



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

URN: 148493

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster

13–14 November 2024

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

1

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

Compliance statement

- The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference
- The school is fully compliant with the additional requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- All areas for improvement outlined in the previous diocesan inspection have been addressed in full.

What the school does well

- This is a caring and nurturing school which enables pupils to thrive.
- Pupils are respectful of each other and themselves.
- The head teacher has a clear vision of the Church's mission in education and uses it to guide the school community.
- This is a very inclusive school.
- Governors are ambitious for the school and provide effective challenge and support for the leadership team.

What the school needs to improve

- Integrate Catholic social teaching across a wide range of curriculum areas to encourage pupils to make links between their learning, their faith and their everyday actions.
- Challenge more able children to think deeply, by making appropriate links between scripture, church teaching and everyday life.
- Increase the number of pupils from different age groups who are actively involved in the chaplaincy team.

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

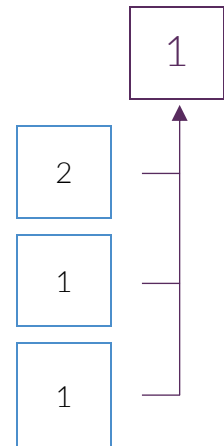
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 school say they enjoy coming to school and feel happy and safe in the welcoming, caring environment created by staff and their peers. This sense of community helps them feel valued and included. Pupils and staff know and understand the mission statement which is displayed prominently around the school. They recognise that it is about working together and trusting in God's unconditional love. One Year 3 pupil summed it up beautifully, saying, 'It is because God loves us so much, and we need to love Him'. Pupils show great respect for their personal dignity and the dignity of others. This is clear in how they behave during lessons and around school. Inspectors noticed how pupils played happily together during lunchtime, supporting one another and sorting out any small disagreements calmly and kindly. Pupils are developing their understanding of Catholic social teaching; older pupils have opportunities to put these principles into action. For example, house captains organise charity days, and the school council has led projects including litter picks and a Clean Air Day to reduce carbon waste. However, pupils would benefit from visiting Catholic social teaching more often across the curriculum. This would help them to broaden their understanding of all the principles of Catholic social teaching.

The school provides excellent opportunities for pupils and staff to live and grow in their Catholic faith. The school's mission statement is at the forefront of all the school's work. Inclusivity is one of the school's real strengths, especially in the way in which it supports children with educational, health and care plans. The special educational needs co-ordinator ensures these children are valued and their needs are met, with one parent writing, 'The special educational needs coordinator works tirelessly to respond to every child's individual need'. Staff show their commitment to the school's Catholic life and the common good in many ways: organising

fundraising, donating furniture for Ukrainian families, and maintaining the school's beautiful prayer garden. The school environment reflects its Catholic identity at every turn. Religious artefacts, like the stunning statue of St Joseph crafted by a former parent, help create a special atmosphere. Staff promote Franciscan values like kindness and gratitude, which are celebrated across the school. Pupils who show these values are recognised in the Gold Book each week, and every half term, a Franciscan Award is given in each key stage. These celebrations help pupils understand and live out these important values in their daily lives. The school's relationships, sex and health education curriculum meets diocesan requirements, and parents are kept involved with regular consultations. They also have access to all the materials through an online portal.

The head teacher leads by example, showing deep faith and a strong commitment to the well-being of every child. His dedication to living out the school's Catholic mission creates a positive culture where gospel values are at the heart of school life. Staff and pupils are inspired by his clear vision and supportive leadership. The head teacher is supported by a dedicated governing body who are actively involved in school life. Governors regularly visit the school to carry out observations and learning walks, and they recently helped redesign the school entrance to make it more welcoming and reflective of the school's Catholic nature. The leadership team have a strong understanding of the school's role in the local community and how it can spread the good news of the gospel. Catholic social teaching is a big focus, with pupils regularly engaging with 'Love in Action' resources. Parents are very supportive of the school's mission, with many praising how it helps their children grow in faith and live by Catholic values. The parish priest is actively involved in school life. Staff feel valued and supported by the head teacher, who prioritises their well-being. This creates a positive working environment where staff feel motivated and committed to maintaining the Catholic ethos of the school.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

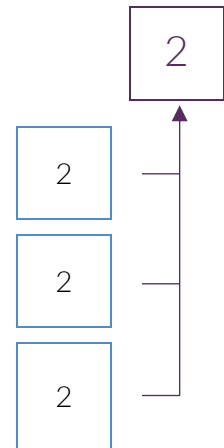
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 achieve well in religious education, making good progress in line with other core subjects. Pupils say they enjoy their lessons and find their learning interesting. One pupil shared, 'I like talking about God', reflecting the positive attitude towards religious education across the school. Behaviour during lessons is excellent. Pupils concentrate well, listening carefully to their teachers and engaging positively in activities. In many classes, pupils were active listeners and eager to answer questions. However, in some lessons, fewer children actively participated, and the learning was more passive. Teachers make effective use of talk partners to encourage engagement, but this needs to be built on by ensuring all pupils are challenged to contribute after these discussions. While pupils can recall recent learning, many struggle to make connections with broader knowledge and scripture on their own. Encouraging them to make these links more independently would deepen their understanding and accelerate progress, helping them to achieve even better outcomes. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well-supported in religious education lessons. For pupils with more significant needs, the curriculum is carefully adapted, enabling them to make progress from their starting points. This tailored support is a notable strength of the school.

