



Governing Board's Strategic Direction 2025 – 2028

Loving Serving and Growing together with Jesus

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION:

This Strategic Plan outlines St Bernadette's Strategic Direction, Context and Core objectives for the years 2025 – 2028.

The school continues to maintain a clear focus - and to that end our core objective remains to build upon successes and address any identified areas of development, aspiring to be recognised as a school judged at the highest standard in all areas by Ofsted and the Catholic Schools Inspectorate. This plan outlines how this will be achieved and must be read in conjunction with the School Development Plan (SDP) as our detailed Operational Plan and the MK Catholic Group School Improvement Plan (SIP) - most recent iteration adopted 19 October 2026 by the full Governing Board (FGB).

SECTION 2: PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

2.1. Principles:

Catholic Schools Principles: The search for Excellence; The uniqueness of the individual; The Education of the Whole Person; The Education of all; Moral Principles.

Nolan Principles: The Board will continue to operate within the 7 Principles of Public Life – The Nolan Principles of Selflessness; Integrity; Objectivity; Accountability; Openness; Honesty and Leadership. (*Lord Nolan Oct 94*)

2.2. Values:

British Values: The Board will continue to operate within the accepted British Values of:

- Democracy; Rule of Law; Individual Liberty; Mutual Respect; and Tolerance of those with Different Faiths and Beliefs.

These Principles and Values are reflected in our Policies and in our decisions as an organisation.

SECTION 3: VISION – A SCHOOL JUDGED AT THE HIGHEST STANDARD IN ALL AREAS BY OFSTED AND THE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE.

1. A school that continues to put Pupil Safeguarding at the centre of all that we do.
2. A school that aspires to excellence in Teaching and judged at the highest standard across all areas by OFSTED
3. A school that continues to be recognised as “Outstanding” in Section 48/CSI (Catholic School Inspectorate) Inspection.
4. A school that values its staff – their Mental Health and Wellbeing - and seeks to alleviate unnecessary workload.
5. A school that recruits, develops and retains the best teachers and support staff to provide the best education for our pupils.



6. A school that inspires children and young people to achieve their full potential and flourish through the delivery of outstanding teaching and learning
7. A school that benchmarks itself against the best.
8. A school that builds resilient young people, with positive Mental Health and Wellbeing, ready and able to engage with the next steps on their educational and faith journey through life.
9. A school that is actively involved in teacher training programmes and initiatives such as our own "grow our own" pilot scheme to address the potential shortfall in Catholic Teachers

SECTION 4: MISSION: "Loving, Serving and Growing together with Jesus"

Our Mission will continue to underpin all our activities as we endeavour to live the message of the Gospels by:

1. Creating an educational environment in which pupils are inspired to reach the highest standards of academic and individual achievement; with accelerated progress across all key stages, bearing in mind the emotional needs and wellbeing of each individual.
2. Developing a Loving, Caring Community which recognises and celebrates the unique, God given nature of each individual; valuing every member of the school community, regardless of religion or no religion, and developing the potential of each individual.
3. Enhancing the Catholic Life of our school and providing children, families and staff with the experience of being part of an active Catholic Community.
4. Ensuring that available resources are directed to our core objective of providing the best education for and positive mental health, wellbeing and safety of our pupils and staff.

SECTION 5: CONTEXT- THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT – THE 3 STRATEGIC DRIVERS and INFLUENCES: DfE, MKCC, NDES/CES.

The Strategic Plan for years 2025-28 has been prepared, as with previous iterations, within the context of the Strategic Plans of the following "umbrella" organisations: Department of Education, MK City Council (MKCC) and Northampton Diocese Education Service (NDES) / Catholic Education Service (CES).

It is important to note that the Strategic Direction of the Diocese is for all schools to join a Diocesan MAT when the time right for them.

This is further discussed in **Section 5.3**.

5.1. DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION (DfE):

5.1.1. The DfE has published a **new governance guide (Updated July 2026)**, to replace the Governance Handbook:

- [Maintained Schools Governance Guide](#)

The following are all covered in the guide:

- [1. Effective governance](#) - An overview of the features of effective governance.
- [2. Strategic leadership](#) - An overview of strategic leadership for maintained schools.



- **3. Accountability** - Holding school leaders to account for the school's educational and financial performance and ensuring money is well spent.
- **4. People** - Information on governance roles, appointments, support and staff well-being.
- **5. Governance structures** - An overview of governance structures and how governing bodies must be constituted.
- **6. Evaluation** - How regular evaluation can be carried out on the effectiveness of governance and the school's performance.
- **7. Compliance** - Guidance for governing bodies on how to meet its legal and regulatory responsibilities with regards to compliance.

