



Holy Family Catholic Primary School Darlington

URN: 139533

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of Bishop Stephen Wright, Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle

29–30 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 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

- Holy Family Catholic Primary School is fully compliant with the general norms of religious education as laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- Holy Family Catholic Primary School is fully compliant with all requirements of the Diocesan Bishop.
- Holy Family Catholic Primary School has responded and met the areas for further development which were identified during the last inspection.

What the school does well

- Leaders are visionary, passionate and ensure every child is valued and loved as a unique person.
- Pupils are proud to be a part of the rich history of Holy Family Catholic Primary School and can articulate what it means to belong in this Catholic community.
- Religious education outcomes are strong, and the quality, quantity, and pride that pupils take in their work is outstanding
- Prayer and worship are central to the daily rhythm of school. Pupils are encouraged to pray in creative ways, which allows them to express and deepen their relationship with God. The vibrant school environment enhances this.

What the school needs to improve

- Increased opportunities to develop the partnership between the school and the parish.

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

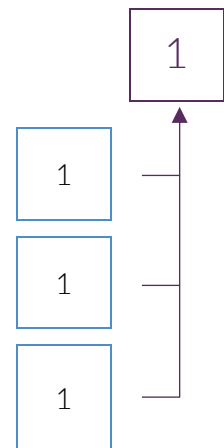
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



Holy Family Catholic Primary School has a strong Catholic identity, built on clear and shared values. Pupils have many opportunities to reflect on their responsibilities and their ability to make a meaningful difference in society where respect is shown by all, including pupils, staff, parents, and governors. Pupils possess a deep understanding of their role in the Holy Family community and proudly live out the mission statement, 'see Christ in themselves and others'. This significantly enhances the Catholic life and mission of the school. Pupils are clearly happy, kind and confident, showing a sense of security through strong relationships within the school. This commitment encourages them to embrace new experiences, knowing they are genuinely loved and valued by both staff and peers. A parent described the school as, 'their first step into faith', showing its role in nurturing their child's spiritual and moral growth. Pupils are dedicated to following Jesus' teachings in their everyday lives, which is evident through various initiatives and actions. For example, one member of the 'Dementia Friends' group stated, 'I enjoy giving others a sense of joy and making them happy.' Their time spent with this community enriches the lives of the older people whilst also deepening the pupils' faith journeys, helping them experience the joy of giving. Additionally, the Laudato Leaders are mindful of their responsibilities and understand the importance of their actions in helping to protect God's world, with a clear understanding of Catholic social teaching principles.

Staff feel appreciated and cared for, actively participating in activities that enhance the school's Catholic mission. Staff relationships are strong and through this they serve as exemplary role models for pupils. One staff member remarked, 'This is a truly special place to teach where teachers are encouraged to be the best version of themselves for the children.' This dedication shines through the love and care staff show to pupils, viewing themselves as models of

compassion and service. A heartfelt letter from a parent highlighted how the school family embraced her child, sharing the positive impact that this had on their entire family. A sense of joy is clearly seen throughout the school, where displays emphasise the school's Catholic identity and celebrate pupils' achievements. The use of religious symbols, art, and scripture encourage pupils to see their faith reflected in everyday life.

The dedicated senior leadership team, including the religious education subject leader, possess years of experience and a clear vision for Holy Family. Leaders are present at all levels, showing what it means to be part of this 'Holy Family'. One parent expressed that, 'The joy felt at Holy Family School is a testimony to the Headteacher's vision.' Governors and Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust Directors have an excellent understanding of the quality of Catholic life within the school, with opportunities to witness this in action during events such as whole school celebration of the word. One governor stated, 'Holy Family is well named' and noted the enthusiasm displayed at school gatherings. Being part of this vibrant community allows both children and staff to experience Christ's love deeply. Links between the school and parish are developing. Supportive leadership in school has ensured that there is a nurturing environment where staff have developed their own faith and are recognised as individuals. This personal approach ensures that everyone feels valued and connected. Together, they work towards a shared commitment to live out their faith, enriching the school's Catholic identity. As a result, pupils learn valuable life lessons, with one parent expressing, 'The school teaches my child to be a good person.'

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

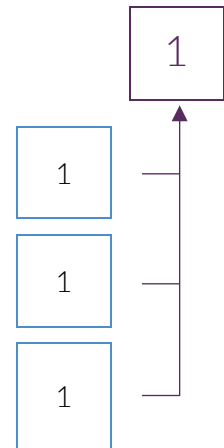
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 at Holy Family display an impressive level of religious literacy, which is demonstrated consistently across all age phases. This is further enhanced through questions asked by staff, ensuring both understanding and the correct use of religious vocabulary. As a result, pupils make excellent progress, evident in their independent work and ability to identify and talk about their next learning steps. Pupils' ability to recall prior learning is further highlighted through 'REFresh' activities that begin each lesson, effectively engaging pupils by activating their existing knowledge. These activities set the stage for deeper exploration of the day's topics. Pupils' oracy skills are exceptional, benefitting greatly from solid foundations laid in the early years of their education. This emphasis on spoken communication enhances their confidence and helps them to articulate their thoughts and feelings more easily. Pupils at Holy Family genuinely enjoy their learning in religious education lessons, taking immense pride in their workbooks, each dedicated to a loved one. Pupils were observed clearly engaging in learning, whilst also deepening their own personal connection to faith.

