



INSPECTION REPORT OF DENOMINATIONAL CHARACTER AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

ST LOUIS PRIMARY
Harris Court, Aylesbury, HP20 2XZ

URN: 110480

DfES School No: 825/3376

Head Teacher: Mrs C Machin

Chair of Governors: Mr Michael Bennett

Reporting Inspector: Mrs Kirstie Yuen

Associate Inspectors: Mrs Laura Maw

Date of Inspection: 17 September 2021

Date Report Issued: 11 October 2021

Date of previous Inspection: 20 October 2015

The school is in the Trusteeship of the Diocese and
in partnership with Northamptonshire Local Authority

Information about the school

St Louis Catholic School is now a two-form primary school situated in north-west Aylesbury. In recent years St Louis has undergone a significant expansion and refurbishment. Now, in September 2021 it has reached its full capacity of 420 children. The school serves all the Catholic parishes of Aylesbury, but most of the children are drawn from the Parish of St Clare's and St Joseph's. Of the 420 children on roll, 84% are Catholic. The school also has a similarly high number of Catholic members of staff, three of whom have the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies. The pupils have a wide cultural heritage; 34 different languages are spoken in school and 43% have a first language other than English.

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic School

Grade 1

St Louis is an outstanding Catholic primary school. Strong and effective leadership gives a clear sense of purpose and direction to the Catholic life of the school which is shared by all staff and governors. Outcomes for pupils are good. They have a good level of knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith and are rapidly acquiring skills to plan and prepare liturgies. The Catholic traditions and history of the school are deep rooted and very much at its heart. The school's original motto 'Ut Sint Unum – That We May Be One' is still in evidence around the school and inspires the new mission statement: "We work together, we pray together, we grow together." Leaders and governors are united in their determination to ensure that St Louis pupils are given every opportunity to become the person God has called them to be. Pupils are proud of their Catholic school, and willingly embrace and live out the values it promotes. They are ready and willing to make a greater contribution to the Catholic ethos and prayer life of the school. Relationships are characterised by love and respect and pupil behaviour is exemplary.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 1

The issues from the last inspection were related to: reviewing the standing of the school motto, and mission statement; to further develop resources and staff expertise in the teaching of other religions and the reviewing of assessment initiatives. These issues have been addressed. St Louis is soon to be joining a multi-academy trust and the system for assessment is evolving further in line with new trust's approach. This will therefore continue to be developed.

The school's self evaluation is detailed, reflective and accurate. It informs the school's development planning. The inspectors concurred with the judgements made by the school. The staff and governors are committed to continued improvement. The RE leaders and the leadership team have a good overall view of the school's strengths and development needs.

The school leadership is totally committed to promoting the Catholic dimension of the school and high quality religious education. They have very successfully communicated an inspiring vision for the school. This has allowed the school to continue its present effectiveness and ensured that this is maintained as the school has grown. The leadership has capacity to develop this even further.

The school has an excellent capacity for sustained improvement and development. There is a strong leadership team, who are passionate for the betterment of the school. Despite the disruption to education nationally, the school has worked hard to maintain the standard of RE and Catholic life that is at its core. For example the school organised remote RE lessons and collective worship, whilst abiding by the government guidance in place to keep pupils, family and staff safe. They constantly review areas for development and implement appropriate actions.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the feedback given to children is explicit so they know how they can improve their learning and be challenged further.
- Ensure progress at every level by using data to plan for intervention and challenge.

Catholic Life

Grade 1

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. They have an excellent understanding of the mission statement which is included in prayers. It informs the school's original motto and inspires all members of the school community to implement these as part of daily life. The school's Catholic identity is evident in the many displays and artefacts relating to its Catholic life. Good links with local parishes, other Catholic schools and the diocese strengthen the school's partnership with the wider Catholic community. Pupils are given many opportunities to take on responsibilities to develop the Catholic character of the school, through membership of the school liturgy team, prayer leaders, Buddies and playground pals. Pupils spoken to have a strong sense of belonging to a Catholic community. They value the ethos of the school and the many opportunities they have to contribute to its Catholic life through service and care for the environment. They understand that all pupils share responsibility for caring for each other and can link this to their mission. The behaviour of pupils is exemplary: they are exceptionally polite, thoughtful and considerate in lessons and around the school. Pupils are also given opportunities to help the wider community through raising money for charities. These have recently included Macmillan and CAFOD.

Provision for the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The school's values are manifest across every aspect of learning and spiritual development throughout the community. In the words of a pupil, "At St Louis we are building a life and a good person." A wide range of assemblies and collective worship are part of the school's provision where key celebrations in the Church's liturgical year enable pupils to develop their faith journey. The school has adapted well in order to maintain this during the recent restrictions. Parish links are excellent with regular visits from the parish priest. A parental survey distributed as part of this inspection showed a very high rate of return and were overwhelmingly positive about the Catholic life of the school.