The roles within St Bernadette's Governing Board are outlined clearly in our Accountability Framework and this is kept under review and new roles created as required.

5.1.2 The OFSTED Education Inspection Framework

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework/education-inspection-framework-for-use-from-november-2025>

Since November 2025, Ofsted has used a 5-point scale to grade different areas of a provider's work. They no longer provide an overall effectiveness grade for any provider inspected under the framework. Safeguarding is evaluated on a 'met'/'not met' scale for providers.

The evaluation scale for each evaluation area, other than safeguarding, is:

- **Exceptional (highest quality provision):** an evaluation area can be graded 'exceptional' when all the strong standards have been met and if it meets all the additional standards in the 'exceptional' section of the toolkit.
- **Strong standard:** an evaluation area can be graded 'strong standard' when all the expected standards and all the strong standards have been met.
- **Expected standard:** an evaluation area can be graded 'expected standard' when all the standards are met – this includes meeting the legal requirements and the expectations set out in statutory guidance, as well as the professional standards required of the particular type of provision, where these apply.
- **Needs attention:** an evaluation area can be graded 'needs attention' when the 'expected standard' has not been met because some aspects of provision are inconsistent, limited in scope or impact and/or not fully meeting the legal requirements.
- **Urgent improvement (lowest quality provision):** an evaluation area can be graded 'urgent improvement' when it needs urgent action to provide a suitable standard of education and/or care for children and learners.

The evaluation areas for all schools OFSTED inspect, including non-association independent schools, are:

- safeguarding
- inclusion
- curriculum and teaching
- achievement
- attendance and behaviour
- personal development and well-being



- early years in schools
- leadership and governance

5.2. MILTON KEYNES CITY COUNCIL (MKCC) previously MILTON KEYNES LOCAL AUTHORITY (MKLA):

The key messages from the **MK Council Chairs and Vice Chairs Briefings over the last few years have centred on the following:**

5.2.1. Financial pressures upon the council, resulting in a letter 29.11.24, stating:

On Thursday 17 October, we sought agreement from Schools Forum for de-delegation of statutory local authority school improvement functions. The proposal was to de-delegate £279,000 funding for school improvement in maintained primary and secondary schools: on a projected £19.70 per pupil basis, equivalent to 0.3% of the maintained school budget share. Following consultation via their mechanism, Schools Forum subsequently voted in favour of de-delegating funding for statutory school improvement functions. This means that we can undertake work required in Milton Keynes maintained schools in the 2025-2026 financial year: underwriting risk and fulfilling our statutory monitoring and improvement duties. The cost rose to £22.23 per pupil for 2025-26. The current proposal for 2027-28 financial year is a per pupil rate of £25.21

5.2.2. MK Council's Primary Place Planning Group reports that there is overprovision of school places in primary schools in the short term and therefore more options for families. It is important, therefore that families are aware of our Strengths and Values and their suggestions at improvements are taken into consideration and acted upon as appropriate.

5.2.3. Four Quadrants have also been established to facilitate discussion and share ideas and joint working across these patches

5.2.4. **The MKCC School Improvement Framework**

In its entirety, the school improvement framework aims to:

- Keep a focus on the overall effectiveness of the Milton Keynes school system, supporting an ambition that all schools in Milton Keynes provide excellent education.
- Deliver a robust evaluation tool to identify strengths and weakness across the maintained sector.
- Clarify for schools, and the council, the procedures and interventions that will be taken if concerns and/or risks are identified.
- Ensure a collaborative, co-produced response where schools require additional support to improve.
- Provide a high-quality, traded offer to schools: ensuring that gains in educational quality over recent years are not lost.

Procedures

All maintained schools:

- All maintained schools will receive an annual evaluation.
- All maintained schools will receive an annual safeguarding audit.
- These will include on-site visits and meetings with leaders.



- At the end of the visits draft summary evaluations will be made, which will be quality assured through moderation activity and shared with the Head of Education Outcomes.

Maintained schools requiring additional support:

- If a school requires additional support to improve several aspects of provision (a potential Grade B school), a School Performance Board (SPB) will be put in place.
- Decisions regarding interventions will be agreed at the School Performance Board (SPB).
- Review of the effectiveness of the interventions and the decision to close a School Performance Board will be agreed at the Education Performance Board.
- If a school governing board is unable to ensure appropriate school improvement, despite ongoing support and intervention, and does not have capacity to take this forward quickly enough an Interim Executive Board (IEB) will be considered.

