

Alston Lane Catholic Primary School, Longridge

URN: 151005

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Lancaster

22–23 January 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

1

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

1

Collective worship (p.7)

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

1

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

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

Fully

1

What the school does well

- The headteacher, staff and parish priest work exceptionally well together to ensure a flourishing partnership which benefits all in school.
- Pupil behaviour, both in lessons and around school, is excellent.
- Senior leaders have developed a culture of trust, respect and mutual support amongst staff.
- Pupils are given extensive opportunities to present their learning in a wide variety of ways.
- A comprehensive strategy for developing pupils' skills of participation in prayer and liturgy, ensures pupils are able to plan and lead high quality prayer opportunities.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine and extend the school's agreed adaptive teaching strategies, so that all pupils make good or better progress in religious education outcomes.
- Provide all pupils with age-appropriate self-assessment strategies, drawing on best practice including through collaboration with other schools.
- Continue to develop and expand the school's gospel inspired curriculum, so that learning opportunities, in all subjects, reflect Catholic beliefs and traditions.

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

1

Provision

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

1

Leadership

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

1

1

Pupils in Alston Lane Catholic Primary School feel loved, secure and safe. Leaders are relentless in their pursuit of excellence, whilst ensuring the school is caring and happy. The mission statement 'Learning and growing as children of God', is lived out by pupils, staff, parents and governors. Pupil behaviour is outstanding, both in lessons and around school. Pupils understand that the school is a no name-calling school where they treat each other with deep respect and kindness. This was shown in action in lessons observed by the inspectors.

Pupils speak confidently about their responsibility to help others and refer to Jesus as their inspiration. Members of the school council and eco groups told the inspectors how they put their faith into action by fundraising for charities, both locally and globally, including the Ribble Valley foodbank and Cafod. They are proud of the work they do, and it is celebrated through 'Super Citizen' awards which recognise those pupils living out the gospel values in their daily lives.

Supported by staff, pupils respond exceptionally well to the demands of Catholic social teaching. One pupil told inspectors, 'Fairtrade is about respect, dignity and the human worth of a person'. They recognise the need to treat others fairly. Pupils are able to articulate the need to care and pray for global issues and demonstrate an excellent understanding of their responsibility to be proactive in responding to the needs of others, referencing the teachings of Jesus.

Staff embrace the mission statement and are exemplary role models for pupils. They show respect and compassion for each other and talk openly of going the extra mile to provide exceptional support. Staff show commitment to activities that reflect the life and mission of the

school. They regularly attend Mass with the school/parish family and many support the sacramental preparations.

Leaders and governors embrace the bishop's vision for collaboration. The school engages extremely well with the Diocesan Education Service and the school became part of the Mater Ecclesiae Catholic Multi Academy Trust in August 2024.

Trust leaders and governors are highly effective, driving forward the distinct Catholic nature of the school. They know the school exceptionally well and have clear ambitions. For example, governors and school leaders are actively seeking ways to work in collaboration with other primary schools in the Trust to further improve outcomes for pupils. Leaders, including governors, speak confidently about the strong links with the parish, with school and parish coming together regularly for Mass and other liturgies. Indeed, the parish priest described the school and parish as 'one body', when speaking to inspectors. Staff and governors are inspirational witnesses to the gospel and to Catholic social teaching in their directing of the school at every level.

The provision for relationships sex and health education is carefully planned and monitored and meets all statutory and diocesan requirements. All policies and procedures clearly demonstrate the priority given to the Catholic identity of the school.

Parents value and appreciate the work of the school, responding positively to the parent questionnaires. One parent stated, 'teachers are very supportive and give solutions to any areas of need for my child' and another described the school as a 'tonic of hope'. Parents also told inspectors that the headteacher knows every pupil by name and that Catholic values are a strength of the school, impacting the lives of their children beyond the school day.

The school environment contributes to the sense of calmness and safety and bears witness to the school's distinctive Catholic character. There are displays around school, including one on stewards of creation and an interactive display for the liturgical year. Each classroom has a dedicated prayer table for prayer and liturgy and a well-used working wall for religious education.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

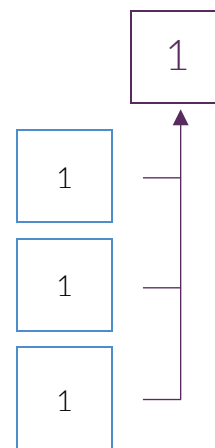
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 have excellent knowledge in religious education, starting in the early years with solid foundations being laid. They are fully engaged learners and role-play is used so that pupils can fully understand the scripture they are learning. For example, during inspection a role-play enacted Jesus telling the disciples, 'Let the children come to me', and pupils used key vocabulary. Across the Early Years Foundation Stage continuous provision is a strength, as it is effectively planned to allow the children to explore and embed the learning undertaken in religious education lessons.

Older pupils identify and plot key scripture, including Jesus' miracles, on a map of the Holy Land. This allows for a greater understanding of Jesus' ministry, whilst making links with other curriculum subjects and reinforcing and layering learning.

