



St Paul's Catholic Primary School

URN: 142739

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

29 April 2026 – 30 April 2026

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 RE

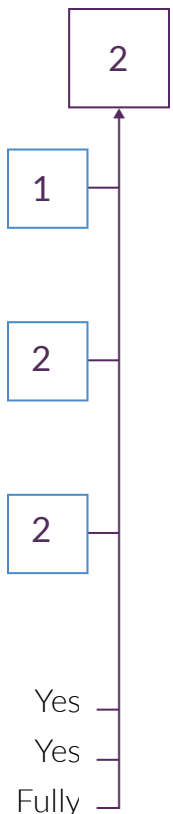
**Collective worship (p.7)**

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



## What the school does well

- Leaders are highly dedicated role models in their faith. They care deeply for pupils, staff and the wider community that they serve. They ensure that God is at the centre of everything they do.
- There is a strong, vibrant and proud Catholic community, where everyone is welcomed and feels supported, especially the most vulnerable pupils, and those with special educational needs.
- The behaviour and attitudes towards learning demonstrated by pupils are excellent throughout the school at all times.
- Attainment and progress in religious education are good, and the presentation of work in books is of a high standard.
- Prayer plays a central role in the life of the school, and pupils participate with confidence, reverence and respect. They sing with enthusiasm and read the Word of God with confidence.

## What the school needs to improve

- As the community moves into a new school building, take the opportunity to revisit and review the mission, so that it continues to be a prominent source of inspiration.
- Ensure that religious education lessons include a wide variety of engaging and creative learning experiences for all pupils.
- Ensure all pupils experience a wide variety of prayer formats that help them remain engaged, enthused, and inspired by their faith.

## 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

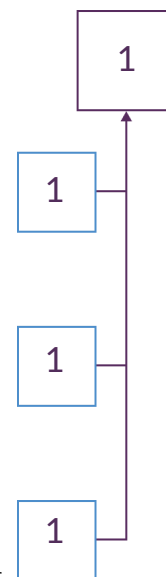
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### 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



St Paul's Catholic Primary School is a strong Catholic community, where pupils and staff actively celebrate and promote the school's mission. Pupils understand that God loves them and that 'In Him we live, and move, and have our being'. They are aware that the Holy Spirit supports them, and that following Jesus' example is central to everything they do. There is a positive, welcoming atmosphere where every child is nurtured and encouraged. One parent commented that, 'There is a real sense of community, care and purpose, and it is clear that children are encouraged to live their faith, not just learn about it.' Pupils show great respect for each other, and behaviour is exemplary across the school. Numerous pupil leadership groups, including prayer leaders, Mini-Vinnies, well-being ambassadors, and the Faith in Action team, respond enthusiastically to the expectations of Catholic social teaching and the needs of the most vulnerable. They organise a range of fundraising events, such as the Big Lent Walk, an enterprise project, an Advent art competition, and a Fairtrade breakfast for pupils. The funds raised support several charities, including Headlight, Cancer Research, the Air Ambulance Service, and the local food bank. Pupils show respect for other cultures and faith traditions.

Christ is at the heart of this supportive and loving community. The mission statement is clear and familiar to staff, pupils and parents. It is visible around the school, but is not prominent in some key documents or in every classroom. It has not been formally revisited or reviewed in several years. Staff promote the Catholic ethos as exemplary role models. Relationships between staff members are strong and supportive. This is mirrored in the relationships pupils demonstrate towards their peers. The school often goes the extra mile to provide nurture,

care and welcome for more vulnerable families and pupils. Christmas hampers, a uniform bank, and a food bank collection are practical examples of this. The provision for pupils with special needs, including social and emotional needs, is excellent. The school environment is bright, attractive, and welcoming, reflecting its strong Catholic character, and it is proud to be a Live Simply Award holder. In addition, it has a well-planned calendar of faith-related activities that unite the community. Examples include the Marian procession and the Remembrance liturgy with other schools. The relationship education provided is carefully planned and rooted in Church teaching.