Maintained schools judged to be in a category of concern by Ofsted

If a maintained school is inspected and judged to require a category of concern, a Project Board will be put in place.

The project board will undertake to:

- Review and agree the local authority statement of action.
- Ensure that enough interventions are in place to improve the quality of educational provision, working with Regional Improvement Teams (RIT) as appropriate/relevant.
- Work with Regions Group (RG) to bring about swift academisation where this is mandated.
- Check that the legal 'due diligence' procedures are being followed and completed in a robust and timely manner, where academisation is mandated

5.3. CES (Catholic Education Service) AND NDES (NORTHAMPTON DIOCESE EDUCATION SERVICE) PREVIOUSLY NORES

5.3.1 The Diocesan Vision for all work in the diocese is set out in the Diocesan Protocols Sept 2026 which states:

Above all, the key word is **mission** - we are a missionary Church.

Mission is to be sent out as **the messengers** of the Good News **of the love of Jesus** (evangelisation) both **in word and witness/action**.

"Always be ready with the reason for your hope." (1 Pet. 3)

3 key messages:

- Mission – the church exists to spread the message of God's love. Schools are central to this, putting pupils, their families and all in the school community in the presence of Christ
- Communion – working together to strengthen our mission.



- Living stones – the people are the church

In short, we need to build communities of disciples.

As an integral part of its vision for the holistic formation of children and young people, the Church expects those responsible for the provision of Catholic education to promote and uphold high standards, including academic standards.

The primary purpose of Catholic Schools is to support families in the education of their children. Catholic Schools must strive to enable each child to attain personal excellence in their studies, through the formation of their human values and the development of their understanding of God's purpose in their life.

"Together with and in connection with the family, the school provides catechesis with possibilities that are not to be neglected... This, of course, concerns first and foremost the Catholic school: it would no longer deserve this title if, no matter how much it shone for its high level of teaching in non-religious matters, there were justification for reproaching it for negligence or deviation in strictly religious education... The special character of the Catholic school, the underlying reason for it is precisely the quality of the religious instruction integrated into the education of the pupils."

St. John Paul II 'Catechesi Tradendae' 69

Crossing the threshold of a Catholic School should be like entering into the nurturing comfort of a loving Christian family, where all experience welcome, feel valued and are challenged to grow'.

5.3.2 The role of NDES in Catholic Education, over the Strategic Period, which is in support of our Strategic Aims, is clearly laid out in its website: <https://northamptondiocese.org/education/>
The following remain the key responsibilities:

- Communication with schools, academies and parishes through NORES NEWS
- Representing the Trustee at all appointments for reserved posts of Head and Deputy Head Teacher, RE and Chaplaincy
- Organising and promoting diocesan events for education, especially the annual Education Celebration and annual Lecture
- Organising annual conferences for Head and Deputy Head Teachers
- The inspection of our schools and academies as Catholic schools, and their Religious Education in accordance with canonical and civil law.
- Monitoring and publishing inspection reports and supporting the implementation of recommendations
- Sharing in responsibility for support for schools and academies as and when needed, and with Local Authorities and other external agencies.
- Representing the diocese on the statutory committees and other bodies as required by civil law



- Working with other diocesan agencies in different ways, e.g. Finance Office, NYMO, Liturgy Commission, Vocations Team etc, and liaising with other denominational and faith bodies in this area.
- 5.3.1. In order to achieve a cooperative approach to working together, MK Catholic HTs prepared a **“MK Catholic Schools Improvement Plan”** to achieve the Benefits of working closely together without the risks and organisational turmoil.
We continue open communication with NDES regarding the Bishop's vision, most recently when Heads and Chairs met with the Bishop on 17th Jan 2025.
- 5.3.2. **The Catholic Schools Inspectorate Handbook September 2026, v5 states:**
- Inspectors will make judgements on how well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision in the following 3 key areas for evaluation: Catholic Life and Mission, RE and Collective Worship
 - Inspectors will need to establish whether governors are holding the head teacher to account for the leadership and management of the Catholic life and mission of the school and ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and the diocese.

SECTION 6: OUR 4 KEY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE 1: IN LINE WITH THE BISHOP'S VISION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION – TO WORK TOGETHER IN COLLABORATION WITH OTHER CATHOLIC SCHOOLS, TO ENSURE OPTIMUM ACCESS FOR CATHOLIC FAMILIES TO HIGH QUALITY PROVISION OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION

RATIONALE:

There is a continuing downward trend in Catholic admissions to St Bernadette's which could, if continues, put its identity as a Catholic School at risk.

