

St Wulstan's Catholic Primary School

URN: 143352

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Birmingham

21–22 May 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

- This school fully complies with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- This school is fully compliant with the additional requirements of His Grace.
- This school has fully addressed all previous areas for improvement.

What the school does well

- The dedicated leadership team is coherently enhancing the life of the school in all areas.
- The pastoral support for pupils and their families is recognised by parents, who speak highly of St Wulstan's.
- Pupil leadership of prayer is well-established and leads to purposeful experiences for all pupils.
- Pupil voice about religious education and prayer is valued and has resulted in confident children who help shape the school's provision in these areas.
- Staff are totally dedicated to the Catholic community they serve which leads to a happy and welcoming environment.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure pupils proactively seek opportunities to lead and evaluate aspects of the school's Catholic life and mission.
- Ensure the religious education curriculum progresses the learning of all pupils rapidly, especially those with higher prior attainment.
- Provide regular opportunities for the wider school curriculum to influence the school's prayer life.

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

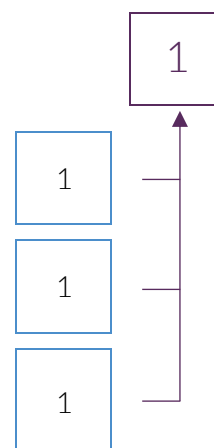
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 greatly value the school's mission and talk passionately about how they love, learn, and share together, including their support for others locally. One pupil said, 'We share so that everyone is equal.' Pupils talk confidently about the care they receive from the staff, giving examples of how they are valued as individuals. Pupils respond to opportunities to serve others in the way Jesus wants them to; for example, leading the school's effort to make gift boxes for residents of the local care home and creating beautiful cards for parishioners. The demands of Catholic social teaching permeate school life, but pupils do not yet proactively seek out self-identified opportunities to help others. Older pupils understand that charity is a way of helping all people become equal; however, younger pupils cannot articulate the theological reasons behind their social action. Pupils care deeply for each other. They talk about ways they routinely show their care for others, knowing everyone is created in God's image. A large group of pupil leaders take an active participation role in school-led activities. This is recognised by other pupils, who talk about their overwhelmingly positive impact.

Despite St Wulstan's mission statement being long-established in school, it is authentically lived out and regularly refreshed; for example, through the addition of a school hymn and school prayer. Staff are inspired to work together as one big team to ensure the needs of pupils and the wider community are met. There is a strong pastoral team that provides excellent levels of support for all within St Wulstan's. This extends to supporting pre-school children and their families; as such, a strong and open culture of welcome is felt by all. Pupils comment that everyone is included, and parents appreciate the care they receive. Staff members genuinely enjoy being part of this happy community and consistently go above and beyond in their roles. Every opportunity is taken to ensure that each child flourishes, receiving whatever specific help

they need. All staff ensure the school's values shine out at every opportunity. This is evident in the way they speak about the pupils and know them all as individuals. The school's Catholic character is clear throughout its environment. Opportunities for moral development are woven throughout each year group, and staff sincerely appreciate the many opportunities they receive to develop their faith.

Leaders prioritise the school's mission when developing policies. All ensure it is shared and experienced by all; subsequently, the community sees its mission as a source of inspiration. Leaders fully engage with the diocese, ensuring staff at all levels benefit from the range of training available. Parish links are strong, and with the arrival of a new parish priest, leaders are keen to strengthen these links even further. Parents are highly engaged with school through charitable endeavours, stay and pray sessions, and regular invitations from pupils to welcome 'someone special' into school. Catholic social teaching has been widely adopted and is now incorporated throughout the school and its broader curriculum. Staff members say they are well-supported and cared for. They value the high level of consideration they receive and, as a result, flourish in their vocations. St Wulstan's is a happy place where adults look after each other. This is mirrored in the care given to leaders by governors and multi-academy company (MAC) directors. Governors have an excellent understanding of the school and its broader impact in the community because they know it well; they prioritise resources towards the school's Catholic mission to ensure this excellent work continues. Leaders and governors' monitoring is strong and accurate, ensuring improvements are maintained. New staff are well-supported in school through the MAC and diocesan training. Pupils' evaluation of Catholic life and mission is not as developed as it is in other areas because pupils are not routinely asked for their views. As a result, they are unable to articulate the difference they have made in this area.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

