



St James' Catholic Primary School

URN: 148778

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle

15–16 October 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

2

Collective worship (p.7)

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

2

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

2

Compliance statement

- St James' Catholic Primary School is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- St James' Catholic Primary School is fully compliant with all the requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- St James' Catholic Primary School has responded to and met the areas for further development which were identified during the last inspection.

What the school does well

- A key strength at St James' Catholic Primary School is the high-level of pastoral care referenced and acknowledged by all stakeholders
- Christ is at the centre of St James'; there is a strong sense of community evident through the quality of relationships and the culture of welcome
- The passion and enthusiasm of the senior leaders is palpable; they know the journey that the school has been on and have a clear plan for continuing to move things forward to further enhance current practice.
- The commitment, engagement and involvement of the local governing committee is a real strength and support for the school community.
- The pupils of St James' embrace and are keen to participate and grow through any opportunities offered to them.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure consistency in teachers applying their own subject knowledge to teaching and learning activities to allow more opportunities for pupils to be reflective
- Provide opportunities for pupils to respond to 'learning point' questioning to deepen their understanding.
- Broaden and develop the opportunities for spiritual and prayer development to ensure greater consistency, variety and frequency.

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 at St James' Catholic Primary School know and understand the school motto: 'We treat each other as Jesus treats us.' They speak of kindness and love for each other and state, 'Our school accepts you for whoever you are,' and 'We are one big family, and no one gets left behind.' Pupils clearly express that they are valued and cared for and show respect for those of other faiths and religions. They understand British values and their importance in a multicultural society, stating that in their school, 'We don't like the word tolerate, as it means just to put up with; we like to say the word love instead.' Pupils embrace the responsibility to care for others and the world in which they live, providing many examples of charitable works and activities linked to Catholic social teaching such as fundraising events for Cafod, their 'plastic-free packed lunch' campaign and the current harvest festival collection. Pupils value the chaplaincy provision; they are willing and enthusiastic to take on leadership roles and actively participate in the opportunities provided by their school, such as Mini-Vinnies and Faith in Action.

The school's motto is a clear and inspiring expression of the educational mission of the Church. It is known and lived out through high quality interactions between staff, staff and pupils and staff and parents. Staff embrace the motto, and this is reflected in the offer to their community. Parents speak openly about the 'close knit family feel', many spoke of a staff team who, 'know each individual child and family' and feel secure that, 'you can go to staff if you need help with anything.' Christ is clearly at the heart of the school; the sense of community and welcome are testament to this. High levels of pastoral support were offered by leaders and the whole staff during recent challenges which saw the school community spread between various sites, all stakeholders praised the school's response to this. The school environment reflects its mission and identity, reflected through the various displays. The school has achieved the 'Live Simply

Award', this, alongside the various Mini-Vinnie and Faith in Action initiatives, provides pupils with purposeful leadership opportunities. The provision for relationship, sex and health education is carefully planned and delivered using diocesan approved resources. It is firmly rooted in the teachings of the Church.

Leaders, on at all levels, can clearly articulate the mission of their school, 'as the Church for the children and families.' This Catholic ethos is embraced as a core leadership responsibility. The school has faced many challenges, including sudden closure and temporary re-location across various sites. Leaders are clear about how they have worked tirelessly to, 'resurrect and further enhance their faith community.' As a result, the senior leaders are held in high regard by staff, governors and parents. Stakeholders cite examples of where leaders they have gone 'above and beyond', to live out their faith in their support for pupils, families and staff, demonstrating high levels of pastoral care and respect for human dignity. There is a strong and flourishing partnership with the local parish and the school works well alongside the diocese, supporting the bishop's vision. The commitment of the governing committee is a real strength and is of great support to the senior leaders. Governors play an active role in the evaluation of the Catholic life and mission of the school including the chair of governors evaluating the Faith in Action journals.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

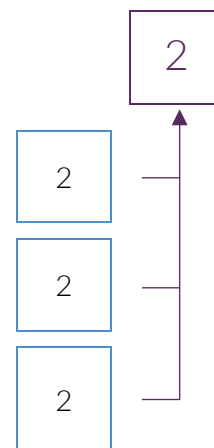
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 St James' are developing a secure knowledge and understanding of the religious education curriculum as outlined in the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. The structure of the lessons, with the daily retrieval and recall and the focus on 'sticky knowledge' and vocabulary, which is currently being developed, means that pupils are knowing more, remembering more and doing more. Pupils, relative to their age and stage of development, are religiously literate and can speak with confidence about their learning, using subject-specific vocabulary, this is particularly evident in upper Key Stage 2. Pupils produce good work that is presented well, showing some signs of individuality and creativity. Pupils, throughout the school, engage well in religious education lessons and behaviour for learning is generally good. Pupils can explain the marking policy and understand how the coloured highlighting indicates that they are making progress. Learning point questions are beginning to be more consistently used within feedback to clarify knowledge and deepen understanding, encouraging pupils to make links in their learning. End of year outcomes show that pupils are achieving standards in line with core curriculum subjects, showing parity in academic progress.