AIM:

To maintain Catholicity of the School in the long term – To ensure that St Bernadette's is the school of choice for Catholic Parents by continuing to provide high quality Catholic Education for all Catholic Pupils in its care *whilst continuing to ensure that all pupils are treated equally regardless of faith or no faith* – in Line with our stated Principles (Section 2 above), to which all Governors commit.

ACTIONS:

1. The **Admissions Committee** will ensure effective communication with the local Community, listening and acting to suggestions, concerns and ensuring that families are aware of the many strengths of St Bernadette's.

This Committee will ensure that there is a strategy in place, addressed through the SDP:-

- a) To continue to monitor numbers of Catholic Pupils applying for admission to St Bernadette's, submitting reports to Board on Issues and actions taken.
- b) To continue to listen to the views of parents, implementing recommendations as appropriate.
- c) To seek opportunities to promote St Bernadette's in the Local Area
- d) To seek the support of Local Priests in informing new parishioners about St Bernadette's- particularly on the Eastern Milton Keynes developments etc.



- e) To publish dates for new entrants and throughout the year as vacancies occur
- f) To support our teachers in visiting Churches to promote RC Education opportunities
- 2. To continue to be "Outstanding" in Section 48/CSI Inspection. – achieved 26th Nov 2021 - in all areas, ensure effective collaboration with NDES and actively engaging their support as necessary.
- 3. To aspire to be recognised as a School judged at the highest standard in all areas by Ofsted. (Most recent school inspection: 'Good with Outstanding features' Ofsted May 2022)
- 4. To continue with the "Grow our Own" initiative to provide training opportunities for those wishing to choose Catholic education as a career option.
- 5. To forge links with Teacher Training establishments.

OUTCOME – SUCCESS CRITERIA:

- 1. All Catholic Families within the parishes St Bernadette's serves will be aware of and choose St Bernadette's as the school of choice for their children's education.

MONITORING:

- 1. The Board will continue to monitor admission levels, receiving reports on issues and challenges and agree action as appropriate.

OBJECTIVE 2: TO CONTINUE TO STRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING and IN ALL ASPECTS OF LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE:

RATIONALE:

To ensure that St Bernadette's is the school of choice for parents, confident that their children will get the best education, in an environment of safety and bearing in mind their Mental Health and Wellbeing needs - to enable them to develop and grow to meet the challenges ahead.

The School Development plan (SDP) lays out in detail how this will be achieved, by whom and when, with clear actions and timescales and Outcomes.

AIM:

To ensure an ongoing supply of appropriately qualified teachers so that the school can continue to recruit, develop, support and retain appropriate levels and skill mix of staff in order to strive for excellence in education and ensure that St Bernadette's is judged at least good overall with some outstanding features and retain its Outstanding Rating in RE.

To ensure a full complement of appropriately skilled Governors to effect a balanced Board – in order to continue to Monitor Performance and support our staff.

ACTIONS:

- 1. The Board will receive School Development Plan (SDP) and School Evaluation Form (SEF) Reports on progress and agree remedial actions as required.
- 2. Ensure that the actions as outlined in the SDP, are implemented - using in- depth Governor Visits and reports to Board – presented by the HT or members of the leadership/Management Teams or from external professionals such as SIP or consultants – benchmarking our performance against the best.
- 3. Continue to be actively involved in teacher training schemes
- 4. Continue to appoint a richly skilled Balanced Board with appropriately skilled Governors to rigorously monitor and report to Board on the key areas.



OUTCOME: SUCCESS CRITERIA

1. St Bernadette's is appropriately staffed and continuously demonstrates *measurable progress* towards pupil performance and excellence in teaching and across all areas of Leadership and Governance
2. Outcome of staff satisfaction surveys are positive.
3. St Bernadette's is recognised as a School judged at the highest standard in all areas by Ofsted and the Catholic Schools Inspectorate.
4. There is a "Balanced Board" – with all the key skills required, for effective Governance, particularly at this time.

MONITORING:

1. Regular Visits with in-depth, rigorous written Pupil Performance reports to Board by appropriately committed and skilled Governors, including Governor/s with Teaching Qualifications - to facilitate rigorous Board Monitoring and Evaluation.
2. The SEF and SDP will continue to be scheduled as specific high priority Items - in the Annual Board Meetings Schedule and monitored and specific actions agreed accordingly.
3. Detailed focused Pupil Performance Presentations to Board will continue to be a priority Agenda Item
4. The HT will report progress to Board Meetings.
5. Staff satisfaction surveys will be provided to Board and remedial actions agreed as appropriate.

