupil's prayers. Well-chosen artefacts and prayer spaces remind members of the school community of its Catholic traditions and inspire them to reflection and prayer.

There is a great sense of community in the school which is evident in the language used on the website and is felt from the moment you walk through the door. A display in the Key Stage 2 building proudly declares, 'Our school is a community' and another states, 'We are each unique and beautiful but together we are a masterpiece'. Caring and supportive relationships underpin the drive for excellence in all aspects of school life and the Behaviour Policy sets the standard by its statement, 'As members of the school community, we strive to develop our relationship with God; in so doing this should influence our relationships with one another'. Parents/carers feel involved and welcomed.

The Headteacher's Tea Parties are extremely popular and help the pupils strive to live out different Christian qualities. Pupils have access to a range of support for their mental health including emotional literacy learning support assistants, emotion coaches, a home/school link worker, a trained drawing and talking therapist and a school counsellor. PSHE and RSE are thoughtfully designed and are in line with diocesan expectations.

The school is equally attentive to the pastoral needs of the staff and a Wellbeing Committee organises social events to show how much they are valued.

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

The Headteacher and the school's leadership team are deeply committed to the Church's mission in education. They are energised by the task and are a source of inspiration to the whole community. One parent commented, "Mr Brannigan and the staff have always instilled the essence of the Catholic faith in the day to day life of both my children. I cannot praise them enough for the impact this has had on my children and their appreciation of the world and of their relationships with others".

All Governors and Senior Leadership Team have attended extensive training run by the diocese and Catholic Education Trust in order to strengthen their knowledge and so equip them with the skills to effectively promote the Catholic life of the school.

Two members of staff have completed the MA in Catholic School Leadership and all teaching staff have completed Module 1 of the CES RSHE training. The Religious Education Leads have completed all 6 modules.

Governors are conscientious in their monitoring role, and the Chair of Governors and RE Link Governor regularly visit the school and meet with the Religious Education Leads. Attendance at class assemblies, school Masses and worship, governor days and discussions with staff mean they are well informed and able to fulfil their role as a critical friend.

School self-evaluation by the Senior Leadership Team is accurate, comprehensive and strongly evidence based. It takes into account the views of staff, governors and pupils and this feedback informs development planning.

The Headteacher and Religious Education Leads are excellent role models, leading by example and supporting and empowering the staff team.

The Headteacher, governors and all leaders bring about improvement clearly directed by their mission statement. This includes a strategic School Development Plan, effective performance management, recruitment of high-quality staff and shrewd financial planning.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 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

Standards in religious education are excellent and in line with those in other core subjects. The great majority of pupils attain or exceed age related expectations; pupils' work shows a high standard of presentation and demonstrates that 10% curriculum time is being devoted to religious education.

Pupils are religiously literate; they enjoy religious education and use their knowledge and skills effectively. In a pupil-led bible study group, a Key Stage 1 pupil made the link between Jesus in the desert telling the devil, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and serve only him' and Moses telling the people not to worship the golden calf. Older pupils were able to draw on extensive knowledge gained in their formative years to make links with their current learning and apply it to life.

All groups of pupils progress well in religious education and are appropriately supported and challenged by teaching staff.

Pupils make good progress in each key stage from their varied starting points. A good proportion achieve 'greater depth' at the end of Key Stage 2.

The quality of teaching and assessment in religious education is Outstanding

The vast majority of pupils enjoy religious education and approach lessons with interest, passion and enthusiasm. One pupil commented, "In religious education lessons we do lots of different activities like drama or art".

Teachers are highly effective in consistently planning high-quality, creative lessons and as a result of this, religious education is a favourite subject for many pupils. In lessons observed, religious education was taught through a range of other curriculum subjects including art, drama and music, for example, Key Stage 1 pupils acted out Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.

School monitoring, and lesson observations during the inspection, indicate that all lessons are good or better, with a significant proportion demonstrating outstanding features.

Since the last inspection, much work has been carried out to ensure that accurate tracking of pupil achievement is in place and that an effective assessment framework has been embedded.

