

St Bernard's Preparatory School

URN: 110160

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Northampton

18–19 June 2026

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 general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

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

Yes

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

Fully

1

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

What the school does well

- The culture of welcome is warm and heartfelt towards all visitors.
- Pupils' behaviour, joy in learning and sense of belonging to St Bernard's is a result of the mission statement being lived daily and authentically.
- Pupils benefit hugely from, and are formed by, the rich variety of prayer and spiritual experiences offered.
- School leaders are shining examples of faith in action and wonderful role models for the whole community.
- Pupils make excellent progress in religious education, and the quality of work in their books is testament to this.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to improve collective worship by ensuring all staff receive high-quality, strategically planned professional development in prayer and liturgy to further enrich pupil prayer experiences.
- Staff to fully understand, 'The Ways of Knowing' in the *Religious Education Directory*, so that teachers can effectively adapt tasks to meet the needs of all learners.

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 know and understand the school's mission, actively embracing it. They have a clear and deep connection to the school community which motivates them to actively seek ways to put Gospel values into practice. They know they are genuinely loved and cared for. They thrive due to the deeply embedded sense of belonging instilled in them. Pupils speak confidently about how the school helps them learn. They understand they have responsibilities to action their learning, making the world and their community a richer and more vibrant place. Examples include St Bernard's Helping Hands, set up by a pupil to raise money for Water Aid and filling food hampers. They show deep respect and kindness for one another through collaboration, sharing and support, be it in lessons, on the sports field or giving out a kindness ticket. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary around the school and within class. They enthusiastically participate in a host of opportunities provided by the school to support the Catholic life and mission by being Faith Ambassadors, Go Givers or Catholic social teaching ambassadors.

One member of staff said that 'Catholic life is genuinely lived in this school'. The school's Bernadine history is unmistakable, and its charism is instilled into the ethos of the school. All staff embrace and live it daily through their interactions and offers to be of service to others. Staff are joyful and work in collaboration with each other. They recognise that the school is welcoming and that their well-being is supported. The commitment to understanding and welcoming all faiths enriches this community and is testament to the unifying power of inclusivity. The school environment is distinctly Catholic with wonderful high-quality displays incorporating stitched tapestries, a guardian angel display and motivational quotes. Beautiful prayer tables are found in all rooms. Parish priests were effusive in their praise for the work undertaken in support of the community and the prayers they offer on behalf of those in need.

The provision for relationships, sex and health education is very carefully planned, taught and monitored.

All leaders view Catholic life and mission as a core responsibility. Links are made explicit to all stakeholders. This is then witnessed by all and woven into the everyday life and rhythm of the school. Servant leadership is always uppermost in the minds of leaders. The commitment to continual improvement underpins a rich and inclusive environment in which all members of the community are valued and nurtured. The headteacher writes a specific report for governors focusing on all three areas of religious education termly. This enables governors to be fully appraised. One member of staff commented, 'the school's mission is reflected in the warmth, kindness and respect evident across the community'. Parents were effusive regarding the warm welcome and really value the opportunities to attend liturgies and invitations into school. Leaders actively take up development opportunities and respond to requests to support the parish. Their open-door policy extends to the wider community with invitations to attend the Knit and Natter group and 'Little St B's' Mother and baby group. Governors are regular visitors to the school, meeting with pupils and staff. Their challenge and support ensure that Catholic life and mission remains at the heart of the school.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

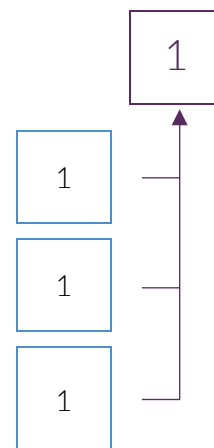
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 are developing excellent knowledge within religious education and make good progress. Early Years' pupils get off to a very strong start. All pupils are now enjoying the transition to the new *Religious Education Directory*. Pupils are increasingly religiously literate, speaking eloquently about what they have learnt. They apply previous learning to aid understanding or question further for clarification. Pupils explain how they have been changed by their learning in religious education. They can apply reasoning and cross curricular learning to discuss and challenge. This leads them to an awareness of the expectations of Catholic social teaching. Displays around the school, such as the Madonna and child and Jesus doing chores, help support the notion that small actions can be impactful. All pupils demonstrate great respect and interest along with a genuine love for learning and curiosity about other faiths. As a result, pupils apply themselves fully to their learning, and their responses to questions demonstrate reflection and maturity. Work produced is creative with art a particular strength. Written work is of a consistently high standard. Presentation is beautiful and pupils clearly value its importance. Pupil response to marking demonstrates deep and increasingly thoughtful responses as they move through the school. All pupils shared that they understood the marking and expectations following this. They felt encouraged by it; agreeing mistakes and offering answers was key to moving learning along. Pupil behaviours for learning are excellent.