OBJECTIVE 3: CONTINUE TO EXPLORE THE ISSUE OF ACADEMISATION

RATIONALE:

In the event that St Bernadette's is required to become an Academy all care must be taken to ensure its continuing objectives of the provision of the best possible Catholic Education – aiming to retain "Outstanding" in Section 48/CSI and be judged at the highest standard in all areas by Ofsted.

AIMS:

1. Plans are in place to ensure the schools continued identity, local focus, financial stability, sustainability and ethos should St Bernadette's join an academy
2. To ensure that if MK Council downsizes, the relevant support is in place to continue a strong infrastructure.
3. To avoid as much as is possible HT and Leadership distraction, organisational disruption and stress – bearing in mind our overriding principles outlined in our Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

ACTIONS:

1. We will continue to work with our MK colleagues and NDES to ensure the best Model for Catholic Education in MK whilst at the same time actively collaborating in a positive manner.
2. Support the MK Catholic Head Teacher Group in updating, as required, the MK Catholic Schools Improvement Plan.
3. Should the decision be made to move towards Academy Status, a full Option Appraisal will be undertaken and Consultation on such a change be carried out to include the Views of our Staff and Community.
4. To demonstrate by shared documentation (MK Catholic Schools Improvement Plan) that these shared objectives can be met without organisational distraction, disruption and stress.



5. To make known any concerns we may have that put at risk our key objectives of excellence in Catholic Education and work collaboratively to avoid them.

OUTCOME - SUCCESS CRITERIA:

1. St Bernadette's "Outstanding" Catholic School status– with the vision of being judged at the highest standard in all areas by Ofsted, is not adversely affected by unnecessary stress distraction and organisational upheaval.
2. St Bernadette's and its wider Catholic School family will be in a strong position to move forward together in a mutually supportive way should Academy Status, in line with "Developing Catholic Education" become a decision/requirement.
3. The Board is fully aware of Academisation actions in the Diocese and has taken the necessary decisions in the best interests of St Bernadette's, its pupils and staff at this time.

MONITORING:

1. The HT will provide the board with regular updates regarding **the MK Catholic Schools' joint improvement plan**
2. Relevant Training Sessions and Meetings will be attended by Governors as necessary on this subject.

OBJECTIVE 4: MAINTAINING FINANCIAL VIABILITY

RATIONALE: At the time of writing this Plan, MK Council is projecting an increase in financial pressures, over the Strategic Period it is important that all resources continue to be stringently managed to ensure the best education for our pupils – and that pupil numbers are maintained/increased.

AIM:

To ensure that St Bernadette's remain financially robust over the Strategic period with all Financial Resources directed towards and underpinning our core function of excellence in Education, and thus Curriculum focused.

ACTIONS:

1. Assess any implications of MK Council Budget projections and take into account Financial planning over the Strategic Period
2. Ensure that the delegated Budget, is included in the SDP, thus monitored closely to demonstrate that all available resources underpin the core objectives.
3. Actions taken/recommended to Board will continue to demonstrate a "can do" innovative approach and will avoid adverse effect on Pupil Progress.
4. Any adverse effect of potential drop in pupil numbers is identified and reported to Board.
5. Introduce mixed year groups where two consecutive years groups have 45 pupils or less

OUTCOME: SUCCESS CRITERIA

1. St Bernadette's continues to be financially robust in both short and long term, using innovation and expertise to avoiding direct effect on pupil progress
2. Available funds are allocated according to most need and original intent.



MONITORING:

1. This will be actioned as appropriate by the Leadership Team and monitored, in detail, by the Finance Leads on an ongoing basis with an Annual Programme of *focused Presentations* with appropriate benchmarking information - to the Board, by the HT and Business Manager.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS: By achieving the above objectives we will be able to demonstrate "Overall effectiveness"

PLAN REVIEW DATES: *This Plan will be reviewed and updated as required and a full Review will take place annually at October r Full Governing Board Meetings.*

mmcg Sept. 2017; Nov 19th 2018 (post OFSTED); Sept 2019; July 2020; 30th Nov 2020; Reviewed OCT. 2021 (and updated with RE Section 48 "Outstanding" achieved on 26th Nov 2021 and OFSTED Good with Outstanding Features in May 2022)) Oct2022 Jan 2024, Jan 2025. FL, S L-M, JZ Jan 2025, S L-M, JZ Jan 2025, Oct 2025 CE, JZ Oct 2026