



St Austin's Catholic Primary School

URN: 104806

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Liverpool

23 September 2026 – 24 September 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 diocesan directives

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

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Yes

Yes

Fully

What the school does well

- There exists a strong sense of belonging to a loving school family at St Austin's. Pupils and staff feel safe, happy and respected because relationships at every level bear witness to the school's mission.
- The pastoral support of pupils and parents is a strength because staff and leaders ensure that priority is given to knowing and understanding the context of the school community.
- The mission and values of the school are lived authentically due to the clear vision of leaders and governors who are proud and ambitious for the community they serve.
- Long standing parish links with the parish priest enrich the prayer life of the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that self evaluation processes in religious education lead to consistency in the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school and the sharing of the very best practice.
- Use probing questioning during feedback in religious education to make pupils clear about how to improve their work
- Prioritise the professional development of staff in the selection of relevant and appropriate scripture to support the provision of prayer and liturgy.

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

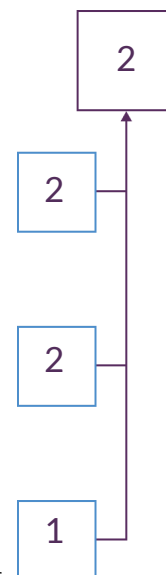
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 Austin's are proud of the school's distinctive Catholic identity and mission. They can clearly express an understanding of why they are valued and cared for as unique persons, made in the image of God. They express that they have faith in themselves and others and everyone's achievements are celebrated. Pupils describe feeling safe and happy because everyone is kind, forgiving and always respectful. They are committed to and enjoy learning about Jesus and how to follow his teaching and example as expressed in the Gospels. Pupils have recently been given more opportunities to respond to the demands of Catholic social teaching through the planned opportunities for them to support those in need. The *Mini Vinnies* were moved to action after learning about the work of the charity *Shelter*, and speak enthusiastically about ways they plan to raise funds for this and many other charities such as Cafod, Guide Dogs for the Blind and the local foodbank. The continuing development of these initiatives will strengthen pupil outcomes. Pupil leaders act as buddies for the younger pupils, and as peacemakers when they fall out. One Year 6 pupil commented, 'Each year that we are here, our star becomes brighter.'

The long established mission statement is known and lived throughout the school. Staff embrace the mission and act as servant leaders. One staff member said, 'There is a strong sense of community, kindness and support.' Relationships are warm, welcoming and inclusive. Pupil voice and community knowledge are gathered sensitively in order to address needs. Leaders ensure their needs are addressed. This enables staff to act quickly when they recognise a pupil in distress. There is a commitment to the poor and the most vulnerable through the use of uniforms and food banks, Christmas gifts and St Vincent de Paul donations

to families. The planned mission review will enable all stakeholders to reflect on the work of the school and how it is deeply rooted in the word of God and the educational mission of the Church. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the work they carry out in their various leadership roles. There are physical signs and symbols of the school's Catholic character in the spaces around school. The provision for relationships and sex education meets statutory requirements and is faithful to the teachings of the Church.

Leaders and governors are committed to carrying out their duty as guardians of the Catholic life and mission of the school and they ensure that the curriculum has religious education at its centre. The recently appointed headteacher has a clear vision and is a source of inspiration for all. One governor stated that, 'She has brought something special to school.' Leaders have high expectations of themselves in putting the school at the service of the Church. The parish priest is a regular visitor to school and liaises effectively between school and the community to support its prayer life and the targeting of resources for those most in need. Engagement with parents is strong because leaders reach out to welcome them into school. Trust is built from the earliest stages, enabling parents to grow in understanding of the school's mission. Staff report that leaders are approachable and understanding, providing them with high levels of pastoral care. Their professional development is well planned and as a result, staff, including those new to the school, have a good understanding of the school's mission. Pupil voice is given high priority when evaluating and planning improvements to Catholic life and mission.

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

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Pupils are developing secure knowledge, skills and understanding in religious education that reflects the learning required by the *Religious Education Directory*. As a result, standards of attainment in religious education are at least in-line with other core subjects. Pupils enjoy their learning in religious education. In Year 1 pupils gasped in anticipation of the *golden box*. Consequently, behaviour in lessons is very good. Pupils work independently, concentrate well and enjoy collaborative work. Adaptations are made for pupils with special educational needs so that they make good progress. Pupils in some classes are knowing and remembering more because links to previous learning are effectively made at the start of lessons. Most pupils are aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life and can relate aspects of scripture to their own lived experiences. In Year 6, pupils could give examples of love in action after reading *The Prodigal Son*. Recording in books is well presented and pupils show pride in their work. Pupils have an understanding of how well they are doing. Probing questioning during discussions and as part of feedback would challenge pupils and enable them to know what they need to do to improve.