The supportive environment at Holy Family encourages pupils to think carefully about their faith, prompting thoughtful discussions and personal reflections. Overall, students develop a genuine appreciation of their beliefs, making the religious education curriculum both relevant and engaging. High expectations in religious education are clearly evident at Holy Family, especially in the way that staff question pupils and assess the quality of their independent work. Carefully planned lessons are designed to challenge all pupils, irrespective of ability, enabling consistent progress. High quality support staff play a crucial role in helping pupils access and understand the curriculum. The school places a strong emphasis on delivering the religious education curriculum creatively, and pupils spoke extremely positively about their learning experiences. One parent remarked, 'religious education always looks so engaging and inviting,' highlighting the effectiveness of the creative approaches implemented by the staff. In addition to the robust core curriculum, pupils also acquire an awareness of other world faiths. They have opportunities to witness this first-hand during visits to the local mosque, where they gain a broader

understanding of beliefs and practices that differ from their own. Furthermore, pupils explore scripture in diverse and engaging ways. For example, two pupils were observed actively participating in the 'Scripture Detective' area, where they discussed different versions of the Feeding of the 5,000. Their spirited debate regarding which gospel it might be found in, highlights the critical thinking skills developed through this interactive approach. Such activities contribute to a rich learning environment, motivating pupils to immerse themselves in their faith and better understand the world around them.

The school is led by a visionary Headteacher, supported by skilled leaders who drive a relentless demand for high standards in teaching and learning within religious education. An experienced and ambitious subject leader models high-quality provision in the classroom whilst supporting the professional development of colleagues. The curriculum is designed to challenge pupils from Early Years Foundation Stage, with appropriate adaptations to help them effectively recall and remember key learning. Monitoring and evaluation of the subject are embedded and accurate, resulting in a positive impact on the quality of education. The governors at Holy Family are passionate about the school's religious education and have an excellent understanding of both its strengths and areas for development. Importantly, religious education holds full parity with other core subjects and is integrated into professional development, resource allocation, timetabling, monitoring, evaluating, and communicating progress to parents. This holistic approach demonstrates the school's commitment to fostering a vibrant, inclusive, and high-quality educational experience in religious education, encouraging all pupils to thrive.

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

Prayer and liturgy are central to Holy Family. Creative prayer is a regular part of the daily experience for both pupils and staff. From an early age, pupils demonstrate reverence and respect during prayer times. During the celebration of the word, one younger pupil observed that, 'We need the cross, because it shows us that Jesus loves us.' This deep understanding was evident in every class, where a calm and prayerful atmosphere was maintained, allowing prayerful silence to flourish naturally. Pupils engage positively during celebrations of prayer and liturgy, singing with enthusiasm and joy. They are confident in leading worship by proclaiming the gospel, selecting hymns and sharing bidding prayers. There is a clear understanding of the cycle of the liturgical year; Year 1 pupils were able to tell me that as we were in ordinary time, the cloths in the focus area were green. Additionally, various groups are responsible for planning weekly class worship, reflecting their commitment to fostering a spiritual environment. The strong sense of community within the school enhances the experience, encouraging pupils to deepen their understanding of their faith, creating a supportive foundation for spiritual growth. Holy Family's emphasis on prayer and liturgy cultivates a vibrant and nurturing environment where everyone feels appreciated and connected.

Pupils are provided with a wide variety of opportunities to express and develop their personal faith. Creative prayer is central to this aspect and offers pupils a meaningful way to engage with their spirituality. They are encouraged to expand their understanding of scripture and appreciate how it impacts their lives and guides them to follow Jesus' footsteps. Pupils from all year groups are able to join in prayer confidently. The school environment fosters joy in worship, with a clear sense that Christ is at the heart of all activities. The physical environment, both in and out of the classroom, provides all pupils with the opportunity for both planned and spontaneous prayer. This shared commitment amongst staff and pupils enriches their spiritual journey. Pupils are encouraged to take an active role in communal prayers and liturgical celebrations and do so

confidently. The emphasis on personal and collective faith development at Holy Family allows every pupil to flourish in their relationship with God.

The headteacher at Holy Family serves as a beacon of spirituality. Her ability to share the gospels not only deepens but also develops the love of Christ for pupils and staff in her care. Many staff members have noted the transformative power of the headteacher's faith leadership in their own lives, with one stating, 'School has been pivotal in my own faith journey.' This commitment to nurturing staff's own faith and spirituality significantly impacts the school environment, creating a warm atmosphere that encourages both pupils and staff to flourish. Leadership across the school ensures that worship is planned progressively, providing clear expectations of pupil and adult involvement. This fosters an inclusive spiritual community where pupils feel confident in leading prayer. Prayer folders for each class show that significant days in the Church's calendar are celebrated, either in class, as a whole school, or in church. Staff have the confidence to lead and support high-quality prayer and worship. Training opportunities are provided to ensure they have the necessary skills and knowledge to elevate pupils' experiences of prayer and liturgy. Leaders and governors monitor and evaluate prayer and liturgy within Holy Family. Pupil response and governor moderation, ensures that there is an emphasis on continued outstanding provision.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Holy Family Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	139533
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8413307
Full postal address of the school	Holy Family Catholic Primary School, Prior Street, Darlington, DL3 9EN
School phone number	01325380821
Headteacher	Jane Weatherall
Chair of governors	Anthony Graham
School Website	www.holyfamily.bhcet.org.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	May 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Paul Craig	Lead
Stephanie Brown	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