



DIOCESAN CANONICAL INSPECTION REPORT

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL, RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Ratcliffe College Preparatory School Fosse Way, Ratcliffe on the Wreake, Leicester, LE7 4SG

School URN:	N/A
Inspection Date:	07 March 2022
Inspectors:	Mrs F Boucher and Mrs A Greaves

Overall Effectiveness	Previous Inspection:	Requires Improvement	3
	This Inspection:	Good	2
Catholic Life:		Good	2
Religious Education:		Good	2
Collective Worship:		Good	2

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

Ratcliffe College Preparatory School is a good Catholic school.

- Ratcliffe College Preparatory School is a good Catholic school. Improvements since the last inspection are clearly evident, resulting in a sustainment and strengthening of educational provision in relation to the school's Catholic character. Pupils are rightly proud of their school; parents are positive in their views about the quality of Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship; staff speak enthusiastically about their experience of working at Ratcliffe College Preparatory School, citing the support from senior leaders and the community-focused atmosphere as key elements for satisfaction at work.
- Religious Education at Ratcliffe College Preparatory School is good. Since the last inspection, leaders, including governors, have focused on systems for monitoring and evaluation to bring about targeted improvements. Staff access training to support their professional expertise, enabling teachers and teaching assistants to work with increasing effectiveness. Pupils are better supported to reach expectations; they produce a range of creative written work; they identify favourite aspects of learning, including 'hands on' experiences, such as opportunities to use cookery when learning about religious festivals.
- The Catholic Life of Ratcliffe College Preparatory School is good. The ethos and culture, linking with the Rosminian values and approach to life and learning, are fully embedded: these continue to be not only a strong feature but also an effective and visible strength of the school and its educational mission. The environment is beautiful and thoughtfully arranged, reflecting both the importance of Catholic Life and the care for all members of the community. Pupils talk with interest and understanding about how they can 'live, love and learn like Jesus'.
- Collective Worship at Ratcliffe College Preparatory School is good. Pupil-led liturgy has flourished since the last inspection: pupils are exposed to a broader diet of worship which takes different forms. Pupils enjoy these experiences; they are keen to send out their peers to fulfil a mission linked to the theme of the occasion. The school community benefits from good role models in the headteacher, senior leaders and the lay chaplain: along with governors, they are committed to ensuring that the school community is one which is joyful in worship.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- Ratcliffe College Preparatory School is an independent Catholic school, founded by the Institute of Charity, more commonly known as the Rosminian Order.
- There are 269 pupils on roll.
- 19% of pupils attending the school are baptised Catholics and 37% are from other Christian backgrounds. 22% of pupils are from other faith backgrounds and 22% have no religious affiliation.
- The number of pupils with additional or special education needs or disabilities is well below average; 0.4% of pupils have an educational health and care plan to ensure that they receive further support in school.
- There are no pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium.
- The vast majority of pupils transfer into Ratcliffe College Senior School for the secondary phase of their education.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

■ Catholic Life:

- Further involve wider groups of pupils more actively in shaping the Catholic Life of the school so that a larger proportion of pupils can make a positive impact.
- Following on from the progress made since the last inspection, leaders, including governors, should continue to develop their strategic approaches to monitoring and evaluating Catholic Life, maintaining the renewed rigour and embedding systems over time.

■ Religious Education:

- Ensure that the most experienced teachers support colleagues in
 - developing children's theological literacy, appropriate to pupils' ages and stages of development
 - using effective formative assessment so that the work set and differentiated in Religious Education lessons is consistent with the next stage of learning for groups of pupils
- Extend opportunities for pupils to respond to feedback in the school's drive towards further improvement.
- Ensure that the skills fostered by Year 5 are maintained in Year 6 written work so that pupils' understanding and knowledge is fully presented in their workbooks.

■ Collective Worship:

- Develop the role of the lay chaplain so that a greater number of pupils benefit from specialised support to further enhance Collective Worship, including more opportunities for pupils to participate in planning and leading whole school worship.
- Further develop strategic approaches to monitoring and evaluating Collective Worship, maintaining the renewed rigour applied by leaders, including the gathering of parental feedback, so that additional improvements and refinements can be identified and more quickly be realised.

