

Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Primary School

URN: 138105

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Brentwood

26–27 June 2025

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

Catholic life and mission (p.3)

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

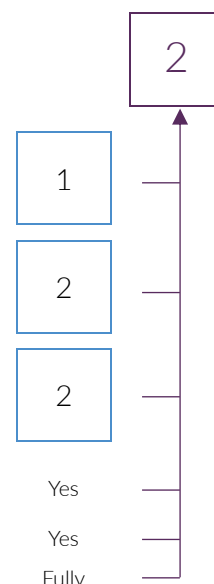
Collective worship (p.7)

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection



Compliance statement

- The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop.
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What the school does well

- Pupils are very happy at Our Lady Immaculate; their behaviour is excellent at all times and they completely embrace the school virtues as a way of life.
- The sense of community is exceptional, creating a strong family and partnership between parents, parish and school.
- The religious education leader has an excellent vision for high standards, creative provision and excellent teaching of the subject across the school.
- Religious education homework is greatly valued by parents, encouraging pupils to present their work in a variety of ways.
- The celebration of the liturgical year and holy days of obligation are prioritised by leaders in collaboration with the extraordinary support of the parish clergy.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure pupils take a leading role in responding to the demands of Catholic social teaching, enabling them to clearly articulate the theology underpinning their actions.
- Provide pupils with consistent feedback, ensuring all pupils clearly understand what they need to do to make progress in their learning.
- Provide professional development opportunities for all staff, enabling them to support pupils in planning, leading and evaluating prayer and liturgy.

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

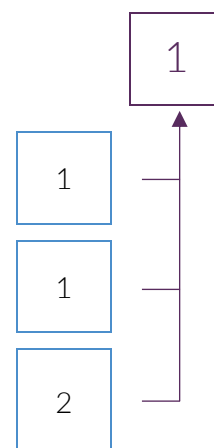
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

Leadership

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



Pupils joyfully embrace and can articulate the mission statement: "With God all things are possible", which they enthusiastically sign during prayer times. Pupils know that they are loved and cared for at this caring school. Parents say that their children 'come home smiling every day' and 'they love coming to school'. Pupils are able to make clear links between the school virtues and their own behaviour. They particularly appreciate the awarding of merit badges for demonstrating the focus virtue of the week. The Mini Vinnies are actively involved in fundraising for a variety of charities, with a harvest collection for the parish St Vincent de Paul Society, a 'backwards Christmas calendar', and a Lenten walk for Cafod. Some pupils are beginning to understand the theology that underpins these actions. However, pupils are not yet taking a leading role in responding to the demands of Catholic social teaching. Pupils have great respect for each other, with excellent behaviour in lessons. They have a strong respect for everyone in the school community, which is exemplified in the buddy system between Year 6 and the children in Reception. Pupils are very keen to be actively involved in the chaplaincy provision.

Staff embrace the mission statement, which is at the heart of the school. They readily give generously of their time to support activities beyond the school day and attend both parish events and those organised by the Friends' Association. There is an exceptionally strong sense of community, which is greatly valued by parents. The school welcomes parents to attend a variety of events, including the family sports day. All staff offer a great welcome to everyone, with the office staff and site manager being highly praised for their helpfulness. The recently introduced cultural day has been really appreciated by the community. Staff are exemplary role models, showing great care for all the pupils in their interactions and ensuring their accessibility to support the community when needed. The pastoral care provided for pupils is of the highest level. Countless examples are given of the additional support that is being offered. The school environment is a rich celebration of the mission of the school with creative displays of Bible stories, banners in the hall highlighting the virtues, and a wealth of signs and symbols act as

witness to the Catholic character of the school. Chaplaincy provision is central to the life of the school. Staff and pupils work with the parish clergy to ensure there is a variety of opportunities that support the spiritual and moral development of pupils. Relationships, sex and health education is planned using the *Life to the Full* programme with a policy that reflects the diocesan requirements, available on the school website.

