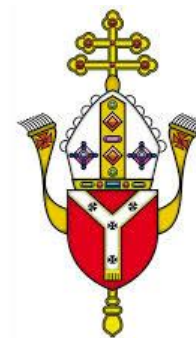


St. Monica's Catholic Primary School

43 Hoxton Street, London, N1 6QN

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 10 March 2022



Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education is good

- The curriculum, mapped to the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*, is sequenced, good and varied.
- Most pupils make good progress. Pupils are exceptionally well versed in religious vocabulary. They can recall to a high degree their prior learning. Pupils are highly articulate and literate in religious education.
- The typicality of teaching is never less than good. Pupils all say how much they enjoy their learning in religious education.
- Teachers use a range of effective strategies to engage pupils in learning and pupils can identify their next steps in learning.
- Self-evaluation is mostly accurate; leaders have identified strengths and areas for development where actions have already been taken.
- The link governor for religious education is actively involved in the support of religious education and makes a positive contribution.

Classroom religious education is not yet outstanding because

- Higher order questioning is not always used to stretch knowledge and deepen pupils' understanding.
- A secure understanding of the age-related standards needs to be further embedded so that appropriate challenge is planned for in lessons.

B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- This is a vibrant and dynamic Catholic community that provides pupils with an excellent range of experiences of what it means to live according to Catholic teaching and traditions.
- There are opportunities within the school for daily collective worship, liturgy and prayer. Pupils at all ages and in all key stages play an active part in leading prayer and liturgy in a variety of ways.
- The celebration of the Eucharist is carefully planned both in school and in the local parish church and many other sacramental celebrations are offered at key times throughout the liturgical year.
- St Monica's pupils support local, national, and global charities and have a good understanding of the theology underpinning their actions.
- The partnerships with parents, school and parish are judged to be outstanding. Parents spoken with during this inspection and the large number who responded to the inspection questionnaire are almost overwhelmingly supportive of the work of the school. Links with the diocese are very strong.
- The leadership of the headteacher, governors and the senior leaders in promoting the Catholic life of the school is outstanding and ambitious.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

St Monica's Catholic Primary School has continued to improve since the previous inspection. Leaders have ensured that staff training opportunities have been plentiful. Professional development has been provided for all teaching and non-teaching staff. Assessment procedures have been reviewed and new systems embedded.

The content of classroom religious education is good

The content of St Monica's religious education curriculum meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory. The curriculum is monitored by the RE leadership team. The programmes of study illustrate where, when and how key aspects of content are taught and assessed. Resources including Bibles are used very effectively. Pupils are taught about other faiths such as Judaism, Hinduism and Islam. Leaders have organised visits from those of other faiths to engage pupils in their learning in this area. There are opportunities to enhance creativity in pupils' wider learning. Aspects of this wider curriculum in religious education include music and art. The link governor for religious education is actively involved in the support of RE.

Pupil achievement in religious education is good

Pupil achievement is good when progress is measured against school systems, as well as deanery and diocesan moderation. Attainment is at least as good as in other core subjects. A scrutiny of books and lesson visits shows that on occasion there is not enough challenge for the most able pupils.

One noteworthy aspect of pupils' achievement is the level of religious literacy and listening skills. In a Year 6 lesson observed, pupils were reflecting on scripture and using peer discussion very effectively to consider religious symbolism. Pupils showed great respect for one another and carefully invited each other's opinion when working in groups. They listen well to adults and to their peers and are confident using scripture and retrieving Biblical stories; in all classes observed this is a strength of the school. Pupils know where to look in the Bible to find evidence to support their learning; this was observed in all classes and in every key stage. Religious literacy is a strength. Pupils in Reception were able to reflect that Jesus was known by many names, and gave examples such as the Messiah, Our Saviour and the Light of the World. Pupils could explain their answers through skilful questioning by the teacher. They effectively recall their prior learning and their attitude is strong and consistently positive. Inspectors observed that teachers effectively linked prior learning to lessons being taught in all classes. Pupils are articulate and enjoy their learning in religious education. Progress is good for most pupils. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are being well supported.