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

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- The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.
- The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school – good

- Pupils at Ratcliffe College Preparatory School show respect for themselves and others. They show an understanding of right and wrong, forgiveness and consideration for those around them, recognising that all are made in the image and likeness of God. Consequently, pupils' behaviour is at least good almost all of the time.
- Most pupils can articulate the mission of the school; they can share key phrases from their own understanding of the Catholic Life of the school, explaining that this helps everyone to, 'try our hardest to be kind to all and love all, no matter what'.
- Most pupils accept the responsibility of living within a Catholic school community; those who are new to the school share their happiness in how well they have been welcomed and integrated into the school family.
- Most pupils value the school's chaplaincy provision. Key pupil leadership groups, such as the Caritas group and the school's head girl and boy, are highly involved; there is scope to involve wider groups of pupils more actively in this blossoming area of school life, building further on the newly established leadership programme.
- Pupils, according to their age and capacity, have a good understanding of relationships and sexual development; they respond positively to opportunities provide for personal growth, recognising their own worth, confidence and happiness.
- Pupils are able to show a pride in their own religious and cultural identity and beliefs. They recognise that the Catholic Life and worship opportunities within the school day help them to feel calm, relaxed and closer to God, noting that at such times, 'your mind is really refreshed'.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school – outstanding

- The provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding. The school's Rosminian charism, coupled with the well-established 21st century learning habits, underpin the school's ethos and approach to learning, behaviour and culture. This clearly sets out the mission of Ratcliffe College Preparatory School and supports each member of the community to strive to be 'the best that we can be'.
- Staff fully participate in activities, prayer and professional development opportunities, reflecting a commitment to the Catholic Life of the school. This is further shown in the implementation of Catholic Life across the curriculum including the well-taught Christian Living programme, rooted in Catholic teachings and principles. Support for charities, such as CAFOD and WaterAid, strengthens the Catholic Life of the school.
- Staff act as exemplary role models in their own conduct and behaviour. They promote high standards of conduct with pupils and adhere to these expectations themselves, creating an atmosphere where there is respect, forgiveness and a loving acceptance of others.
- The physical environment reflects the school's mission and identity through highly effective signs of the school's Catholic character. Artefacts, wall displays and furnishings are thoughtfully and carefully arranged to maximise impact and create an atmosphere conducive to reflection, prayer life and community-focused attitudes.
- Chaplaincy provision has increased positively since the last inspection. The appointment of a lay chaplain has boosted provision and added to the effectiveness and capacity of the staff team in this aspect of Catholic Life, including support for and development of the Caritas and Eco teams.
- Pastoral care for pupils and staff alike is a feature of Ratcliffe College Preparatory School. The school is attentive to and caters for the needs of all members of the school community.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school – good

- Leaders and governors demonstrate a clear and visible commitment to the mission of the church. In their example and word, they show themselves to be models of Catholic leadership, prioritising the Catholic Life of the school as a key area of responsibility and importance.
- The increased rigour being applied to the monitoring and evaluation of the Catholic Life of the school is bearing fruit. The headteacher and Religious Education leader are starting to amass more information so that, over time, plans for improvement can be realised and form part of a more structured, cyclical process. The good work should continue; it remains a valid target area, the importance of which is recognised by school leaders.
- Governors have deepened and increased their involvement since the last inspection, supporting and challenging from a position of knowledge: they are an asset, in this respect. Governors are ambitious for the Catholic Life of the school; they recognise the existing strengths within the school and within themselves; they are playing a more active part in shaping future success.
- The school has effective strategies for engaging with stakeholders. A parent forum enables leaders to hear the opinion of parents, first hand, in relation to the Catholic Life of the school. Parents are highly supportive; they report that they 'never have to go looking for the school's Catholic ethos: it is in how the children speak and how they respect the Sacraments'.

continued

- During the Covid pandemic, school leaders kept the Catholic Life of the school alive, ensuring that the school community continued to feel together while apart. Parents were particularly impressed with this aspect of the school's work and its positive impact of their families.
- The school promotes the bishop's vision in its work and responds increasingly well to diocesan initiatives and policies. Leaders and governors are keen to explore further opportunities in this respect.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION	2
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- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

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How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education – good

- Pupils enjoy their lessons in Religious Education. They say that their teachers help to keep their lessons interesting by enabling them to be creative and learn in different ways. Pupils concentrate on their studies; disruption to learning is rare; where pupils take the conversation away from the task at hand, adults steer them back to their work and diligence resumes without issue.
- Pupils make progress from their starting points; those who require additional help, either because of their individual learning needs or because they have joined the school unaccustomed to being taught Religious Education in this way, are able to access support, make progress and show enthusiasm in lessons.
- Pupils’ attainment is good; outcomes are consistently in line with or above diocesan end of year expectations. Pupils are pleased with their work: they can find pieces of which they are especially proud and can talk about why and how they succeeded in a particular task.
- Some pupils are religiously literate for their age; they can articulate and scribe their ideas well; they think ethically. The next step is for all pupils to gain greater confidence in, and further develop their abilities for, thinking theologically and spiritually, reflecting this in their work across the school, according to the relevant age groups.
- The quality of written work has improved; pupils write at length more frequently across an increasing number of classes. When reaching upper key stage two, it is important that the skills fostered by Year 5 are maintained in Year 6 written work so that pupils’ understanding and knowledge is fully presented in their workbooks.
- There are some opportunities for pupils to respond to feedback, in line with the school’s agreed marking and feedback policy. This should now be extended in the school’s drive towards further improvement, so that more pupils, more consistently, respond to teacher feedback as they improve their work and their understanding.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education – good