The promotion, monitoring and evaluation of the Catholic life of the school is good. There is a faith-filled commitment on the part of the governors and senior staff to create a school setting where the spirit of Christ lives. They are wholeheartedly committed to the Church's mission in education and to ensuring that this is embodied in their school. The RE leaders attend diocesan courses and work closely with the diocesan RE advisor. They provide a model of good practice by offering demonstration lessons for teachers new to Catholic education and offer support in planning and assessment. Governors have a clear understanding of their role in promoting and monitoring the Catholic life of the school and their responsibility to the diocesan bishop. They regularly attend collective worship and whole school services and discuss religious education at governor meetings. Leaders are excellent role models and have created a cohesive staff team with a strong sense of Christian community and the importance of the traditions of the Catholic Church, particularly mindful of the school's links to the founding Sisters of St Louis.

Religious Education

Grade 1

Religious education at St Louis is outstanding. Pupils achieve well and enjoy their lessons. Pupils are given a good foundation in Early Years which is built upon as they progress through the school. In lessons, pupils are actively engaged and keen to contribute to discussions. Pupils always have a positive attitude and are most enthusiastic in their response to questions. In a Year 6 lesson the pupils were exploring unconditional love. Rich discussion was evident and pupils were able to articulate their predictions with confidence and understanding about how the Prodigal Son's father would react. Behaviour during religious education lessons is excellent. Pupils are proud of their

work and speak confidently about what they have learnt. They work independently within a range of different activities according to age and ability. Pupils generally are making good progress in religious education within lessons. Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities are well supported and are achieving very well. The targeted support from highly skilled teaching assistants ensures all groups of pupils are included and able to achieve well. Pupils can talk about scripture stories and have a good grasp of religious terminology appropriate to their ages.

The quality of teaching and learning and assessment in religious education is good. The majority of teaching observed was good and outstanding; however, this is not consistent. Tasks and support are differentiated to enable pupils to achieve well. This could be developed further to ensure the content of the religious education curriculum is covered in greater depth, especially at the higher levels. Pupils are engaged and enthusiastic as teachers use open-ended questioning, discussions with talk partners and an interesting selection of tasks and resources to deepen pupils' learning. Work in pupils' books is of varied quality. In some lessons, some learning opportunities are missed due to underdeveloped feedback. Knowledgeable teaching assistants provide invaluable support within the class. This was a particular strength as it was a consistent feature across all year groups.

School leaders are strongly committed to religious education. They ensure the curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference with at least 10% of curriculum time devoted to the subject. The religious education curriculum is delivered through the 'Come and See' programme. The headteacher along with senior leadership ensure that religious education and the Catholic life of the school are central to self-evaluation. Religious education has full parity with other core curriculum subjects and includes provision for professional development and resourcing. The governors are highly visible in the school and appropriately challenge and support leadership. Governors are aware of developments in religious education. They also observe religious education through learning walks and drop-ins. Governors are well informed of standards through committee and governor reports.

Collective Worship

Grade 1

Collective worship at St Louis is outstanding. Prayer and worship are integral to the life of the school. Pupils, even the youngest, respond well to collective worship. They are calm and reverent when they pray, can reflect and meditate thoughtfully, but also sing joyfully. Both staff and pupil leaders lead prayer and plan liturgies. Pupils respond extremely well to worship and the prayer life of the school. They participate respectfully and with ease and appreciate these experiences as a time of uniting the whole school community. Pupils across the school welcome opportunities to plan and prepare liturgies. By the end of Key Stage 2 they can do this with minimal support from adults. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the Church's liturgical year, her feasts and seasons. They enjoy talking of how these are celebrated in school and their contribution to these occasions. St Louis exemplifies a faithful, worshipping community in which prayer and worship nurture the spiritual and moral development of all pupils. Pupils show respect and reverence. They

also understand the need to respect the faith beliefs and practices of others. Pupils interviewed as part of this inspection valued their prayer and worship opportunities. They appreciated that these deepened their relationship with God and strengthened their school community.

The quality of provision for collective worship is outstanding. The school now has a designated school chapel, which is used regularly for class worship and for various liturgical reflections. Most recently, it is the setting for recording the Gospel assemblies. During the inspection the headteacher and the liturgy team delivered a pre-recorded act of collective worship to the whole school. In classes, the pupils reflected prayerfully on their uniqueness and celebrated their talents. Collective worship is well resourced and planned, with careful choices made to interest and engage pupils and to encourage participation by pupils. An attractive prayer table in each classroom provides a further focus for prayer, reflection and learning. These are enhanced by pupils' work and contributions to the display. Masses are usually celebrated in school and parish throughout the year and the traditions of the Church are explored with pupils. The school is very keen to return to this practice as restrictions are lifted. The school offers a wide range of prayer and worship opportunities. These reflect the traditions of the Catholic Church, the liturgical year and school celebrations.

Leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship by giving a high priority to the planning of quality liturgies and assemblies. They ensure all staff are given guidance on liturgical formation and the delivery of collective worship. School leaders and governors are active participants in the school's collective worship and prayer life, acting as role models and recognising that it is essential to the spiritual life of the school and important to them as members of the school community. School newsletters and the website keep parents informed. Monitoring and evaluation of collective worship form part of school self evaluation and planning for continued improvement. The school's life of prayer and worship is seen as the very heart and soul of the school.

The inspectors would like to express their thanks and appreciation to all members of the school community for their welcome and openness during the inspection