



# St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

URN: 147123

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

11–12 February 2026

## Summary of key findings

### Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

2

#### 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

## What the school does well

- Senior leaders, including governors, are inspirational in driving the Catholic ethos of the school which is fully embraced by the staff and results in expectational levels of pastoral care at all levels (pupils, staff and parents).
- Pupil behaviour for learning across the whole school is of a high standard.
- There is a high level of teachers' religious education subject knowledge across the school which is driven by senior leaders.
- Whole school strategies of retrieval and taught vocabulary which are embedded across the school; impacting positively on the pupils' verbal knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils' attitude and reverent approach to prayer and the opportunities that they are provided with; they embrace them fully and demonstrate an eagerness to take on further leadership roles.

## What the school needs to improve

- Ensure religious education tasks are designed to challenge higher-attaining pupils, enabling them to demonstrate their full potential in written work. Whilst their depth of understanding is clear during class discussions, this is not consistently reflected in their written responses.
- Develop a robust system of recording ongoing assessment to support the accuracy of summative data.
- Implement the progression in skills document for planning pupil-led liturgy consistently across the school to enable pupils to further develop their leadership capacity.

## 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

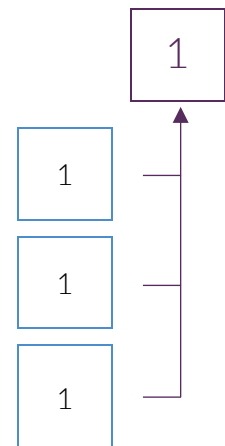
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### 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 Joseph's Catholic Primary School clearly understand and embrace its distinctive identity and mission. They know and understand the school motto: 'We are children of God: We achieve, believe and care'. This is evidenced through the interactions between pupils and with staff which show deep care and respect of one another. Pupils clearly articulate how they feel loved, valued and cared for within the school community, 'The teachers love us and teach us new things.' Pupils can express why their school is special and how it teaches them to, 'follow in Jesus' footsteps and be more like him'. Pupils talk confidently about the work they do to support Catholic social teaching and why it is the right and natural thing to do, linking it to the message of the gospel. They are proud of the roles that they hold in relation to the various Catholic social teaching groups within school such as Mini Vinnies, Cafod Club and Faith in Action. Pupils are articulate in explaining the class charities and the various school charitable projects such as making cards for the local care home and the harvest foodbank collection. The pupils themselves find it rewarding that they are helping others in need, 'We do it because everyone's life is just as valuable.'

Staff embrace the mission statement, recognising one of the school's core strengths as the sense of community. They talk about the strong relationships within school, 'We are a happy staff who support each other.' Staff are exemplary role models for pupils, offering the highest levels of pastoral care. They are keen to participate and contribute to the wider life of the school, particularly the service that it offers to the community, 'I am proud to be part of a school where Catholic life and mission are at the heart of everything that we do.' Discussions with parents demonstrate that they value the support that the school offers them. Parents feel welcomed into the community and are happy to be involved, 'The community feel is like coming home.' The

school's core values are embraced by all; this is reflected through the wealth of displays throughout the school environment which not only promote the distinctive nature but also celebrate pupil achievement. The relationship, sex and health education curriculum fully meets diocesan requirements and is delivered using diocesan approved resources making it fully compliant and firmly rooted in the teachings of the Church. Parents are consulted annually with regard to curriculum content.

Catholic life and mission is at the heart of this Christ-centered school. Leaders, including governors, see this at the core of everything that they do and refer to it as the 'golden thread'. They see their mission as providing inspiration to the whole community, pupils, staff and families, to be the very best that they can be. This is recognised by parents, 'fantastic school, wonderful values, proud to say my child attends this school'. The school motto, developed by the school community, is seen as, 'not simply words but a way by which the community operates'. There is a flourishing partnership between the school and the local parish with many examples of shared experiences ranging from fundraising opportunities to social activities such as the 'bingo and biscuits' event. Leaders seek opportunities to fully engage with parents, as the first educators of their children. This is valued and embraced by parents who feel welcomed into school and very much part of its mission. Parents speak highly of the commitment of staff to their children. 'Staff go above and beyond for the pastoral care.' The dignity of staff and staff work life balance are placed as high priorities and are considered when making decisions. Staff talk about being listened to and that the senior leadership team are, 'very approachable and open to discussion'.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

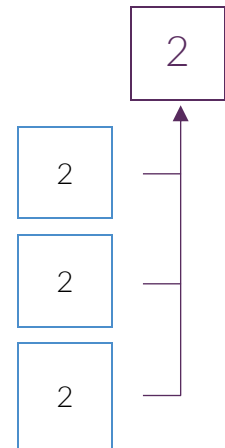
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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 across all classes clearly enjoy their religious education learning and engage readily within lessons. They approach their learning with interest and enthusiasm, resulting in good behaviour for learning throughout the whole school, from Nursery to Year 6, with no instances of low-level disruption seen throughout any lesson visit. As a result, pupils are developing secure knowledge and understanding reflecting expectations of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. Pupils of all ages demonstrate a growing understanding of religious vocabulary relative to their age, speaking confidently within lessons to offer responses to questions or share their knowledge. They are able to verbally use their knowledge accurately and show that they are making good progress in knowing more and remembering more. Classroom discussions demonstrate a secure and progressive knowledge of religious literacy which is embedded across the school. Work in pupil books is well presented and of a good standard. Pupils have some understanding of how well they are doing in religious education; however they are less clear in relation to what they need to do next to improve. School data indicates that pupils achieve well in religious education and this has been evidenced for the last three years.