Staff are developing their subject knowledge in line with the *Religious Education Directory*. They are committed to the value of religious education and this is conveyed to pupils. Pupil effort is celebrated both verbally and in written feedback in books. Pupils are encouraged to do their best. This leads to high levels of motivation and as a result, most pupils, especially those with additional needs, are inspired and they learn well. Planning is broadly linked to pupil assessment and in some classes seen, challenge and adaptations provide support for

learners' needs. Teachers understand the impact of religious education on the moral and spiritual development of pupils. This is evident in lessons when comparisons are drawn between the lesson content and the lived experiences of the pupils. This enables them to understand and relate to scripture. The *Religious Education Directory* is giving rise to a more creative approach to lessons and staff are enjoying giving pupils a variety of forms of expression in response to their learning. Questioning during lessons takes place that enables teachers to check on pupil understanding. More open and challenging questioning would give rise to extended discussion and debate, increasing pupil engagement and maximising learning for most pupils.

Leaders have ensured that the *Religious Education Directory* and archdiocesan planning is used to deliver the religious education curriculum. Planning is sequential and effectively adapted to meet the needs of learners. Monitoring and evaluation by leaders and governors ensures that religious education is given full parity with other curriculum areas, which results in outcomes for pupils that are in line with other core subjects. Governors are informed about religious education through their meetings, the religious education action plan and through the headteacher's reports. The school newsletter gives stakeholders a comprehensive view of the work of the school in religious education and is received well by governors and parents. Through strategic and detailed action plans, leaders demonstrate a clear vision for the development of learning in religious education. Planned actions target areas for improvement and the professional development requirements of staff. The school plans to develop staff expertise in the monitoring and evaluation of religious education by introducing more regular moderation of pupils' work. Staff development that focuses on effective pedagogy for learning in religious education would also further enhance the consistency in the quality of teaching and learning across school.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

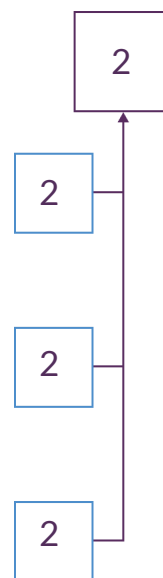
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

Leadership

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



Pupils respond well to the experiences of prayer and liturgy provided at St Austin's. They reflect in silence, join in community prayer and bring forward scripture, symbols and music to the worship table. In a whole-school celebration of the word, pupils sang joyfully as they gathered to worship. Pupils report that the recently introduced *sacred silence* gives them private time to speak to God. Supported by key staff, older pupils are also able to lead. Pupils have a good understanding of the liturgical year and the various celebrations that occur at key times. Pupils recognise and talk about the ways their prayer and liturgy is influenced by wider world themes and events. They describe learning lessons from scripture and that prayer makes them happy. They understand how their reflections in worship and their responses to the scripture inspire them to make changes. For example, in Year 1, after reading scripture about creation, pupils wanted to be like St Francis, protecting wildlife from harm. In Year 5, themes of forgiveness were explored after the story of the *Prodigal Son* and go forth messages encouraged pupils to reconcile after disagreements on the playground.

Prayer and liturgy is central to the life of the school and forms part of routine gatherings of pupils, staff and leaders. There is a daily pattern of traditional prayers and pupils report making use of spontaneous prayers when there are particular intentions that they would like to pray for in class. For example, they described praying for people who are sick at home and at school and for people in the news who are in need of prayers. Scripture passages are chosen, matched to a particular need or theme so that pupils are able to relate messages to their own lived experiences. At times, scripture passages are long, reducing the capacity of the pupils to fully participate. Staff would benefit from guidance with scripture choices that are

age appropriate so that all pupils are able to deepen their responses. Staff, including leaders and the parish priest, are models of good practice to other staff. Staff work well with families to include them in the prayer life of the school and the developing prayer life of the pupils. Whole school and class celebrations such as the Advent Mass, Carols by Candlelight and Stations of the Cross are well attended by families and are a source of joy.

The school's policy on prayer and liturgy is well formulated and useful to staff, leading to a consistency in approach. Pupils come to know, understand and participate in the parts of worship as they progress through school. Leaders work with the parish priest to plan the school calendar to celebrate Mass and other services at key times in the liturgical year. These include Advent, Lent and other seasonal liturgies. Leaders monitor and review the quality and impact of prayer and liturgy leading to actions for improvement such as the introduction of the *sacred silence* to give pupils time to reflect on the scripture shared. All staff have received recent training in prayer and liturgy provided by the archdiocese. As a result, they understand the elements of worship and are committed to taking a leading role. Leaders understand the variety in ways of praying that are part of the Catholic tradition. They plan to further develop staff skills by widening the scope of worship. This will give pupils a greater variety of experiences in the styles and forms of prayer taking place in school. Budgets are allocated to quality resources that enhance the experiences of prayer and liturgy for the pupils.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Austin's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	104806
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3423415
Full postal address of the school	Heath Street, St Helens, WA9 5NJ
School phone number	01744 678000
Headteacher or Head of School	Mrs Lynsey Burgess
Chair of Governors	Mr Mike Burke
School Website	www.st-austins.st-helens.sch.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	
Age-range of pupils	3 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	11 February 2020
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The Inspection Team

Fiona Brownsey

Lead

Anne Marie Webb

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