The quality of teaching is good

The typicality of teaching is at least good. Most pupils in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress and activities are engaging and well matched to learning in class. Further challenge opportunities were missed when on occasion adults did not engage pupils in meaningful discussion in some of these activities. Teaching is engaging and nurturing, and the learning environment both indoors and outdoors in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) has been developed to enhance RE. Pupils in Reception were given time to engage in the activities planned. An attractive area for prayer and quiet reflection was provided as well as a range of religious education activities both indoors and outdoors.

Teachers in this school have high expectations of pupils, however, tasks are not always matched to pupils' own interests and understanding. In some classes teachers do not always plan to give enough time for pupils to begin their activities thereby restricting their time to respond. Key religious vocabulary was discussed in lessons observed and pupils are keen to use this vocabulary. Pupils in a year 5 lesson were confident making links with scripture to help them support their work. They were also using scripture effectively in a Year 4 class to study Matthew 6:2-4 and consider how they should respond during Lent. In a Year 3 lesson pupils knew the key vocabulary for their topic and inspectors observed that they were beginning to use this in their independent work. Support staff play an important role in supporting pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and or disabilities. Home learning and research opportunities are provided for pupils. Leaders have provided effective systems for feedback; pupils use these well, they know how well they are doing, and most pupils know what they must do to develop their learning further.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education is good

The leadership and management of religious education is strong and committed to high standards. The headteacher has ensured clear roles and responsibilities in RE for the assistant headteacher and Inclusion leader. This team provides effective support and guidance to teachers and support staff. New staff and non-Catholic staff are being well supported by the assistant headteacher who regularly monitors, team teaches and coaches staff. The assistant headteacher, in addition to demonstrating lessons, also conducts half termly workshops for teachers to support their subject knowledge. All staff have recently undertaken the Diocesan Foundation Stones training programme and this input has had a positive impact on teaching and learning. The governing body are knowledgeable and supportive of the work of the school. A substantial budget has driven improvements in the teaching of RE. The leaders' self-evaluation of classroom religious education is mostly accurate; leaders know their school well and have clear strategies for addressing identified areas for improvement.

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

- higher order questioning must be more consistently used to stretch knowledge and deepen pupils' understanding
- continue to develop a secure understanding of the age-related standards so that appropriate challenge is planned for in lessons.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

The area for development from the previous inspection has been addressed. Pupils lead liturgy with confidence. The school has developed pupil leadership groups to ensure that pupils have opportunities to experience various leadership roles.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum is outstanding

The school devotes 10% of curriculum time to religious education in every class, as required by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. This is clearly timetabled and is central to the life of the school. The commitment to RE is evident by the high-quality displays throughout the school, the attractive olive tree lined prayer garden, and the prominence of liturgically adorned prayer spaces in every classroom.

A generous budget has been set for the last three years and new resources have been bought to support the implementation of the religious education curriculum. Governors have good insight into RE at St. Monica's and offer outstanding support. Parents and pupils recognise the importance the school places on its Catholic life. The leadership of religious education is very well supported as are the staff in their professional development for the teaching of RE.

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

Prayer and worship are central to the life of this school and are judged to be outstanding. There are opportunities within the school for daily collective worship and prayer. All classes have attractive prayer areas, which during inspection were in appropriate liturgical colours for the season of Lent. Displays of work around the school are of a very high standard. There was a particularly striking portrayal of the stations of the cross in the school hall. This display was fashioned in pastel colours and carefully produced by the pupils. QR codes are used to enhance meaning on this beautiful display. Pupils at all ages and all key stages play an active part in leading prayer and liturgy. In a Year 2 act of worship observed, pupils led very reverently and effectively. They clearly know the structure of collective worship and paid great attention to setting, mood, organisation and delivery of worship. Pupils gave each other time to respond and encouraged each other's responses in a collegiate manner. In a Year 6 collective act of worship observed, pupils reflected on the mission of their worship and discussed their responses. It is evident that these opportunities deepen pupils' spiritual understanding and help focus them to act accordingly. Such moments demonstrate their growing levels of knowledge and understanding of the links to scripture, and its relevance to their everyday experiences. All areas of the school clearly show and celebrate that this is a Catholic school. Visitors are warmly welcomed into a foyer where the high standard of liturgically correct display makes it clear that this is a vibrant Catholic community. It is evident to all who enter that prayer and worship are integral to the daily life of the school. The celebration of the Eucharist is carefully planned both in school and in the local parish church and many other sacramental celebrations are offered at key times throughout the liturgical year. All year groups attend Mass weekly, on a rotational basis. The parish priest is heavily involved in the school and recently held an outdoor liturgy where pupils prayed for those caught up in the war in Ukraine. Pupils held aloft the sunflower, the national flower of Ukraine, as a gesture of solidarity and peace. The website celebrates liturgy and worship in an outstanding way. Pupils' spiritual development is carefully fostered in this school.