Leaders, including governors and the dedicated, highly respected headteacher, clearly articulate the Church's mission for education. They have high expectations and provide rigorous yet supportive challenges, so the school continually seeks improvement. Maintaining the Catholic ethos of the school is a primary responsibility they take seriously. Leaders ensure a high level of positive engagement with the Diocese, parish and other local Catholic schools. Parents are actively encouraged to be involved in school life. There are various effective strategies in place to support them in their role as first educators of their children. Parents consistently praise the dedication, professionalism, and care demonstrated by the staff. One parent said, 'I am inspired by the leadership in St Paul's. The way the information is shared with parents is grounded in the Catholic faith, showing what a truly faith-driven place this is, in which to learn.' Leaders ensure regular, high-quality training for staff, including those relatively new to the profession. All staff feel valued and appreciate the attention given to their well-being. Although the taught curriculum reflects a Catholic understanding of the world, more discrete links to Catholic tradition have not been formally made.

## Religious education

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 key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

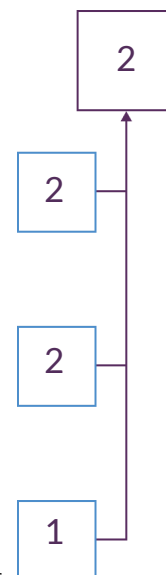
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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



Given their age and abilities, pupils demonstrate a secure level of religious understanding and knowledge. They actively participate in lessons and find them enjoyable. In younger classes, they can become distracted if the teacher speaks for too long. As they progress through the school, especially by the end of Key Stage 2, pupils become more confident in their use of religious language. They reflect upon prior knowledge and think spiritually and ethically during lessons. In a younger class, pupils reflected on Easter, with one saying to their teacher, 'He is alive now... I can feel Him!' Pupils know that the Holy Spirit strengthens their faith. Furthermore, older pupils discuss the lives of saints to understand how their examples can influence us. Pupils discuss their learning with ease, understand their progress, and utilise teacher feedback to identify areas for improvement. Across the school, pupils are notably quick to start their work once set by their teacher. Consequently, they make good progress, including the most vulnerable pupils and those who have special educational needs. By the time they leave the school, pupils' attainment is above average. Books are well-presented, and they take pride in their work. However, recorded learning in these books suggests that pupils are not experiencing a wide enough range of activities to make lessons engaging and challenging for all learning styles.

Teachers and support staff demonstrate high expectations and a clear understanding of how pupils learn. They are deeply committed to religious education and enthusiastic and motivated to do their best for their pupils, using assessment tools to plan and consolidate understanding. Teachers' questioning in older classes consistently offers pupils opportunities

to engage in deep challenge, critical thinking, and record learning in ways other than writing. However, this is less consistent in younger year groups. In stronger lessons, teachers give pupils well-paced, concise input. Similarly, where teaching is more effective, time for individual pupils to discuss, reflect, and respond is well judged. They plan activities involving active collaboration, role-play, and the use of scripture, media, and art. For example, in a lesson about St Paul's conversion, older pupils compared an image on the smart board with an account from the Acts of the Apostles to identify differences. In another class, pupils were given the opportunity to ask themselves questions about an image of St Stephen before hearing his life story. Furthermore, teachers give pupils effective verbal or written feedback, which helps them understand how well they have done and what they need to improve.

Leaders ensure that resourcing of religious education is comparable to other core subjects, in terms of staffing, timetabling, and teaching materials. Supported by officers from the Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust (BHCET) and the Diocese, they are committed to securing high-quality training for staff. They are particularly aware of this commitment, given the imminent introduction of a new religious education curriculum. The subject leader is an excellent role model in her own faith practice. She has a clear vision and a confident level of expertise, which she generously shares with colleagues. Excellent links are forged with local agencies and the wider community, ensuring that pupils have opportunities to enrich their faith experience. These links include participation in events such as a holocaust memorial service, as well as retreats and festivals at the Emmaus youth village, and visits from representatives of Cafod or the Seafarers charity. Catholic virtues taught in lessons are applied alongside the values promoted through the school's sporting opportunities and Catholic social teaching. Leaders' understanding of religious education provision is informed by well-planned monitoring, which helps them identify areas for improvement.