Leaders and governors can articulate the mission of the school, which they ensure is reflected in all their policies. The school fully participates in and benefits from being part of a supportive Catholic Trust, with trustees involved in monitoring the Catholic life. Links with the parish are exceptional, exemplified by the sharing of facilities. The school has a range of highly successful strategies for engaging with parents, including the provision of the Ark after-school facility. The strong and supportive Friends' Association is proactive in organising fundraising and social events that bring the community together on a regular basis. Leaders and governors ensure funding is focused to help families in need with the provision of uniform and other help when needed. Additionally, governors have ensured a climate action plan is in place to support the care for our common home. Leaders and governors support the wellbeing of staff, with time for staff reflection. Policies and structures are in place to demonstrate this commitment. The school is beginning to make links between different subjects and a distinctive Catholic curriculum, which is strong in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Governors have high expectations and good knowledge of the range of strategies that support the school's mission. Their self-evaluation now needs to reflect a greater depth in its rigour and analysis. Although induction and professional development is well planned, increasing its frequency would deepen staff understanding of the Catholic life and mission.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

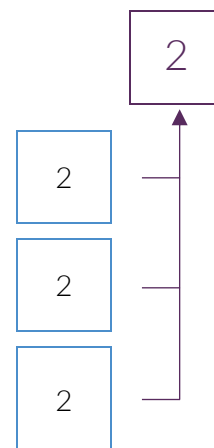
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education

Leadership

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



Pupils' knowledge and understanding reflects the *Religious Education Directory* and pupils make good progress in knowing and remembering more. Pupils in Year 1, for example, have a good knowledge of the Jesus' baptism, Palm Sunday and the Last Supper. Pupils are beginning to reflect ethically and ask questions. In a Year 6 lesson pupils were able to think deeply and ask their own questions, such as 'can we stop deforestation?', and 'could we drop food not nuclear weapons?' showing their ability to link world events to their moral development. Pupils' work is usually well presented and they have increasing opportunities to think creatively and present their work in an independent way. This is particularly evident in the Early Years Foundation Stage where creativity is encouraged. Pupils willingly engage in lessons. They are very keen to answer questions and they appreciate their religious education lessons, enjoying the use of role play and art. Some pupils respond to marking to improve their work; however, this needs to be consistently implemented along with a consistent approach to self-assessment for pupils across the school. Data provided by the school shows that attainment in religious education over a three-year period is in line with other core areas.

Most teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and they show a good understanding of appropriate learning opportunities for pupils. Teachers plan well, ensure religious vocabulary is highlighted and encourage pupils to use this vocabulary. Teachers use a good range of open questions to ensure pupils build on prior learning. Although some teachers adhere to the marking policy and award house points for work, there is an inconsistency in this celebration and feedback. A consistent approach needs to be developed to ensure pupils know how to improve their work. Most religious education lessons start with a prayer. Some teachers encourage pupils to reflect on their prior learning at this time. There are some good examples of creativity and a variety of resources being used across the school; this is particularly strong in Early Years Foundation Stage with excellent small world and construction equipment being used to reinforce St Paul's life. In a Year 2 lesson pupils were able to develop their understanding of 'who is my neighbour?' with a video of the Good Samaritan, and in Year 4 pupils had brought in

photographs to reflect on the qualities of role models. The use of art work from Ghana was particularly effective in a Year 1 class.