Across the school pupils can recall scripture and make links to their everyday lives. Some pupils in Key Stage 2 are able to extend their learning by comparing and contrasting different scripture passages. The explicit teaching of vocabulary helps the children make sense of scripture, and this allows them to articulate what they know. This is further aided by the focus on talk partners, where pupils orally rehearse their thinking before writing. Pupils work well in lessons, which is greatly helped by the excellent behaviour for learning the children demonstrate. Pupils' work is of a high standard, and they take great pride in their religious education work. They appreciate the variety of tasks planned for them. For example, in lower key stage two, where bread is proved to illustrate the parable of the yeast.

Teachers benefit from high-quality continuous professional development and receive additional support from the headteacher who is also the religious education subject leader. This has resulted in the teachers' subject knowledge being strong. Planning is effective and in line with the new *Religious Education Directory*. Teachers set high expectations for the children and are committed to ensuring they reach their full potential. Teachers' use of questioning is

good, but leaders recognise that it could be further refined to allow children to think at a deeper level. Children are proud when they receive stickers in their books, as they know this signals they have done well. A more consistent approach to feedback across the school, including self-assessment, would enable all pupils to be fully aware of their next steps in learning. Teachers recognise the importance religious education has in the children's lives, and this is reflected across the curriculum and in the behaviour and attitudes of the children.

Leaders and governors are highly ambitious for the outcomes for children and have ensured that the statutory curriculum is in place and prioritised through timetabling arrangements. Religious education has core parity with other core subjects, and professional development opportunities for staff are of high quality, which has aided their delivery of the current curriculum. Leaders have entwined the school's gospel inspired curriculum alongside the *Religious Education Directory* to ensure that the children are being developed spiritually and morally. Pupils' needs are being met. However, refinement of the agreed adaptive teaching strategies would ensure that good or better progress is made by all learners.

The religious education curriculum is enhanced to ensure that the children benefit from a wealth of experiences and opportunities. For example, older pupils have the opportunity to travel to France, where they spend time in a cathedral and honour those who lost their lives in service during the war.

Governors and leaders work closely together to monitor standards in the religious education curriculum. Therefore, they have an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and next steps. They are all highly ambitious for pupil outcomes and are committed to ensuring that the whole child is educated and that the children actively live out their faith in school and the community.

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

1

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

1

Leadership

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

1

1

In all key stages pupils respond exceptionally well to the prayer and liturgy offered. The reverence and respect demonstrated by pupils indicate that prayer is deep and meaningful to them. They show an excellent understanding of the variety of ways of praying that are part of the Catholic tradition, respond with reverence and respect, are confident in the use of scripture and comfortable in prayerful silence.

During inspection, pupils in the early years responded well to a call to prayer by moving in silence to sit together on the carpet. They were able to make the sign of the cross, recognise the bible and listen attentively to scripture. They responded to the scripture by stating, 'we are all special to Jesus'.

A 'skills strategy' forms part of the long-term planning for liturgical formation for pupils. Younger pupils begin to take a lead in class and whole school prayer so that by year four they confidently plan and lead celebrations of the Word which are meaningful and engaging. They are skilled in evaluating the quality of prayer and liturgy and support each other to make improvements. With the support of staff, older pupils confidently lead prayer and liturgy for younger pupils. Pupils regularly attend Mass with parishioners in church and can undertake ministries with confidence, for example as altar servers and readers.

Prayer and liturgy is central to all parts of school life and is highly valued by all. There is a clear and embedded pattern of prayer which is integral to daily gatherings of pupils and staff.

Appropriate scripture is central to all prayer and liturgy experiences, and these are intrinsically linked to daily life. Staff, including senior leaders, are inspirational models to pupils and demonstrate a deep understanding of the liturgical norms of the church. They bring their own skills and gifts to enhance prayer and liturgy experiences.

Prayer spaces in each classroom and in shared spaces are created in a thoughtful way, reflecting the liturgical year. For classroom-based prayer, staff and pupils move the prayer table and classroom furniture, giving careful attention to the mood and setting.

Parents are extremely positive about the prayer life of the school and recognise how it impacts the daily lives and actions of their children. Some parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire, stated that their children sing hymns and share school prayers at home. One parent told inspectors that their child led the family in a prayer learned in school, before a family meal.

As a result of the flourishing partnership with the local parish, pupils and their families are supported exceptionally well in their sacramental preparation, leading them to a fuller participation in the liturgy.

Clear policies and procedures, which reflect the *Prayer and Liturgy Directory*, are in place and are effectively communicated to all stakeholders.

There is an established calendar which incorporates liturgical feast days, holy days of obligation and other key dates, including the Pilgrims of Hope Jubilee Year.

High quality continuous professional development opportunities ensure all staff have the appropriate knowledge and skills to lead meaningful, engaging prayer and liturgy sessions. Staff understand the centrality of prayer and liturgy in the school and are fully committed to the prayer life of the school, recognising its value and the impact on pupils' lives.

Leaders regularly monitor prayer and liturgy across the school by taking part in class sessions, speaking with pupils about the prayer life of the school and reviewing resources. They ensure that time and budgeting never restrain the effectiveness of prayer and liturgy.

All stakeholders are involved in evaluating the quality of prayer and liturgy. Self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Alston Lane Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	151005
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8883727
Full postal address of the school	Alston Lane Catholic Primary School, Preston Road, Longridge, Preston, PR3 3BJ
School phone number	01772783661
Headteacher	Mark FitzGibbon
Chair of Governors	David Monks
School Website	www.alstonlane.lancs.sch.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	2-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	October 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	2 - Good

The inspection team

Jacqueline Hampson
Clare Evans

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