



# St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Blackhall

URN: 148789

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

03 April 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

#### Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

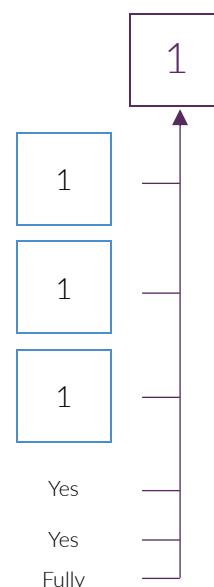
#### Collective worship (p.7)

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

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 to the areas for improvement from the last inspection



## Compliance statement

- St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is fully compliant with all requirements of the Diocesan Bishop.
- St Joseph's 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

- The pastoral care offered to pupils and staff is exemplary. Pupils know they are loved and feel a deep sense of belonging. Adults know they are greatly valued.
- Leaders are highly dedicated. They are aspirational for all and pursue excellence for their pupils with determination and relentless ambition. They ensure that the religious education curriculum is rigorous and aspirational.
- Staff have the highest expectations of pupils in all areas of school life. They are determined to ensure that all pupils flourish and they work relentlessly to remove barriers to success.
- Links to the parish are exceptionally strong and the opportunities to pray together are highly valued by parishioners and clergy. Every opportunity is taken to cement these bonds.
- Pupils love school. They display joyful dispositions and create a culture of mutual respect and inclusiveness.

## What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that pupils know and remember more over time.
- Ensure that pupils use religious vocabulary with understanding to explain their learning.
- Ensure that pupils can consistently evaluate how the quality of prayer and liturgy they plan can be improved over time.

## 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 share a deep sense of belonging to the St Joseph's family and live out the school's mission enthusiastically, both in school and in the wider community. Their actions are underpinned by their profound commitment to care for one another and for our common home, and reflect the school values of respect, friendship, excellence and care. Pupils can express that they are unique and loved, and they fully recognise their responsibility to be committed citizens. This is reflected in their relationships with one another and in their willingness to share their talents widely for the benefit of others. They eagerly take leadership responsibilities as Mini Vinnies and prayer leaders. In working towards achieving the Live Simply Award, pupils demonstrate that they can proactively take actions to promote sustainability. As a consequence of learning about Catholic social teaching, pupils lead initiatives to serve their community with pride. Their charitable acts and kind deeds emerge from their recognition that they can make a positive impact on the world. The culture in school is a consequence of deeply rooted beliefs and values which are centred on the teachings of Christ. Pupils therefore feel calm, safe and valued, and they demonstrate personal dignity and respect for others in a desire to be Christ-like.

Staff provide exceptional pastoral care. They aspire greatly for all their pupils and are exemplary role models in their commitment to inclusion. Staff regularly identify opportunities to promote equity. They are highly dedicated to ensuring that all pupils are known and loved, and that each of their individual stories are heard. The actions of staff consistently embody the Church's mission. One parent remarked, 'Due to the excellent care, support, educational and spiritual guidance that my children have experienced at St Joseph's, they have developed respect and strong morals.' Staff create an environment which celebrates the school's Catholic character, and one which reflects the dignity and high aspirations they hold for each pupil. It explicitly witnesses

the Catholic mission of the school. Dedicated spaces, including a prayer room contribute well to the formation of all pupils. The parish priest commented, 'School is... a beautiful, quiet oasis...It gives pupils a chance to reflect, a tranquility, so they feel safe and at home.' Relationships, sex and health education is taught systematically, and therefore pupils are able to talk about what they have learned with understanding. Parents are very supportive of this and value the provision in school as it reflects the teachings of the Church.

Leaders are exceptionally driven and relentless in their pursuit of excellence for their pupils and staff. With Christ as their inspiration, they model the highest of standards in their interactions, and their pride in the school is reflected in the experiences offered to pupils. For example, their actions to 'poverty proof' the school is testimony to their passion to provide equitable opportunities for all and ensures that no one is left behind. They work diligently to support parents as the first educators of their children. The headteacher's energy has a ripple effect across the community and consequently, she inspires all stakeholders to feel a deep sense of pride. Because leaders clearly articulate their vision, the Catholic character is evident in all aspects of school life. One member of staff commented, 'Leadership has consistently driven school improvement and raised all aspects of Catholic life, collective worship and religious education. The changes... have been nothing short of transformational.' Leaders, including governors, are highly ambitious and work hard to live out their responsibility to witness the gospel. They work hard to sustain thriving relationships with the parish, Diocese and Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust (BCCET). They ensure that policies and procedures uphold the dignity of all and consequently pupils and staff flourish.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

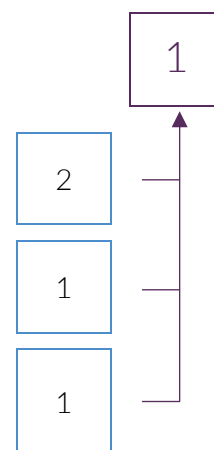
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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 engage well in religious education lessons and make good progress from their starting points. They demonstrate pride in their work and strive to improve because they are given feedback in lessons which deepens their understanding. They respond positively to careful instruction, leading to systematic, small steps of progress. Some pupils are able to work with independence and some are beginning to ask inciteful questions because of the prompts they are given to help them reason. Relative to their age and ability, they respond to questions thoughtfully, and make links between scripture and the actions of believers. They contribute willingly in lessons because of the encouragement they are given, and older pupils confidently engage in discussions which provoke deeper thinking. Pupils enjoy their learning and concentrate well because lessons are interesting. Classroom management is effective and therefore behaviour is good and little learning time is lost. Pupils are able to reflect on what they have learned which then informs them how they live their own lives. However, pupils do not consistently use religious vocabulary and do not consistently retain what they have learned over time, and therefore the development of religious literacy is limited at times.