Leaders and governors have ensured that the school curriculum is faithful to the *Religious Education Directory* in all year groups where it has been introduced. They have ensured parity with other core curriculum subjects in terms of professional development, resourcing, staffing and accommodation. Professional development in religious education, provided by the religious education leader and diocese, is valued by staff, and is beginning to impact on provision and pupil outcomes. The religious education leader has a very clear vision to ensure that 'religious education is where faith meets understanding through the *Religious Education Directory* and scripture and that pupils live their faith.' She has very high expectations which are demonstrated in her own exemplary provision and practice. This now needs to be shared across the school and beyond. Leaders ensure that the needs of pupils with additional needs are met through supplementing provision through pre-teaching of vocabulary, scaffolding and targeted adult support where necessary. Data is analysed by leaders to ensure good progress. Enrichment opportunities are provided through visitors to the school, such as Cafod representatives, and a drama group for Key Stage 1 linked to care for creation. Leaders and governors have a good knowledge of religious education within the school, through visits and looking at pupils' books. They now need to ensure strategic actions are in place with well-targeted planning to ensure outstanding outcomes.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

2

2

Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of Our Lady Immaculate school. Prayer is a regular part of the daily experience and promotes a calm and purposeful environment which results in respect being shown at all times. Singing is enjoyed by all pupils and they perform with gusto during whole-school worship. Imaginative use of space is made to promote prayer and worship. Each classroom has an age-appropriate designated prayer space. These are focal points for the pupils with many displaying their hand-written prayers of thanks. Pupils show an understanding of the liturgical year and the variety of ways of praying. The younger pupils explained how they led a candlelit service during Advent and the Stations of the Cross during Lent. Pupils work well with others, such as staff and other pupils, to prepare engaging experiences of prayer and liturgy. A good example of this was a Year 1 Celebration of the Word led by two Year 5 pupils on the 'The Body of Christ'. The leaders spoke with authority and confidence as they gained responses from the younger pupils. Some pupil evaluation of the quality of pupils' prayer and liturgy takes place, but these now need to become more commonplace and routine across the school. Older pupils know that prayer impacts on their lives by 'making us closer to God'. They take prayer seriously and know they should 'praise God'.

Praying together as a class, a phase and as a whole school is clearly a regular experience for all pupils and staff, leading to a positive impact on the school's sense of community. There is a creative balance between routine and innovative times of prayer. A perfect example of this occurred recently with a pop-up Pilgrimage of Hope led by the chaplaincy team and the Mini Vinnies. They provided a day of prayerful and spiritual experiences, confirming the school's support for the development of pupil leadership. Staff are role models of good practice to colleagues and pupils. Staff are developing their skills in assisting pupils to make choices in planning and leading well-constructed prayer and liturgy, including incorporating scripture. Music and other art forms are used in prayer and liturgy in a way that enhances the experience for all participants. There is a beautifully designed prayer garden which is fastidiously cared for and maintained by the chaplaincy team. They also encourage pupils to come for private

reflection. Additionally, a well-attended lunchtime weekly Rosary is led by the parish Legion of Mary. The school has thoughtfully planned how to work with families to include them in the prayer life of the school. This was highlighted by parents who felt that the prayer bag and travelling crib provided families with excellent opportunities to engage in family prayer at home. A flourishing partnership has developed between the school and the parish, leading pupils, staff and parents to grow in their understanding and appreciation of the liturgical life of the Church.

The prayer and liturgy policy puts prayer at the heart of school life and contributes towards a spiritually enriched community. Recent staff training around prayer and liturgy is enabling worship to become an integral part of each class, and is increasingly led by pupils. Leaders understand the different levels of participation that are reflective of the age and capacity of pupils. All holy days of obligation and feasts of Our Lady are prioritised in consultation with the parish priest who is also a governor. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is made available during Advent and Lenten services in school. The provision of prayer and liturgy is well resourced. Consequently, relevant staff are able to develop good quality experiences of worship. The impact of prayer and liturgy is beginning to be regularly assessed by leaders and governors. The views of pupils are also sought to help improve the experience for all.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	138105
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8815250
Full postal address of the school	Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Primary School, New London Road, Chelmsford, CM2 0RG
School phone number	01245353755
Headteacher	Sophie Gibbs
Chair of governors	Catherine Squires
School Website	www.ourladyimmaculateprimary.org
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	The Rosary Trust - A Catholic Multi Academy
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	5-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	May 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Gael Hicks

Dermot O'Neill

Lead

Team

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement