

Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School

URN: 105243

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Salford

09–10 July 2025

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

1

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

1

Compliance statement

- The school fully complies with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference. Religious education, taught for at least 10% of the timetable, is the heart of the whole curriculum. The school is fully compliant with the requirements of the *Religious Education Directory*.
- There are no additional primary school requirements from the Bishop of Salford.
- The school has fully addressed the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. There has been a whole school approach to implementation of the *Religious Education Directory*. Executive leader reports to the Governing Board continue to evaluate provision across the requirements of the framework for Catholic school inspection, enabling effective challenge and support. Sequencing within religious education enables children to become increasingly religiously literate, and apply this to their lives, as they progress through school.

What the school does well

- The dedicated and focused leadership provided by the genuinely inspirational executive headteacher, along with an equally impressive senior team, ensures that this school is always striving to improve. They continuously seek new ideas that will positively enhance the experiences of pupils and improve the outcomes they achieve academically, spiritually and as human beings.
- Catholic social teaching and the school's mission are deeply embedded in the fabric of the school and everything it does. These values are celebrated, and implemented in tangible ways within the school community, the parish, the local area, nationally, and globally.
- The behaviour and attitudes of the pupils are truly exemplary. This is due to their strong voice and active involvement in decision-making. They undertake a wide range of valuable leadership roles, demonstrating genuine respect, and support for one another. They know they are valued and cared for by the adults with whom they spend their days.
- The provision of prayer, worship and celebration of the Word is varied, vibrant, creative and well planned. It gives pupils experiences which help them to come to know God and to understand their faith in many special and unique ways.
- Religious education lessons are challenging and well thought through, so that all pupils, including those who find learning more difficult, can be fully included and attain high standards of skills and knowledge. Teaching is never less than good and is sometimes outstanding.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that provision for religious education in the early years maximises learning for all pupils.

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

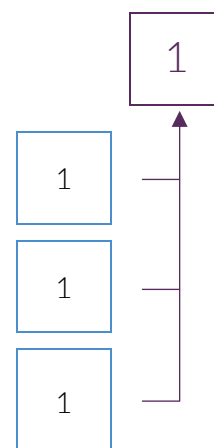
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



The 'Sacred Heart experience' is simply unique. This school proclaims its love of God and its prime mission to 'Love One Another' with joy and enthusiasm. Pupils who attend this school are very fortunate. They are confident, interesting, and curious at all ages. They know God loves them as individuals, each gifted with particular talents that they are called to share with others. They show deep respect for each other, including those of other faiths and cultures. As one pupil told inspectors, 'Pope Francis says we should encounter others so we understand them better, and realise they are just the same as us'. Behaviour is exemplary everywhere, even when pupils are not directly supervised by adults, or when caring for the school's animals and vegetable beds. Pupils demonstrate high levels of awareness of Catholic social teaching and the implications for taking action, especially when it comes to speaking truth to power, human rights, social justice, and caring for our common home. They take inspiration from their class saints. The charitable and community engagement undertaken by the school is beyond outstanding, having contributed financially and practically to more than twenty five charitable causes in the last year or so.

The school's purpose and mission are lived, in the everyday actions of staff and pupils, and the way they continually seek to be 'Like Jesus'. Pupils take inspiration from others, including popes, agencies such as EducareM, and speakers with expertise in fighting injustice. There is a strident commitment to inclusivity, and the celebration of individuality, even when this requires courageous decisions and action. Chaplaincy provision is particularly strong, and the care for families and pupils whose circumstances make life more challenging, often goes beyond that which can be reasonably expected. Some of this provision, done away from the public eye and with the dignity and privacy of individuals maintained as a priority, is literally life changing. Staff

members are inspiring role models in their relationships with each other and with pupils. There is a proactive culture of professional development, which leads to the creation of highly qualified middle leaders within the school, and future leaders for other schools. The attention given to the school's physical design, especially the spaces available for prayer and reflection are exceptional. Areas such as the Sheepfold, Sanctuary and Croi contribute significantly to the distinctively Catholic character of the school. The strong commitment to caring for our planet is lived out, through the installation of solar panels, the growing of crops and wildflowers, the urban farm, recycling and repurposing. Parish links are strong and the parish priest is a much valued and frequent visitor.