- Teachers take care to plan and deliver lessons in such a way that pupils learn well. This means that lessons are good and purposeful, with staff employing a range of strategies to keep pupils engaged and focused. Individual and collaborative work is undertaken in lessons, adding variety and opening opportunities for pupils to hone their skills of application to a range of tasks.
- Consistency across parallel classes ensures an evenness in approach for pupils and supports the confidence of staff. This means that the sequence of lessons, and the activities chosen, sit neatly within wider, whole school plans. Similarly, resources are mirrored across each year group for uniformity and, at the same time, teachers are allowed scope to inject some individuality into their delivery and methods.
- Teachers use skills in questioning and observation during lessons to react and respond to learners. Teachers show confidence in their subject knowledge; most can adapt their input according to the needs of pupils during class discussion and tackle misconceptions.
- In the strongest lessons, pupils are well supported to use their theological knowledge to articulate and record their ideas, making links between scripture, prayer, hymns and other key sources. The next step is for this expertise to be modelled and extended so that it occurs across all classes and age groups.
- Teaching assistants add value to lessons, supporting pupils effectively in groups or on a one-to-one basis. Scribing responses ensures that pupils' literacy skills do not impede progress and achievement in Religious Education lessons.
- Before the Covid period, staff had started to moderate pupils' work with another Catholic school: continuing this activity would serve to reinforce the school's high expectations and ambition around Religious Education.

The extent to which leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education – good

- Leaders and governors have further prioritised the teaching and learning of Religious Education since the last inspection and the positive impact of this strategy is evident. The development plans and targets for Religious Education have been designed to sequentially improve all aspects of this subject, including methods for monitoring and evaluation.
- Since the last inspection, monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education is more evident in discussions with a range of staff and governors; it is more visible in documentary evidence. This ensures that plans and outcomes are regularly reviewed and analysed.
- Governors have increased their involvement and influence. Regular communication and meetings ensure that joint working and discussion is a regular feature of school improvement. The team is galvanized and inspired by what has been achieved thus far and equally by the work ahead as they strive for further success.
- A revised system for target setting in Religious Education has been introduced recently. This links with the work already started to support pupils in understanding how to improve their own learning and also to enable staff to track progress more accurately.
- The curriculum meets the requirement of the Bishops' Conference in every respect and in each key stage. Religious Education lessons are structured to ensure that sufficient time is dedicated to this subject. Financial resources set aside for Religious Education are in line with or above that for other core areas. Relationships and Sex Education is well planned within the context of Religious Education and personal development.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP	2
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• How well pupils respond to and participate in the school’s Collective Worship.	2
• The quality of provision for the Collective Worship.	2
• How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.	2

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school’s Collective Worship – good

- Pupils are keen to participate in Collective Worship. During these times, they act with reverence, interest and enjoyment. In periods of silence, they reflect; in community prayer, they take part. In explaining what it is like when they pray in school, they say, ‘We make the sign of the cross; it is very holy’. When taking part in class liturgy, they say, ‘We sit in a circle because of God’s endless love for everyone’.
- Since the last inspection, opportunities for pupils to regularly plan and lead worship have increased and improved. When leading liturgy, pupils have confidence and speak clearly; they use a range of successful methods to keep their peers involved and engaged. These pupils have gained a degree of independence which now can be further extended to a wider group of pupils across all age groups.
- Most pupils have a good understanding of the Church’s year and the liturgical cycle; most talk with age-appropriate understanding about the season of Lent, though they focus on fasting alone rather than on fasting, prayer and almsgiving.
- Pupils use a variety of approaches to prayer: they can recite traditional prayers appropriately, in unity; they can meditate in silence; some can volunteer an individual, spontaneous prayer linked to the world’s news. Pupils enjoy carrying out a mission, going out from a liturgical celebration to undertake, for example, an act of kindness in response to what they have heard during worship.
- Pupils recognise that they live and work in a prayerful community. They relate this to their spiritual and moral development, recognising that what they learn in lessons can be applied outside the classroom. Pupils think about ‘how we can live out the scripture in life’. They say that ‘in assembly we pray, we read scripture and they teach us to be humble, not boastful’.
- Pupils have a well-developed sense of respect for those of other faiths, reflected in the manner in which many pupils participate in prayer and worship.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship – good

