



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

URN: 143515

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

01–02 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 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 the requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- St Joseph's Catholic Primary School has responded to and met the previous areas for improvement identified during the last inspection.

What the school does well

- Pupils are active contributors to the Catholic life and mission of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, and carry out responsibilities with willingness, enthusiasm and a desire to make a difference.
- Following the example of St Joseph, the school, 'surrounds children and families with love and encouragement', living out its mission statement.
- The quality of relationships between staff and pupils is a strength, and the love and care for all pupils is tangible.
- Leaders, Governors and the Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust combine to bring forensic and searching self-evaluation of religious education in a consistent desire for high standards.
- The centrality of prayer and liturgy is reflected in the provision of a wide range of engaging and creative experiences for pupils.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve pupils' ability to articulate their knowledge and understanding in religious education, thus deepening their learning and confidence in speaking.
- Develop regular and sustained opportunities for high quality reflection in religious education.
- Develop a handbook for prayer and liturgy to provide clarity of guidance for staff.

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 value highly the Catholic identity of their school. They know and understand the mission statement well and respond to its demands willingly and enthusiastically. They know that the mission includes care for others, following the teachings of Jesus in the gospel. Pupils are fully committed to grow in the school's chosen virtues, assisted by the regular weekly focus on each element. They embrace a strong desire to care for their common home, particularly through the Eco Warriors group, carrying on the tasks that led to the school's attainment of the Live Simply Award and the Woodland Trust's Green Tree Gold School Award. There is active engagement among pupils in response to Catholic social teaching, for instance through volunteering for groups such as the school council, fairtrade and wellbeing leaders. The Mini Vinnies, who play a strong part in supporting the school's chaplaincy provision, have impact beyond the school in its outreach to the wider community, such as in the visits to a local care home. They also help to drive the school's support for a variety of charities throughout the year, including Cafod, Save the Children and Diabetes Awareness. Pupils understand why they are engaging in these activities for the benefit of others, summed up by one comment: 'If God could see us right now, he would be proud'. Respect for each other is demonstrated in their excellent behaviour.

The school's mission statement, agreed with the involvement of the whole school community, is prominently displayed, and has noticeable impact. All staff members show their commitment to promoting it and exemplifying it. There is a very strong sense of a supportive community, shown in their welcome of all and the strong desire to help the most vulnerable. The school shows this care through small acts of subtle support: uniform and food sharing being typical examples. Staff are exemplary role models, resulting in relationships within school that are excellent. Pupils report that the school staff support them well. 'They help us to understand more, how to be

happy and kind, let us make the right choices', said one pupil. The pastoral care for pupils and their families is clearly exceptional, with the inclusivity of all at its heart. The school environment showcases the Catholic ethos of the school, with particular care taken to present each space as welcoming. This can be seen most vividly in the school's chapel and the secret garden. The chaplaincy programme is well-structured, planned to bring the best out of pupils. The relationships, sex and health education programme fulfils diocesan requirements fully.

Leaders, local governors, and the directors and officers of the Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust (BHCET) are very clear in their duty of promoting the Catholic life and mission of the school as a priority. Governors and directors are very active in challenging and supporting school leaders and show ambition in striving for continual improvement. The school has active engagement with the diocese and has recently welcomed Bishop Stephen to school to launch the Jubilee Year. The parish priest is a frequent visitor to the school, and parish links have been developed effectively, as has the welcome to parents, particularly those most vulnerable or in need. The pastoral care and support for the wellbeing of staff is evident in their views. There is an effective and searching approach to self-evaluation that leads to good strategic planning. Parents are very appreciative of what the school provides, summed up by one comment: 'The school has a loving and caring attitude towards the pupils and encourages them to have a positive attitude towards each other.'

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

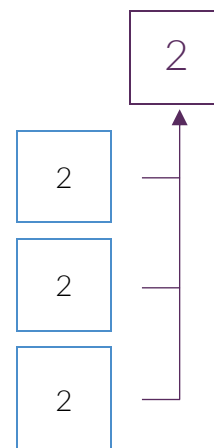
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 are developing secure knowledge, understanding and skills at an age-appropriate level as they move through each class in the school. They make good progress against the curriculum expectations, with all groups achieving well. Pupils in the earliest years develop their understanding of religious concepts and subject-specific vocabulary through engagement in active learning. Older pupils' work in their books is presented well. By the time they reach Year 6 pupils are becoming more religiously literate, able to think ethically, and to apply their knowledge of scripture to religious discussions. Pupils engage in lessons willingly, demonstrating interest and a desire to do well, although with some tendency to lapse in tasks that require sustained concentration. Behaviour in lessons is good because of pupils' enjoyment of the subject. Overall, pupils show less development of the ability to reflect spiritually, and to show deeper understanding of their learning, with written and oral responses often confined to a shallow level. Some pupils lack the confidence to speak about what they have learnt and to engage in deep consideration of religious issues. Pupils do know how well they are achieving, albeit on a surface level, and can make self-assessments of their learning. Attainment is in line with that of other core subjects.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding of the religious education curriculum. They show firm commitment to its value, recognising its impact on the moral and spiritual development of pupils. Teachers ensure that there is comprehensive coverage of the curriculum in their planning. Many learning tasks are focused on a written response, and these show variety, with pupils experiencing the chance, for example, to retell religious stories, write diary entries, prayers and poems, and put themselves in the place of religious figures. Tasks are regularly adapted for those who need supporting scaffolds, and teaching assistants lend very good support to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities so that they can