Leaders, including the governors, are dedicated to ensuring that the school maintains a strong relationship with the parish and diocese. They have established fruitful and nationally recognised collaborations with organisations such as The Royal Ballet and the Robert F Kennedy Foundation for Human Rights. Parents are supported as the prime educators of their children. Parents are highly appreciative of all the school provides and the values it teaches their children. One parent said, 'My children have flourished and developed a strong social conscience. I cannot praise the school highly enough'. Senior leaders, and the exceptionally committed executive headteacher, are particularly aware of the need to support those who are marginalised, left behind or left without. Policies and systems are rooted in the Gospel and everything that happens only happens because it is the right thing to do. Highly effective planning, monitoring and evaluation, ensures that leaders and governors know their school exceptionally well. All stakeholders are involved in shaping the school, including the pupils. They have significant leadership and monitoring roles through numerous groups and forum. Wellbeing is a priority for all leaders and staff say they feel valued and well supported in their faith formation and spiritual enrichment.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

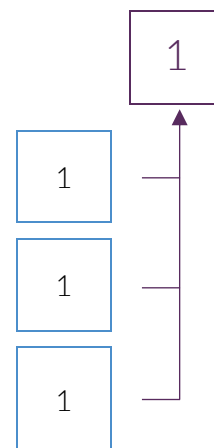
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 develop an excellent understanding of their faith and the implications it has for how they should live their lives, 'Because the Journey Matters'. All pupils, including those with special educational needs make consistently good progress. They develop high levels of religious literacy and recall of prior learning, because of the highly effective strategies used to help pupils remember. Pupils across the school are highly articulate and can discuss concepts and ideas with great effect. They ask questions of adults and show a deep desire to enhance their learning throughout lessons. They work with focus and independence showing exemplary behaviour and a strong sense of pride in their work. Books are presented well, and pupils take great pride in completing a wide variety of learning tasks, inside and outside the classroom. They are highly engaged individuals who have a clear sense of what is right and wrong. They know how to have a positive impact in the world. Feedback systems help pupils understand how well they have done and what they can do to improve. Pupils have ownership of their work and older pupils have started to develop the skills required to offer feedback to their peers.

Teachers exhibit extensive subject knowledge relevant to their phase and display a genuine enthusiasm for religious education, recognising its potential to shape pupils' understanding of how they can positively improve the world. Questioning enables pupils to draw on and make links between a breadth of sources, including *Laudato Si* and *Fratelli Tutti*. Every aspect of the taught curriculum is extremely broad, and exciting. It has numerous aspects to it that are engaging, challenging, and innovative. Special learning moments are captured and celebrated through video streaming on various screens throughout the school, serving as reminders of the enriching experiences that pupils have had. These experiences include visits to parliament, and a virtual workshop with the Jewish Museum in London. Visiting artists and poets, as well as the diocesan schools singing programme, and a wide variety of trips and extra-curricular

opportunities, including those that are abroad, enhance the religious education curriculum. Older pupils showcase their driving and artistic skills in electric go-carts liveried in the values of Pope Francis and Pope Leo. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is effective, thanks to dedicated support staff and the highly effective pastoral team. There are some missed opportunities in the Early Years Foundation Stage for pupils' learning to reach its full potential in religious education.