At St Joseph's the quality of teaching and learning in religious education is good, ensuring pupils engage with their learning and develop a clear understanding of the Catholic faith. The inspection coincided with Judaism Week, which was well-planned and enhanced by a visit from a local rabbi. The rabbi provided valuable pre-teaching during collective worship, enriching pupils' understanding of key knowledge. Relationships in classrooms are a real strength, with teachers and pupils sharing mutual respect. Teachers provide positive feedback, and pupils value and respect each other's contributions, creating a supportive environment for learning. Teachers demonstrate excellent subject knowledge and lessons are carefully sequenced in

small, manageable steps, with regular recaps of prior learning. This approach ensures that key concepts are revisited and reinforced, as seen in every lesson observed during the inspection. All classrooms have religious education learning walls, displaying key vocabulary and concepts. The introduction of knowledge organisers this year has been particularly effective, enabling pupils to revisit prior learning and explain their understanding confidently. Teachers use a combination of closed and open-ended questions to assess pupils' understanding. While closed questions effectively gauge recall and comprehension, open-ended questions encourage deeper thinking and higher-order skills. For instance, in a Year 3 lesson on the Passover, pupils were asked, 'How do you think the children felt when they saw their parents putting lamb's blood over the door?' prompting thoughtful reflection and discussion. In the Early Years, teachers engage children using pictures and religious artefacts, helping to build their knowledge and vocabulary in a meaningful way. In the most ambitious lessons, teachers' enthusiasm and creative approaches result in high levels of engagement. For example, a Year 2 lesson on the Sabbath included a quiz, role-playing, blessing candles, sharing Challah bread, and listening to Jewish music.

Leaders are dedicated to ensuring that religious education remains the highest priority in the school's curriculum. Governors understand their responsibility to ensure religious education has core parity with other subjects. They visit the school regularly, using these opportunities to challenge and support the leadership. For example, during a recent visit, they suggested exploring how religious education supports equality and inclusion. However, they currently receive limited data on religious education attainment, which restricts their ability to fully evaluate the impact of teaching and learning in this area. Leaders are proactive in addressing areas where teaching and learning can improve. The subject leader has a clear and ambitious vision for developing religious education across the school. However, his capacity to drive rapid progress is limited as he is currently leading several other areas of school improvement. This presents a challenge in advancing religious education as quickly as he would like.

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

1

1



Pupils participate in and respond to collective worship with respect, reverence and a deep sense of its importance in their spiritual lives. The chaplaincy team, made up of Year 6 pupils who apply for the role, is highly regarded by other children in the school. They play a key role in leading prayer and liturgy across the school. During October for example, they led a popular rosary group for the whole school. A smooth transition period during the summer term, where outgoing Year 6 members mentor the incoming team, ensures the new team is well-prepared to lead at the start of the academic year. To further develop the team's skills and ensure continuity, involving children from across all year groups would allow for a more sustainable and progressive approach, reducing the need to start anew each September. Older pupils take responsibility for planning and leading weekly prayer and liturgy in their classes. The evaluations seen during the inspection confirm that this is an embedded practice. Pupils understand the importance of scripture during the Celebration of the Word, always greeting the gospel with reverence by standing and singing an acclamation. The school's annual plan ensures that pupils develop a good understanding of the liturgical year, which is evident in their engagement and responses during prayer and liturgy. During whole-school acts of worship, pupils are extremely respectful, contributing to a collective sense of reverence. In the best examples of class collective worship observed, moments of silence and opportunities for spontaneous prayer were used effectively, enhancing the spiritual experience for all.

Pupils are offered numerous opportunities to engage in prayer throughout the day in both formal and informal settings, involving a balance of modern and traditional prayers. Daily Christian meditation further deepens their prayer life, offering moments of quiet reflection. Pupils have access to thoughtfully designed prayer spaces. These include a spontaneous prayer stop next to the hall, a well-loved prayer garden, and the forest school, which many pupils

describe as their favourite place to pray. Staff model how to lead and participate in worship, helping children develop confidence and understanding. Teachers also guide pupils in planning and evaluating collective worship, ensuring it is a thoughtful and reflective process. Prayer bags, which foster strong home-school links have been warmly received with one parent writing, 'We are not Catholics, but I am thrilled that my children have embraced the Catholic ethos. My son loved the prayer bag in Year 1, and they are both captivated by the ethos and teachings.' While the school has a good connection to the parish, a significant minority of parents are unaware of these links. Increasing communication about parish events and the school's involvement would help strengthen parents' understanding of this important relationship.

The leadership of prayer and liturgy is thoughtful and well-structured with strong planning, inclusive practices and a clear focus on continual improvement. The school's collective worship policy is well-designed, with a clear intent and a progression in prayer that develops as pupils move through the school. Regular reviews ensure it remains relevant and effective. Leaders ensure that worship is age-appropriate and meaningful for all pupils. Governors, through regular visits to classrooms, have witnessed this in practice. The liturgical year is carefully planned, incorporating Masses on significant dates and Holy Days of Obligation. The school has also reintroduced the Sacrament of Reconciliation, reflecting a commitment to deepening pupils' spiritual experiences. Leadership supports professional development in collective worship. New staff attend Foundation Stones training, while all teachers observe one another's collective worship sessions, sharing best practice. This approach is fostering greater creativity in class worship. To build on this solid foundation, leaders could explore incorporating art, drama, music, and liturgical dance, which could enhance the variety and depth of worship experiences. The school has successfully built strong links with families. Almost all parents responding to the parent survey agreed that they are invited into prayer and liturgy. This is supported by excellent attendance at school Masses and liturgies, highlighting the importance placed on involving families in the spiritual life of the school.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	148493
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9193341
Full postal address of the school	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, North Road, North Road, Hertford, SG14 2BU
School phone number	001992583148
Headteacher	Martin Maloney
Chair of trustees	Seamus O'Boyle
School Website	http://www.stjosephs255.herts.sch.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Francis Of Assisi Catholic Academy 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	November 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

Mark Holdsworth
Christine Curtis

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