



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

URN: 148704

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

21 March 2024

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

1

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

2

What the school does well

- The commitment and drive of the executive headteacher, ably supported by other school leaders, has revitalised the vision and mission of the school so that all members of the school community have a strong attachment to the school's purpose.
- The pastoral care and inclusive approach for all pupils is exceptional; all pupils understand they are loved and cared for.
- Pupils understand the school's mission deeply; they show joy and enthusiasm in living out the values of Catholic social teaching and demonstrate a deep commitment to making a positive difference.
- Prayer and liturgy are a central part of school life and pupils play an active part in planning, leading and participating in creative and joyful celebrations with high levels of confidence, understanding and skill.

- Pupils know and understand scripture well as teachers ensure that every religious education lesson features a Bible reference.

What the school needs to improve

- Secure greater consistency in the effective use of teachers' questioning to enable stronger links with prior learning and to enhance opportunities to deepen and broaden pupils' understanding.
- Enhance self-assessment opportunities for pupils so that they understand how to improve their work and know the next steps to take in their learning.
- Ensure more precise evaluation in religious education by leaders so that action plans are more specific about areas for improvement which will help teachers to be guided in developing their practice.

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

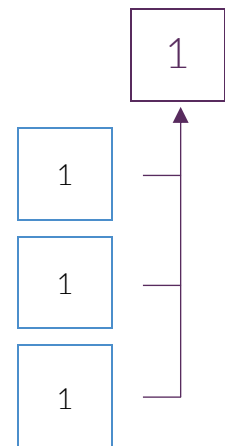
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 are proud to belong to St Joseph's. They know they are valued and recognise school as a safe and happy place where they can flourish. Pupils have a clear understanding of the school's mission to 'live simply, act justly'; they can articulate what this means for pupils at the school, and they live out the school's values with passion. The behaviour and conduct of pupils within and beyond the classroom is exemplary. Pupils show a deep respect for themselves and for others and have a well-developed understanding of the teachings of Jesus. They treat each other with kindness. They understand and respect differences and know how they can make positive change within their community. They understand their responsibility to care for themselves and for others and the world around them. Pupils actively seek out opportunities to live out the values of Catholic social teaching through Mini Vinnies, equality ambassadors and support for the local foodbank. They undertake charitable acts with compassion and enthusiasm and drive recommendations for actions and opportunities they would like to see in their school. As a result, pupils are central to the shaping and formation of the Catholic mission and life of the school.

The recently revitalised mission statement is a clear and inspiring touchpoint for everything that takes place at St Joseph's. It is truly at the centre of the school's work. There is a lived sense of community, and all staff readily embrace the school's mission. The strong culture of welcome for all reflects the high quality of relationships where all are valued without exception, especially those who are most vulnerable. This was seen in the school's Lighthouse Hub when, during a lesson on Palm Sunday exploring the singing of, 'Hosanna!', a pupil was asked why they might be praised and their response of 'Because I am special!' epitomises the explicit and concrete commitment to the most vulnerable. Staff and pupils regularly use the phrase 'to be the face of Jesus', which exemplifies how they consistently bear witness to the school's mission. The school

environment unmistakably witnesses to its identity through explicit and effective signs of the school's Catholic character. Creative prayer spaces and thoughtful displays ensure that pupils are continuously provided with opportunities to reflect on the dignity of each person.

In enabling the mission to be known and lived out by all, leaders ensure that Christ is at the centre of school life. They see the development of the Catholic life and mission of the school as a core leadership responsibility. They are a source of inspiration for the whole school community and are held in the highest regard by all stakeholders. A flourishing partnership with families and the parish enables parents to be recognised as the first educators of their child. The school fully supports them in meeting the demands of parenting and their views bear strong testimony to this. One parent commented that, 'I've never felt more included and involved in my child's school life - I couldn't have picked a better school.' Leaders are inspirational exemplars in their respect for the dignity of all. They explicitly witness to the values of Catholic social teaching and ensure that resources are consciously and effectively targeted at those in greatest need. Governors and Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust (BWCET) are highly ambitious for the school and fulfil their responsibilities diligently in holding the school to account. Staff are exceptionally well supported in their professional development and leaders demonstrate a clear commitment to the physical and mental wellbeing of staff.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

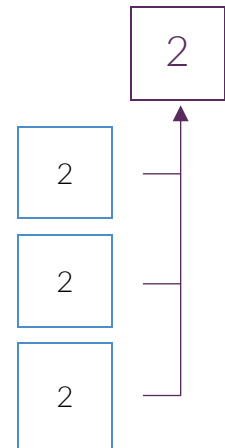
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 make good progress in religious education as they move through the school when measured against the planned curriculum. Their attainment in religious education is good compared to other core curriculum subjects. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs, demonstrate in lessons how they know more, can do more, and remember more. Pupils know how religious education lessons help them to think ethically and morally. Pupils are able to make links between their learning and the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. Pupils speak fluently and with confidence about what they have learned using subject-specific vocabulary. They use technical terms accurately and confidently because teachers are clear in their use of them. As a result, pupils are able to ask and respond to probing questions which further enhance learning. Work is presented well in books and is of a consistently good standard, demonstrating their high regard for the subject. Pupils enjoy their learning and show interest and enthusiasm in lessons. Behaviour for learning in lessons is excellent because most pupils enjoy religious education and are usually engaged. Pupils have limited opportunities to self-assess which reduces their understanding of how well they are doing. Consequently, pupils are not always clear about what they need to do to improve their work.