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

St Monica's has established a genuine commitment to the Common Good which is outstanding. Pupils in discussion with inspectors proudly mentioned their global fundraising efforts for CAFOD and Missio. They understood the work of these organisations and the part their work in school plays in their success. Nationally, pupils focus on Red Nose Day, Save the Children and MacMillan coffee mornings. Pupils also fundraise locally for Hackney Night Shelter and The Passage's Lenten appeal. They speak with enthusiasm, pride and passion about the work they do. They are clear on why they undertake this work and understand the theology underpinning their actions. In response to the Church's call to action for justice, a peace and justice group has been developed. Their aim is to promote the Common Good, lead on assemblies and promote awareness of the notion of service throughout the school.

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 partnerships with parents, school and parish are judged to be outstanding. Parents spoken to during this inspection and via a high response survey are mostly overwhelmingly supportive of the work of the school. Parents all mentioned the good start young pupils receive and also responded positively when considering the progress their children make. One parent whose children and grandchildren all attended St. Monica's commented on how this school is at the heart of this close-knit Catholic community. She mentioned how her grandchild in Early Years comes home telling the family all about Simon and Anna as well as other Bible stories learned. Another parent whose child has additional needs told inspectors that the open-door policy and general support for their child has helped them flourish in school. Parents appreciate the technology used to communicate and inform. Parents also considered that the pastoral care of the school was very effective. Links with the parish are strong, parents see this as a strength and these links are greatly appreciated by the parish community. The school is integral to parish life and the parish priest is a frequent and welcome visitor to the school. Links with the Diocese of Westminster are equally strong at all levels. The excellent links with the diocesan team and pro-active involvement in deanery networks enhance the opportunities for professional growth for all staff.

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

The leadership of the headteacher and her senior leadership team in promoting the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. Their vision to promote the Catholic life of the school is equally shared by teachers and support staff at all levels. Staff are fully committed to supporting the values and ethos of the school. The governing body makes a major contribution to the work and Catholic dimension of St Monica's. Governors are rigorous in their strategic leadership; they challenge the leadership team while also providing highly effective support. The school's own self-evaluation is mostly accurate, and leaders of RE demonstrate their ambition to further enhance the delivery of Catholic social teaching in their curriculum planning. Leaders of religious education are reflective and constantly pursue excellence. Pupils' voices are very strong and articulate in this school. They love talking about their work in religious education and were rightly proud and happy to be attending such a well-led Catholic school. Pupils' relationships with each other are very positive.

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

- Continue to further develop Catholic social teaching within the religious education curriculum.

Information about this school

- The school is a one form entry Catholic primary school in the locality of London, Hackney.
- The school serves the parishes of St Monica's, Hoxton; St. John's, Hackney and Our Lady's and St. Joseph.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 49.43%.
- 206 children, 98 Catholics and 108 from other faiths, including Christian denominations.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 3, and 1 teacher is undertaking the CCRS.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 80%.
- There are 24% (50) of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 6 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.
- 92 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (44.67%).

Department for Education Number	2043553
Unique Reference Number	100268
Local Authority	Hackney

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	2-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	204
The appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Simon Lee
Headteacher	Mrs Amanda Ruthven
Telephone number	0207 7395824
Website	www.stmonicasprimaryhackney.co.uk
Email address	office@st-monicas.hackney.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	December 2015
Grade from previous inspection	
Grades from previous inspection:	
Classroom religious education	Good
The Catholic life of the school	Good

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 7 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended 2 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.

Ms Evelyn Ward

Lead Inspector

Mrs Norah Flatley

Shadow Lead Inspector

Miss Cynthia Ní Loingsigh

Associate Inspector

Mrs Dee Abbott

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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