achieve. There is less opportunity for pupils to present their learning in an independently chosen manner. The school acknowledges the need to encourage pupils to go more deeply into their understanding. Teachers' questioning towards this end is developing but does not yet give pupils sufficient opportunity to reflect purposefully or engage in sustained discussion, as a means to building confidence in their articulation. The high quality of teaching is evident; however, the creation of the special, sacred nature of the subject inspiring awe and wonder is not yet fully developed.

Leaders and governors ensure that the school curriculum for religious education is a faithful expression of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory (2012)*. The school uses the *Come and See* scheme of work as the basis of its teaching and learning. Furthermore, leaders ensure that the curriculum is enriched with other opportunities to enhance knowledge and understanding, through the use of visitors to school and a residential visit to the Emmaus Youth Village, for example. The introduction of pupils to other world religions is also covered fully. Religious education is given parity with other core subjects in terms of resourcing, timetabling and professional development. Leaders ensure that the subject is effectively planned to meet the needs of all pupils. Governors supply both challenge and support, and have good knowledge of standards and priorities through their monitoring activities and the regular communication received at governors' meetings. They are supported in this role by helpful advice offered by BHCET officers in their visits. All are united in their ambition to achieve the highest standards.

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

1

Leadership

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

2

2

Pupils show enjoyment of their experiences of prayer and liturgy provided by the school. Their behaviour in celebrations of the word is good, showing respect to the nature of what is taking place. Their understanding of the liturgical year and its traditions is developing, whereby they can relate the changing of the seasons, when significant feasts occur, and how this influences the prayer life of the school. They show knowledge of responses that are part of the Mass, less familiarity with traditional prayers, but sing hymns confidently and with enthusiasm. Pupils collaborate with each other very willingly in planning, preparing and participating in celebrations of the word, developing their skills at age-appropriate level in each class, guided by their teachers. They also undertake liturgical ministries with enthusiasm, with impressive involvement shown by the role of the Mini-Vinnies in whole-school celebrations. While pupils comply with the expectations of their involvement in acts of worship, their full, active and conscious participation is yet to be developed through their understanding of the sacredness of each occasion, requiring a depth of spiritual reflection within prayerful silence and a sustained attentiveness to what is taking place. However, when asked to respond to given themes for consideration, pupils are generally able to relate these themes to the wider life of the school and to the actions that should be taken in their lives to carry out a given mission.

The centrality of prayer and liturgy in the life of St Joseph's is very evident in the rich variety of experiences that are provided for pupils. The well-structured weekly offering includes the chance to revisit each Sunday's gospel reading, exploring its meaning and relevance; a virtue and a Catholic social teaching principle to focus on and learn about during the week. This leads to active involvement that is regularly praised and celebrated at the end of the week; the chance to practise hymns, within a context that recognises this as an act of prayer; and the opportunity to take part in celebrations of the word as a class group. Scripture passages are chosen to reflect

the Church's liturgical season. Staff members give their full commitment to engaging with and leading prayer and are helping pupils to develop their skills of involvement in a progressive manner, in line with the school's agreed strategy. Imaginative use is made of the spaces available to the school. The chapel is a wonderful resource that highlights the priority and consistent presence of prayer in the life of the school. It is creatively decorated to reflect the Jubilee Year. Families and parishioners are warmly welcomed into the prayer life of the school and attend celebrations of the word and Mass regularly.

The Prayer and Liturgy policy is currently being revised to meet the demands of the Prayer and Liturgy Directory. Based on models from both the diocese and the Trust, it is not yet in a format that gives clear guidance to staff. The development of progressive skills in planning and preparation of celebrations of the word has been implemented effectively, and an annual plan of provision is being developed. Planning across the year is thorough with Mass celebrated each half term, and holydays and other significant feasts recognised and addressed in imaginative and relevant manner. Examples of this attention to the importance of each occasion and the involvement of the whole community can be seen in the examples of the remembrance tree prayers in November, the procession to the Stations of the Cross in Holy Week, and the Pentecost gathering of the youngest pupils. This reflects the knowledge and clear vision of leaders in ensuring the quality of spiritual provision. This self-evaluation is shared regularly with governors, particularly through the termly visit of the link governor.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	143515
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8402020
Full postal address of the school	Garburn Place, Durham, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham, DL5 7DE
School phone number	01325300337
Executive headteacher	Not applicable
Headteacher	Mrs Kirsty Evans
Chair of local governing committee	Mrs Mary Wood
School Website	https://stjosephsna.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	2-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	July 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The inspection team

Alan Dewhurst
Nicola Noble

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