## 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

1

2

Pupils enjoy their prayer life and participate with respect and reverence. Appropriate to their age and ability, pupils work well alongside peers and teachers to plan, lead, and evaluate prayer. They enjoy singing hymns and join in enthusiastically. The reading of God's word by older pupils is strong. Pupils take on responsibilities in prayer leadership, with older pupils serving on the altar and preparing for Mass in school and the parish. Pupils enjoy attending the weekly prayer group during lunchtime, and prayer leaders in every class undertake their responsibilities with pride. During Lent and Advent, prayer resources are taken home by pupils, so they can pray with their families. Furthermore, pupils are aware of the liturgical seasons in the Church's year and the colours used to identify them. Appropriate to their age, pupils explain how evaluating their celebrations of the word informs their planning. They reflect upon how prayer influences their lives outside school. Sometimes, pupil-led celebrations do not allow sufficient time for silent reflection. When planning celebrations of the Word, pupils' experience of a sufficiently wide variety of prayer formats, and response activities is limited. Consequently, their ability to realise their full potential in making these celebrations consistently engaging, meaningful and creative is reduced.

There is a natural pattern of prayer embedded in the school's daily life. It is central to all gatherings. Appropriate scripture or a relevant theme is carefully chosen to enhance prayer and celebrations of the word. Saints such as St Joseph and St Francis provide inspiration during other moments of small-group or whole-school prayer. All staff are excellent role models in leading prayer and in helping pupils plan their own celebrations. Staff work thoughtfully with parents to ensure that they feel included in prayer life. They are encouraged

and welcomed enthusiastically when attending events, and they very much appreciate the opportunities offered by the school. Several parents noted that their children teach them about prayer or share stories about their prayer experiences at school. One parent said, 'He comes home, prays before bed, and has made a little prayer table in his bedroom. I love this!' The parish priest is a frequent visitor, and his experience and contribution to prayer life are highly valued. Links with the parish are increasingly fruitful. The school makes good use of the building to provide appropriate and thoughtful spaces for prayer. A particular treasure is the small jungle that grows at the heart of the school, a haven of peace and contemplation.

Leaders ensure there is a clear and accessible policy for prayer and celebration of the word. They plan a variety of liturgical activities throughout the year, with support from the parish priest. Mass is celebrated regularly in school and in the parish church, at significant moments in the school year, and on feast days. Leaders ensure that there is a progressive skills progression strategy that equips pupils to confidently lead and participate. They make high-quality training for teachers and support staff in faith formation a priority, which is accessed through the diocese and BHCET. Leaders work closely with the parish to ensure that pupils in Year 4 make their First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. In addition to this, arrangements are in place to allow Key Stage 2 pupils to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation in school, during Lent and Advent. Resourcing of prayer and liturgy is a high priority when setting budgets and allocating staff responsibilities. Leaders, including governors, have strategies for reviewing the quality and impact of prayer and other liturgical celebrations, and for taking pupils' views into account through discussions with the Mini-Vinnies and the Faith in Action team.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Paul's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	142739
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8083304
Full postal address of the school	Wolviston Mill Lane, Billingham, Cleveland, TS22 5LU
School phone number	01642 360022
Headteacher or Head of School	Mrs Sheena Sinclair
Chair of Governors	Mr Marc Scott
School Website	<a href="http://www.stpauls.bhcet.org.uk">www.stpauls.bhcet.org.uk</a>
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	01 February 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

## The Inspection Team

Mark Brennan Lead

Stephanie Mary Brown

## 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