Leaders ensure religious education is given the highest priority. There is an extremely effective subject leadership team. The early adoption and implementation of the new *Religious Education Directory* and planning for the introduction of a new scheme, has been thorough and well managed. Leaders and governors are committed to securing high-quality training for staff, not only in terms of their professional development but also to grow their personal faith understanding. Opportunities for staff to undertake additional studies and acquire further qualifications are abundant. A large proportion of staff have the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies or equivalent. Leaders' commitment to enriching the curriculum is unwavering. They constantly seek ways to do things differently, including lessons on human rights heroes, racism and genocide. Parents are well informed about the content of the curriculum, through frequent Unite, Achieve and Celebrate events, as well as newsletters, social media and the website. Sports leaders, the pastoral team, and those responsible for special educational needs are devoted to assuring impressive support and activities for these particular pupils. Leaders, including pupils, demonstrate clear awareness of the impact of religious education, leading to outstanding outcomes.

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 consistently demonstrate a deep sense of reverence, and prayerfulness. They sing traditional and modern hymns joyously. There are frequent moments of spontaneous prayer, even at break times. There is a wide variety of types of prayer offered, including examen, adoration, celebration of the Word, and visio divina. Pupils say they enjoy these experiences. Pupils have a significant role in various prayer and worship opportunities. They take on these roles as true leaders, through membership of the Apostles, Hope Ambassadors, Creation Ambassadors, Farmers, Sacred Heart Singers, the Eco-Team, and as Altar Servers. They can articulate the purpose and impact of prayer on their daily lives and the way in which it calls and inspires them to action. One pupil told inspectors that, 'It makes me sad inside when I pray for those who are in need, but happy when I know there is someone I can help'. A senior leader remarked that, 'We want pupils to reflect on the fact that they can help people they do not know, and will probably never meet'. The sponsorship of a room in a local homeless shelter and fundraising for the purchase of pedicabs in Metro Manila are examples of how prayer leads to action by pupils.

Prayer and worship are fundamental to all aspects of this school's activities and are embedded into the daily routine. Staff members demonstrate exemplary practice in prayer, guiding pupils to enhance their understanding and skills in planning, leading, and evaluating worship. Music and singing are notable strengths in the school's prayer and worship activities. The choir even performs for younger students during lunchtime while they eat. The school makes exceptional use of the internal and external space available to it, to support and enhance prayer and worship. Access to these spaces is timetabled but is also freely available to pupils, for them to use at playtimes. All these spaces are well resourced and looked after, often by pupils themselves. Thoughtful additions to the school's provision, such as the urban farm, the vardo, a real grape

vine and even a fig tree, as well as three fire pits, and the forest school provision all show a determination to think outside the norm and do things differently to support prayer. There are numerous opportunities for parents and parishioners to join prayer and liturgy within the school and at the Church. Several adults told inspectors how much they appreciate these opportunities.

The highly skilled and experienced leaders have a deep commitment to ensuring prayer life is at the centre of everything. They have embedded strategies that nurture pupils' spiritual development, enabling them to take ownership and to take on genuine leadership roles. They have already ensured that the new *Prayer and Liturgy Directory* is faithfully integrated within practice. This includes preparing and identifying specific pupils fully, before they undertake ministry roles and appropriately acclaiming the Gospel before it is read aloud. The liturgical year, which is used to label the half terms, is celebrated in many engaging ways. Holy days, such as Sacred Heart and Pentecost are celebrated appropriately, but also in innovative ways, such as the use of dance or fire. Professional development opportunities offered to staff are extensive and include retreat experiences. Well-trained governors take their responsibilities seriously. They monitor and evaluate effectively and have an acutely accurate understanding of what they need to do to improve. Leaders have allocated resources to the prayer life of the school that ensure consistently high quality experiences for pupils. The parish priest and highly effective lay chaplain are significant leadership figures in prayer and liturgy activities.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	105243
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3503359
Full postal address of the school	Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School, Central Drive, Westhoughton, Bolton, BL5 3DU
School phone number	01942 634681
Executive Headteacher	Martin Johnson
Chair of governors	Claire Walker
School Website	https://www.sacred-heart.bolton.sch.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	03 April 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

Mark Brennan
Alixena Lubomski

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