Teachers benefit from a collegiate approach and are fully supportive of one another. The excellent leadership team works hard developing the expertise of staff so that pupils receive high quality teaching within religious education. Well planned lessons drive learning outcomes alongside skilful questioning techniques. The road to Damascus lesson asking why Saul was chosen by God despite his hatred for Christians resulted in a response, 'God saw he had a spark and the potential to change'. Referencing prior learning and making explicit links for pupils

provides effective scaffolds for learning, allowing pupils to make connections. Marking is timely and appropriate with some challenging written questions as follow up. Strong relationships, positive praise and humour all enrich the teaching provision. Pupils can link scripture to daily life, Catholic social teaching and school values, and common themes within other religions. This is because staff recognise the important role religious education plays in the formation of pupils. Staff are very adept at weaving links through their lessons, aiding recognition and understanding. They understand the importance of allowing time for reflection in lessons. Consequently, pupils understand their learning and how it applies to our world today. Staff strive to make lessons creative, engaging and accessible. Moving forward, further knowledge of the *Religious Education Directory* is required to make adaptations to lessons to support and optimise all learning opportunities.

Leaders have planned strategically for the introduction of the new *Directory* programme. Leaders have ensured that staff needs have been fully considered so that its impact has been positive and inspirational. This approach has enabled staff to feel supported. Good quality, regular professional development is provided. Governors are kept fully informed and have attended some relevant and appropriate training at the Diocese. Full governor training for the *Directory* would be hugely beneficial moving forward. Governors pose relevant questions, seeking to ensure that impact is appropriate and the required professional development has been undertaken so that pupils benefit and achieve the best outcomes. Trustees are kept fully informed. Religious education receives full parity and is regarded as 'the' core subject. All policies reflect this. High quality resources are available and used daily. Religious education is monitored carefully. Leaders are exceptionally reflective and respond swiftly to needs and areas of concern resulting in excellent 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

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

Pupils confidently and clearly articulate the deep impact of prayer on their lives. They recognise how they and the whole school community, benefit from the joy-filled prayer opportunities. As one child commented, 'Prayer enhances my relationship with God and helps me grow in wisdom, so I make good choices', and another recognised that prayer helps them to feel 'safe, comforted and close to God'. They have a deep appreciation of the variety of prayer offered and speak enthusiastically about the daily rhythm of prayer. This includes a deep engagement with traditional and school prayers, alongside moments of quiet reflection, prayerful meditation and prayers meaningfully composed by the pupils themselves. Pupils have a deep understanding of the liturgical year. Everyone participates joyfully in prayer and liturgy with deep reverence and respect. Engagement in communal singing is undertaken with enthusiasm and spiritual joy, notably seen in the school's 'Light of Hope' hymn written by a pupil. Regular opportunities for pupils to prepare celebrations of the word contributes to the confidence and willingness with which they undertake ministries. Pupils in the Early Years confidently proclaim scripture in class liturgies and assemblies. Faith Ambassadors from across the school act as inspirational role models for all, confidently planning and leading whole school liturgies. They link prayer and scripture with events such as anti-bullying and wellbeing week, and independently monitor prayer focal spaces in classrooms, resulting in a deep sense of school-wide ownership and involvement for pupils.

Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school. The headteacher acts as an inspirational role model leading to a deeply inclusive, spiritual community rooted in Gospel values. The staff team highly values the prayer life and its rhythm. It contributes to and enhances the deep sense of spirituality that pervades the community. One staff member commented, 'Prayer is woven naturally throughout the day.... children participate with reverence and enthusiasm.' Staff greatly

appreciate the highly inclusive nature of the school's prayer and the way it is used to celebrate and mark significant moments of the community such as ordination anniversary, retirement and to mark First Holy Communion. Attractive and personalised prayer focal areas in each classroom and throughout the school, add to the richness. Music is a spiritual strength of the school. Its carefully considered integration into assemblies contributes to deeply moving spiritual experiences for the whole community. Parents and families highly value the regular opportunities to participate in the prayer life of the school, attending Wednesday liturgies and Friday assemblies. These opportunities further deepen the sense of spirituality that pervades the community. Flourishing relationships with the local clergy, as well as the Sisters of Stroud who work as prayer partners with each class and welcome Year 6 on retreat, ensure that all pupils benefit from wider opportunities for prayer, rooted in the rich tradition of the school's history.

The headteacher and senior leadership team have a clear and well-developed understanding of the importance of opportunities for prayer and liturgy and ensure that appropriate time and resources are provided so they are high-quality and effective. The leaders' highly effective modelling, alongside planned professional development and opportunities for collaboration and sharing of practice, ensure that staff develop the skills to lead and form pupils. However, opportunities for the wider team to be formed through experiencing different types of prayer, alongside more focussed professional development would increase confidence. Leaders understand the variety of ways of praying and these are integrated into the school year. This is also supported by clergy to ensure all prayer and liturgy is reflective of, and informed by, Catholic tradition. The school calendar is permeated by well-planned opportunities for prayer and liturgy, including the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the celebration of the Eucharist at key moments.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Bernard's Preparatory School
School unique reference number (URN)	110160
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8716000
Full postal address of the school	Hawtrey Close, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 1TB
School phone number	01753521821
Headteacher	Asha Verma
Chair of governors	Ros Nockles
School Website	www.stbernardsprep.org
Trusteeship	St Benedict's School, Ealing
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Catholic Independent School
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	2.5 -11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	21 June 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Sheila Birtles
Jo Marsh

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