- The provision for Collective Worship is good and improving. Staff ensure that each occasion has a purpose and message; themes are appropriate and relevant to pupils, reflecting a good understanding of the Catholic character of the school and the Church's seasons.
- Praying together is a feature of daily life at Ratcliffe College Preparatory School. Worship takes different forms and a more varied diet is available for the whole school community, such as times to sing and praise, times to be still and silent and times for prayer within class and whole school liturgy. Regular celebration of the Mass is enjoyed and prized.
- Staff have developed their skills in supporting pupils to prepare and lead worship; they can take the lead themselves, when needed, but also have the confidence to allow pupils to take charge. Through the carefully chosen resources and artefacts that are provided, staff ensure that pupils can create experiences which are meaningful and engaging. For example, some pupils were empowered to create a liturgy around the Holocaust, following input by staff.
- Teaching assistants have accessed training and workshops to enable them to further support Collective Worship within their work. This enables the wider staff team to take responsibility for and assist during times of worship and demonstrates the commitment that staff have to this aspect of school life.
- Opportunities for adults associated with pupils to attend Collective Worship was hampered for schools during the Covid period; online experiences enabled pupils and families to access prayer and worship remotely, sustaining the wider school community.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship – good

- The values of the Rosminian order and the school's mission permeate the approach to Collective Worship. Leaders are keen to ensure that children learn about how and why we pray, as well as experience the power of prayer.
- The headteacher and lay chaplain know how to plan and develop quality Collective Worship, which they model to others. Their support extends in other ways, such as the addition of liturgical wheel displays all around the building which supports pupils and staff alike in their understanding of feasts and seasons. To enhance provision further, pupils across the school would benefit from greater access to the lay chaplain, widening her impact beyond key pupil groups such as those in the Caritas team.
- School leaders promote opportunities for pupils to plan and lead worship; development plans and systems readily include this aspect and its importance is therefore raised in the life of the school. Resourcing is considered so that opportunities are maximised for success.
- More rigorous monitoring and evaluation of Collective Worship has been introduced since the last inspection, ensuring greater consistency in meeting the diocesan expectations. The broader range of activities undertaken better places all leaders to understand what is working well and where further action should be taken. This level of analysis should continue so that, over time, these activities become fully embedded leading to increased progress.
- Following the global pandemic, parents and carers are now able to join worship in school. Leaders, including governors, now need to use this as an opportunity to bring parent voice into the monitoring and evaluation cycle for Collective Worship in order to embed consistent approaches towards involving all stakeholders, supporting the drive for refinement and improvement in this area.
- Governors have an increased presence in the school and a deep commitment to Collective Worship. Their 'eyes on, hands off' approach enables them to secure strong relationships with senior leaders, observe and participate in worship and talk with more confidence and understanding about plans and developments.

SCHOOL DETAILS

School Name	Ratcliffe College Preparatory School
Unique Reference Number	N/A

The inspection of this school was carried out on behalf of the Bishop of Nottingham under Canon 806 of Canon Law in accordance with the *evaluation schedule* for diocesan canonical inspections in the Diocese of Nottingham. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. The process begins with the school's own self-evaluation and the inspection schedule is in line with the criteria set by the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers (NBRIA).

During the inspection, the inspectors observed 15 Religious Education lessons and 3 Acts of Collective Worship.

Meetings were held with the headteacher, the subject leader for Religious Education, the school's lay chaplain, two representatives from the parent forum and two governors. Further discussions were also held with pupils and parents.

The inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including reports of the governing body, action plans, the school development plan, monitoring forms, assessment information and parental response forms. Inspectors also examined the work in pupils' Religious Education books.

Chair of Governors:	Mrs Louise Marsden
Headteacher:	Fr Christopher Cann
Date of Previous School Inspection:	28 June 2018
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WHAT INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS MEAN

Within the report, the following grades are used:

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires Improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

In the context of the whole school, the overall effectiveness grades have the following meaning:

Grade 1	Outstanding	The school is a highly effective Catholic school. Pupils' needs are exceptionally well met.
Grade 2	Good	The school is an effective Catholic school. Pupils' needs are met well.
Grade 3	Requires Improvement	The school is not yet a good Catholic school, it is not inadequate however, and there are aspects that require improvement. There will be a monitoring visit within the next 18 months and the school will be re-inspected within 3 years.
Grade 4	Inadequate	There are features in need of urgent and immediate attention. The school is not meeting the basic minimum requirement for adequacy as a Catholic school. The school will receive an annual monitoring visit and will be re-inspected within 3 years.