Teachers across the school are committed to the value of religious education. This commitment is shared effectively with pupils and, as a result, their high expectations are communicated effectively. Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and demonstrate good understanding of how pupils of all abilities learn. Every lesson features an extract from scripture, so pupils understand how their learning is rooted in the Bible. During the inspection effective questioning was seen during lessons. However, some opportunities to reflect on prior knowledge, deepen learning or to accelerate the pace of learning were missed. The recent

introduction of the use of extension questions during lessons is an effective tool to stretch pupils to reach higher levels. Teachers understand that religious education provides opportunities for spiritual and moral development and therefore pupils have time and space during lessons to share their ideas with each other and for quiet reflection. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to capture their learning in a variety of forms of expression. This approach effectively meets the differing needs of pupils, including those in the Lighthouse Hub, and enables pupils to respond creatively to learning tasks. Good quality resources, including the effective deployment of additional adults, helps to optimise learning for most pupils.

The religious education curriculum is a faithful expression of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. It has parity with other subjects in relation to timetabling, professional development, budgeting and staffing. Whole school policies such as homework and marking are applied equitably across all core subjects, including religious education. School leaders have good levels of expertise and are actively involved in improving teaching and learning. They have a clear vision and have high expectations for the subject. Leaders ensure that the school provides engaging enrichment activities which enhance learning for different groups of pupils, enabling all to succeed. Leaders are active in monitoring the quality of work in religious education books and lessons. This is effective in identifying strengths. However, action plans to improve the quality of teaching and learning do not always reflect the areas for development identified through monitoring activities. Leaders effectively plan professional development opportunities for all staff in both subject knowledge and pedagogical development. Governors are well informed about standards in religious education and offer effective challenge in ensuring continuous 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

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 at St Joseph's participate well in whole school prayer and liturgy, responding well to the messages shared and relating them to their own lives. They gather for liturgies, often in song, and participate confidently in them. Pupils join in with responses and opportunities for singing and liturgical dance, which they do with great joy and enthusiasm. Pupils are confident in taking on ministries and lead liturgies with confidence; they take pride in planning, leading and evaluating liturgies for others. Time is provided for personal reflection during prayer. Pupils understand the meaning of the Church's liturgical year and understand how this shapes the prayer experiences during the year. Pupils are able to undertake leadership roles when praying with the parish and they relish these opportunities. For example, during the inspection a group of pupils led Stations of the Cross with the whole school and parish. One pupil described this as, 'a great responsibility which we enjoy.' Pupils take on the roles of junior chaplains and liturgy leaders and this is well developed. As a result, all pupils enjoy prayer and liturgy and engage with enthusiasm. One pupil described these opportunities as, 'making our school a special place to be'. Another described leading liturgy as being, 'like a mini version of Jesus'.

Prayer and liturgy at St Joseph's is carefully planned and the pattern of daily prayer is deeply embedded. It is central to the life of the school. The school offers contemporary and traditional approaches to prayer and liturgy which helps to engage pupils. Scripture is carefully and thoughtfully chosen for all liturgies. Staff are models of good practice as leaders of prayer and liturgy, and they inspire pupils to take on liturgical ministries. Children take advantage of opportunities for prayer throughout the day and as one member of staff said, 'They love to come together to worship in school and in church.' Imaginative use of space around the school has led to the creation of informal prayer stations at which pupils can create prayers for their own intentions. Care is taken to ensure that these spaces are used appropriately, well cared for and

are conducive to prayer. Parents and carers say that they are fully included in the prayer life of the school and value opportunities to join the school community in prayer. One parent commented upon a recent liturgy as being, 'very touching, with a gorgeous and peaceful atmosphere'.

Leaders ensure that the school calendar and timetable are planned around the liturgical year. Opportunities to join with the parish for Mass and other liturgies are central to the school and valued by all stakeholders. Leaders are aware of the needs of individual pupils and plan thoughtfully so that all pupils can access worship with reverence. Leaders have developed a strategy to meet the previous inspection target where prayer and liturgy is child led. This has been achieved and pupils lead liturgies with maturity and confidence. All staff are committed to the Catholic prayer life of the school. Leaders have ensured that all staff can participate in high quality professional development from the Trust and the Diocese. As a result, all staff feel exceptionally well supported and are effective leaders of liturgy. Leaders understand many different ways of praying and impart this knowledge to staff very effectively, paying particular attention to inducting new staff. Leaders and governors ensure that prayer and liturgy are prioritised in terms of resources. Leaders, governors and pupils are involved in monitoring and evaluating outcomes. This results in highly effective strategies for further developing prayer and liturgy opportunities across school.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	148704
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8403489
Full postal address of the school	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Mill Lane, Gilesgate, Durham, DH1 2JQ
School phone number	01913865611
Headteacher	David Miller
Chair of Local Governing Body	Paula Russell
School Website	www.stjosephsgilesgate.durham.sch.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	N/A
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	February 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Michael Ewing
Lisa Hoey

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