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

The school is following 'Come and See' for religious education and subject allocation meets the Bishops' requirement; religious education has parity with other core subjects in terms of budget and resourcing.

The school is following 'Journey in Love' for RSHE which is in line with guidance from the Diocese.

The Headteacher and Religious Education Leads monitor the provision of religious education continuously and hold it as a high priority. Strengths and areas for development are identified and feed into the School Development Plan and the action plan for religious education.

The governors are fully supportive of the Religious Education Leads and ask probing questions to develop all aspects for the religious life of the school.

Leaders and governors' self-evaluation of religious education is a clear reflection of regular monitoring, analysis and self-challenge. This results in strategic action taken by the school which leads to continuous improvement.

The Religious Education Leads have an inspiring vision of outstanding teaching and learning and a high level of expertise in securing this vision. Staff and pupils alike recognise their passion and enthusiasm for the subject.

Effective assessment procedures allow the Religious Education Leads to analyse progress being made by all groups of pupils and identify areas for development.

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

Acts of worship engage all pupils' interest and inspire in them deep thought and heartfelt response. Collective worship was observed in both key stages and pupils recognise that these are special times of prayer and reflection and join in with singing and responses. One pupil commented that, "praying gives me a safe and peaceful space in my heart and mind". Another pupil shared, after a class meditation, that, "Jesus told me not to worry because my Nan is with me".

Pupils are very much involved in planning and leading worship using the carefully structured planning grid. They enjoy selecting resources from well equipped 'prayer baskets' and choose artefacts, music, prayers and readings with care. Upper Key Stage 2 pupils led a beautiful bible study group with Key Stage 1 pupils and helped them enter into the Gospel reading more deeply with skilful questioning.

The experience of living and working in a praying community has had a profound and visible effect on the development of all pupils. One pupil said, "The school teaches us that God should be in our Number 1 spot; we ask ourselves, is this what God/Jesus would want us to do?".

The Religious Education Council said that, "St Alban's is special because it teaches us to be respectful, kind and to understand the difference between right and wrong".

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

St Alban's provides a wealth of varied and inspiring worship and prayer opportunities which are woven into the fabric of school life. Pupils value these and respond very positively.

Opportunities include Masses, liturgies, assemblies, reconciliation, Lectio Divina and 'Take Time' meditations. There is a prayer garden and wellbeing garden which provide opportunities for outdoor prayer.

Prayer is part of everyday life: pupils and staff start and end the day with prayer and staff and governors' meetings always include prayer. There is a special St Alban's Prayer Book which takes pride of place on every prayer table and class prayer books have recently been introduced.

Pupils have a good understanding of the Church's liturgical year because of a carefully planned schedule of liturgical experiences and speak confidently of how these are celebrated in school. During the inspection, a visiting priest was available to the pupils for Reconciliation.

Pupils experience a range of different types of prayer in different settings including traditional, contemporary and spontaneous; for example, a Key Stage 2 liturgy included pupils saying and signing the Hail Mary.

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

School leaders have expert knowledge of planning and delivering high quality collective worship and are committed to a high standard of provision. Careful planning and good resourcing contribute to nurturing pupils' spiritual development and strengthening the school community.

Liturgical and spiritual development is seen as a priority in the professional development of school staff.

Modelling by school leaders and the provision of training, support and resources has built a competent and committed team of staff empowered to deliver quality provision. For example, inspectors saw a Key Stage 2 assembly prepared by one of the Religious Education Leads during which one gave a moving lyrical performance to help their peers reflect on how Jesus' death has brought us new life.

Regular monitoring and review include collective worship observations and pupil interviews. These feed into school self-evaluation and inform the religious education action plan to ensure continuous development. If support is indicated or requested, it is provided by school leaders or school practitioners with outstanding practice.

Governors, in particular the Link Governor for Religious Education, are fully and actively involved in monitoring the school's collective worship and prayer life. They are frequent visitors to the school and participate in school liturgies and celebrations.

Summary of Inspection Judgements

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.

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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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