All staff demonstrate secure subject knowledge and are able to deliver this knowledge through well-structured, well-planned lessons, which follow the agreed school format. Time and attention are given to supporting the pupils in knowing and remembering more through purposeful retrieval activities which are built into every lesson throughout the whole school, retrieving from previous lessons and previous topics. A clear focus is placed on a shared taught religious vocabulary, which is modelled through an embedded 'my turn, your turn' approach when introducing new vocabulary, along with providing pupils with age-appropriate definitions to enable them to use the vocabulary themselves. Staff are modelling how to use the Bible through effective use of visualisers. Teachers use questioning to clarify and extend verbal knowledge and

understanding. Pupils working below the expected level are supported through the use of additional adults, scaffolded tasks or word banks to enable all pupils to access the same learning task. Teachers adhere to the school's marking and feedback policy acknowledging pupil's efforts. Verbal feedback is used during some lessons to move pupil's learning forward however this is not consistently embedded to allow more-able pupils to access higher order thinking and pupils are not always clear as to how to move their learning forward.

Leaders and governors ensure that the religious education curriculum is a faithful expression of the Directory. The curriculum follows the *Come and See* programme and is sequentially planned. Religious education has full parity with core subjects, leaders ensure that this is reflected through staffing, timetabling, resourcing and professional development, this is also evidenced through expectations in relation to marking and feedback. Professional development opportunities are embraced by leaders and governors, provided by both the diocese and the Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust (BWCET), including more bespoke training to support the school's specific areas of focus. The religious education leader works closely with the headteacher, governors and the BWCET leader for ethos. She has a clear vision for teaching and learning and demonstrates a good level of expertise in securing this vision having implemented a whole school approach to retrieval, vocabulary and Bible use which are now embedded. Leaders, on all levels, work together to evaluate religious education through a structured monitoring schedule which has resulted in strategic actions being taken which has led to good outcomes demonstrated by pupils in relation to religious literacy and engagement within lessons. Attainment outcomes indicate that age-related expectations in religious education are higher than English, however there is not a consistent approach across the school to inform the assessment data.

## 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

Prayer is an integral part of daily life for pupils at St Joseph's Catholic Primary School. They speak openly about their daily patterns of prayer, as well as moments of prayer in the classroom and when gathering as a whole school community. Pupils value the varied range of opportunities to pray, showing respect and involvement. They display confidence in a variety of prayer styles and participate in singing with enthusiasm and joy. As pupils progress through the school, they are developing greater independence in the ability to plan and lead classroom prayer, with support and guidance from the adults. Pupils plan using the school planning format which is based on the four-part model and focuses on the use of scripture. They use the Bible with respect and proclaim with confidence and reverence. Pupils are able to reflect on prayerful experiences and discuss what they have enjoyed and how it made them feel. Pupils understand the significance and power of prayer and clearly see prayer as part of wider life of the school and community, 'We pray to become closer to Jesus.' Their developing knowledge, understanding and confidence demonstrates that they can make links between prayer and gospel messages and daily life, putting these messages into action.

Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of St Joseph's community. Opportunities for prayer are embedded routinely within gatherings with pupils, staff, governors and parents and is led by all senior leaders. Significant moments of joy or sorrow, throughout the year, are marked by prayer such as the celebrations for the feast day of St Joseph and to support the school community during difficult times. This has a strong impact on the school's sense of community. Scripture has a central place within prayer opportunities and is chosen to reflect the season. Sacred focal points are within each classroom; these are linked to the liturgical season and reverently presented. The school also has a dedicated prayer garden. The current focus for the dedicated prayer station within school is 'promoting peace' which is linked to the Catholic social teaching

focus, providing further encouragement for independent reflection and prayer. The school welcomes families and the parish to participate in the prayer life of the school, which is well received, parents speak enthusiastically of their time in shared prayer, this is also reflected in the wealth of comments in the 'sharing prayer' with our children's feedback book.

The diocesan policy for prayer and liturgy is followed faithfully to support the moral development of pupils and staff. Leaders have developed a prayer skill progression document which is in its early stages of implementation however there is still evidence of progress in expectations for pupils across the phases. Leaders demonstrate an understanding of a variety of ways to pray and plan for a range of prayerful opportunities throughout the school year, including regular engagement with parish Masses, whole school prayerful gathering led by adults, celebration of the word led within class (by staff and pupils) and daily opportunity for meditation using the Maranatha in every class. Leaders, including governors, value and embrace the professional development offer, both from the diocese, the BWCET, and that which is delivered by the religious education leader; all of which is appreciated by staff. Leaders and governors routinely undertake a review of the quality and effectiveness of prayer and liturgy as part of the annual monitoring and evaluation cycle; this process helps shape ongoing improvements that enrich the spiritual life of the whole school.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	147123
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3943326
Full postal address of the school	Village Lane, Washington Village, Tyne and Wear, NE38 7HU
School phone number	01919172484
Executive headteacher	Not applicable
Headteacher	Elizabeth Maher
Chair of local governing committee	Kathleen Bengston
School Website	<a href="https://stjosephswashington.bwcet.com">https://stjosephswashington.bwcet.com</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Wilkinson 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	09 May 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

## The inspection team

Leigh-Anne Young  
Ruth Whyte

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