Most teachers show strong subject knowledge and there is developing confidence in transferring that knowledge to pupils through careful planning and task design. Where this is most evident, pupils are skilfully taught, leading to articulate learners who can draw on prior knowledge and give detailed responses. However, teaching and learning is not consistently developed across all year groups. Teachers use questioning to clarify understand and move learning forward for most pupils. The previous pace of learning, in some classes, has resulted in some gaps in curriculum coverage, leaders are aware of this and have plans in place to address this during the current academic year. Staff use house points and praise to celebrate pupil effort, leading to good levels of motivation. There is some variety in task design, showing evidence of written work, drama

activities and artwork, used in both the delivery of teaching and in the outcomes of learning. The subject leader stated that in response to pupil voice, staff are now looking at task design with more creativity to support engagement. More consideration is being given to time and space for reflection within lessons with 'I wonder' questions being more readily used. Quality resources, including effective use of additional adults, allow all pupils to make progress, including those with additional needs.

The religious education curriculum is delivered through the *Come and See* programme and is a faithful expression of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. School leaders and governors ensure that the curriculum is given full parity with other core curriculum subjects in relation to professional development and resourcing. There has been recent budget consideration given to enhancing the quality of Bibles to support the pupils within lessons, this has been supported through the links with the parish, with parishioners' contributions serving as a 'Bible sponsoring' scheme. Staff new to teaching in a Catholic school are provided with relevant professional development opportunities, this has recently included diocesan new to Catholic education training in relation to key guidance for working within a Catholic setting and subject specific training linked to reconciliation. The religious education subject leader is passionate and committed to her role within school and works closely alongside the headteacher. They have a clear vision of where they want to strengthen religious education teaching and how they are going to do this. Governors work alongside the leaders to monitor teaching and learning, they describe a model whereby they follow a particular theme or topic through all classes which allows them to clearly see progression in 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

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

Leadership

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

2

2

Pupils are enthusiastic and respond well to the opportunities provided by the school. They participate well and demonstrate a growing knowledge and understanding of different ways to pray. Older pupils can talk about prayer including silent prayer in their heads, which they also linked with spontaneous prayer, traditional prayers, such as the 'Our Father' and 'Hail Mary', and community prayer, praying together as a school community. Some pupils have some experience of meditation; this is an area which is being developed. Pupils sing enthusiastically, joining in with actions to songs, and have a growing repertoire of familiar songs and hymns. Pupils, appropriate to their age and stage of maturity, work collaboratively with peers, supported by teachers, to prepare well-constructed experiences of prayer and liturgy, following the four-part model. Pupils are growing in confidence in using the 'Let Us Pray 2gether' resource which was introduced towards the end of last academic year. Religious Education Ambassadors are keen to engage in liturgical ministries and do so reverently and respectfully, they talk about how they are gradually training their peers. Some year groups are confident in evaluating the quality of the prayer and liturgy that they have planned, and this is an area that the school are embedding this academic year.

Appropriately planned prayer and liturgy opportunities are central to the life of St James' Catholic Primary School. A religious education notice board displays information linked to forthcoming prayer opportunities. Staff, including senior leaders, model prayer experiences and plan for a variety of prayer experiences such as Mass, held both in the parish and in school, whole school celebrations of the word and class prayers. Prayer is included in pupil gatherings and Friday morning staff briefings always begins with the headteacher sharing the gospel for the following week. Each class teacher leads a whole school celebration of the word each half term and the pupils from their class present the readings and prayers. There is a pattern of prayers which

punctuates the day. Scripture is central to prayer gatherings and concentrates upon the weekly gospel. Prayer focuses, linked to the liturgical season, are located in every classroom and within the main hall where the school gathers. Pupil-led prayer is an area that continues to be embedded using the recently purchased prayer resources. The school are keen to encourage participation with families; they have developed prayer booklets which are shared on the website and key stage one parents are invited to share in 'stay and pray' sessions each term.

The school's policy on prayer and liturgy is well formulated and is available to staff. Leaders have adapted the Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust's (BCCET) skills matrix to meet the needs of St James' community. This matrix outlines prayers to be taught at different ages and a progression in expectations for pupil participation and pupil leadership. Leaders plan to further embed this over the forthcoming academic year, providing a clear and consistent strategy for building skills and levels of participation and developing knowledge of prayers. Consideration is given to planning the school calendar to facilitate opportunities to celebrate the Eucharist. Holy days and other significant dates, such as the feast day of St James and the house team saints are recognised. Leaders and governors, plan for opportunities for professional development linked to liturgical formation, including training and support linked to pupil-led worship. Last term, staff received training from BCCET lay chaplain in using the 'Let Us Pray 2gether' resource and are skilfully guiding pupils, in an age-appropriate way, to support them in developing confidence in planning, leading and evaluating their own planned prayer opportunities.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St James' Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	148778
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3933313
Full postal address of the school	Solway Road, Hebburn, Tyne and Wear, NE31 2BP
School phone number	01914832672
Executive headteacher	Not applicable
Headteacher	Mrs Francesca Heslop
Chair of the Local Governing Committee	Mrs Sharon Grewcock
School Website	www.stjameshebburn.co.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Choose an item.
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	November 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

Leigh-anne Young
Kirsty 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