Teachers are confident and competent in delivering the planned curriculum, reflecting the requirements of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. They ensure that lessons are sequential and because they have secure subject knowledge, they enhance pupils' learning. Teachers skillfully adapt lessons to ensure all pupils keep up with the curriculum, and because they use effective questioning, they are able to elicit and deepen pupils' learning. They use accurate assessments to inform planning, and so lessons are ambitious and appropriately challenging for all. Because they readily celebrate the successes of pupils, teachers motivate their pupils well and encourage them to contribute to lessons without fear of being incorrect. They give clear explanations, adapting when necessary to give greater clarity, and they set

appropriate tasks to capture their pupils' understanding. Staff creatively use a range of high-quality resources to maintain high levels of pupil engagement and enjoyment. Staff report that their professional development is, 'always supported' and they therefore feel confident in their subject knowledge and their ability to make lessons varied. Additional staff are very effectively deployed to ensure that all pupils have appropriate support which is focused on their needs, and therefore all adults impact positively on learning.

Because leaders rigorously monitor the provision for religious education, they have a clear overview of learning. They have developed a vision which is focused, well-informed and shared by staff. They have the highest expectations of pupils and staff, and provide appropriate induction, ongoing support and relevant training to ensure that staff are knowledgeable and confident. Leaders ensure that the curriculum is progressive, demanding and delivered with creativity. Therefore, religious education has equitable outcomes to other curriculum subjects. Working in collaboration with colleagues from BCCET, the monitoring of standards has ensured that leaders provide training which improves teaching and learning. This is recognised by the school's chief standards officer who observed, 'Staff are flourishing in their work because of leadership. They have made significant improvements in recent years.' Leaders have ensured that lessons are enriched with creative resources. Learning about other world faiths is enhanced by visitors, and consequently pupils demonstrate an authentic interest in the beliefs and actions of others. Governors are regular visitors and are therefore well placed to analyse outcomes and challenge leaders in their pursuit of excellence. They have diligent oversight of the subject and as a result are able to make inciteful contributions to strategic action planning.

## 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 from Nursery onwards engage joyously in prayer and liturgy with reverence and respect because the experiences offered to them are meaningful and well-constructed. They enthusiastically participate in traditional prayers and hymn singing and thoughtfully reflect in silence. Because pupils are supported to explore a rich variety of prayer and liturgy, they are able to find ways to pray that are personally meaningful. They eloquently express how prayer helps them to grow closer to God and inspires them into action. Parents recognise the impact that the prayer life of the school has on their children, with one parent commenting, 'My child got off to an excellent start in learning how to pray. She has learned the ways of God and she knows she can turn to Him when she needs help.' Appropriate to their age, pupils work collaboratively to plan and lead celebrations of the word with increased independence so that by the time they are in upper Key Stage 2 they are proficient in leading acts of worship that are deeply moving and inspiring. They confidently undertake ministries both in school and in church, and appropriate training enables prayer leaders to support the spiritual development of others.

Staff ensure that prayer is at the heart of St Joseph's and reflects the liturgical year. They place the highest priority on collective prayer at key points in the day so that pupils are able to engage in prayer that reflects the breadth of Catholic tradition. Staff also provide opportunities for spontaneous and creative prayer which support pupils to develop a personal relationship with God. Staff are excellent role models in the way they plan and lead prayer. Because they undertake relevant training, they have a comprehensive understanding of the norms of the Church and they select well-chosen scripture extracts that reflect the liturgical season. They are highly skilled in helping pupils to use their gifts to enhance prayer and liturgy and in supporting pupils to plan and lead their own celebrations. However, staff do not consistently provide opportunities for pupils to evaluate prayer in a meaningful way and so pupils cannot fully

articulate how the celebrations they have planned can be improved. Staff ensure that the school environment is utilised imaginatively to encourage personal prayer and deep spiritual development. They establish rich, prayerful spaces in classrooms and shared areas that signify the church's season creatively. These enable pupils to respond and reflect so that they feel uplifted and inspired.

Leaders ensure that there are daily, rich and varied prayer experiences that encourage the spiritual development of all pupils. They place the highest priority on prayer and diligently monitor its provision. Leaders invest in stimulating training to ensure that staff are able to provide prayer experiences that are high-quality, meaningful and deeply engaging. Leaders are inspiring role models. They ensure that the school's prayer and liturgy policy is clear, relevant and consistently applied well. They have a secure understanding of the capacity of pupils and have therefore developed a progressive strategy to support the participation and leadership of pupils as they develop. Leaders have carefully developed a planned calendar of events which prioritises many opportunities for parents and parishioners to join pupils in prayer and liturgy. The school community regularly joins the parish for Mass and leaders work in collaboration with the parish priest to ensure that worship is varied and meaningful. The school community is inspired by leaders to celebrate feast days, holy days of obligation and global initiatives, including the Jubilee Year, with joy and enthusiasm. This reflects the priority leaders give to the formation of every member of the school community and their ongoing commitment to ensure that the mission of the school extends beyond the school building.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	148789
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8403506
Full postal address of the school	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Coast Road, Blackhall Colliery, Hartlepool, TS27 4HE
School phone number	01915864308
Headteacher	Lisa Ashton
Chair of local governing body	Paul Francis
School Website	<a href="http://www.st-josephsrc-pri.durham.sch.uk/">www.st-josephsrc-pri.durham.sch.uk/</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Chadwick 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	September 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

## The inspection team

Barbara Reilly-O'Donnell  
Martin Gray

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