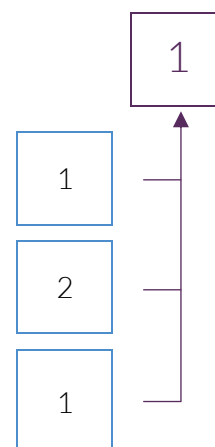
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Due to teachers' consistent approach to recalling prior learning, pupils are building a secure foundation of knowledge in the curriculum for religious education. Pupils' books show that they all have frequent opportunities to demonstrate their secure understanding of the standards expected by the curriculum. However, pupils with the potential to meet higher-level standards are not frequently exposed to greater depth criteria, which limits their progress. Subsequently, the number of pupils who achieve greater depth is low in comparison to other core subjects. Frequent opportunities for reflection on learning are available throughout the school, and as a result, pupils confidently use religious vocabulary and scripture to explain their learning. Pupils are starting to ask their own questions through 'I wonder' tasks. Pupils are used to being asked their opinions and sharing them openly and articulately. This has resulted in reflective responses, both orally and in writing. The work in pupils' books is of a consistently high quality and demonstrates the care that pupils take when learning in religious education. Pupils respond to adult feedback through 'purple pen activities' and can therefore explain what they must do to improve. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), can work independently to demonstrate their learning clearly and effectively. Behaviour overall in lessons is outstanding, and pupils actively engage in activities, contributing to a great learning climate.

The staff's subject knowledge is strong, resulting in lessons that are well-planned to meet the expected standard of the curriculum. Teachers expect pupils to work hard in religious education, and this is reflected in the quality of work in the books. Lessons are planned based on teachers' knowledge of pupils; however, there are missed opportunities to extend pupils' knowledge to achieve the challenging higher-level criteria within the curriculum because teachers do not consciously plan for this. Teachers do use deeper-thinking questions, but these are often targeted towards pupils who already have a higher level of understanding, meaning not all pupils

are always sufficiently challenged. Feedback consolidates pupils' understanding but does not always help all pupils to 'know more' or 'do more', though progress for most pupils is good. Lessons provide pupils with an opportunity to reflect spiritually, resulting in good levels of moral development. The variety of learning activities in religious education enables most pupils to express their understanding accurately. All opportunities to deliver and enhance the curriculum are utilised by leaders, who are given time by governors to ensure that standards are in line with those of other core subjects. As a result, leaders, including governors, have a thorough understanding of the strengths and areas for development in religious education. Staff say they are supported as a team and on an individual basis because leaders support the specific training requirements they may have. Leaders skillfully support all staff's development through delivering bespoke training opportunities, which are well-matched to the school's needs. A team of leaders support the religious education subject leader to enable her vision for teaching and learning to be realised throughout the school. Leaders' skills are shared across the MAC for the benefit of other schools. Where teachers need support, a coaching approach is employed, resulting in notable improvements. The curriculum for religious education is well planned and sequential, building pupils' knowledge each year. There is, however, a lack of rigour when using data to analyse the needs of different pupil groups. As a result, actions to sufficiently extend the learning of some pupils have yet to be taken. Leaders provide governors with a wide range of evidence so that they can be confident they have an accurate picture of the subject's performance. This is combined with governors' own high-quality monitoring through termly allocated monitoring days and meetings, to ensure that all have a well-informed understanding of the strengths and areas for development in religious education.

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 respond very well to all forms of prayer and are active participants in liturgy. They undertake different ministries, such as altar serving and proclaiming God's word with confidence. All pupils respond well during Mass. Pupils show deep reverence throughout liturgy, particularly in moments of prayerful silence. Whilst singing is part of prayer and liturgy, there is less evidence of pupils confidently engaging with it in all year groups; this is most notable in younger classes. Each key stage has regular, age-appropriate prayer sessions, which have exposed pupils to a wide range of Catholic prayer types. Pupils are accustomed to planning worship in a collaborative manner, which means they possess a high level of skill when preparing, leading, and evaluating prayer. Currently, there are limited examples of where the curriculum influences prayer. Pupils can talk about how prayer leads them to individual action; for example, using the message from a prayer session to change their behaviour for that day, as a result of the 'go forth' message.

Prayer is central to school life and relates to the pupils' lived experience. This allows pupils to grow in faith. Staff expose pupils to a wide variety of prayers. This, combined with strong parish links, enables pupils to engage in liturgy with confidence. Weekly Mass is celebrated, as are the many significant times in the Church's liturgical year; for example, Stations of the Cross in Lent, and a Marian procession in May. A recent focus on enhancing the use of scripture throughout the school has led to thoughtful reflections being used consistently in all classrooms. Staff commitment is exceptional, and because of their dedication, they are skilled in leading prayer, supporting pupils to engage deeply with it. This extends beyond the school day, for example, through family weekend masses, so that staff are seen as faithful witnesses amongst the community. Monthly family Masses enhance the school's wider prayer life and ensure that the messages from within the school are shared with the broader community. Some prayer spaces

are underdeveloped and do not enhance the school's provision or contribute significantly to pupils' formation.

There is a well-utilised prayer and liturgy policy which is known and followed by all. It includes a progressive skills map, which ensures all pupil-prepared prayers are linked to clearly defined expected skills for their age group. The prayer and liturgy coordinator has ensured that staff are highly skilled at leading prayer, which has had a noticeable and very positive impact on the level of participation of pupils at all levels. The Eucharist is central to school life; no opportunity is missed to share significant days in the Church's calendar with pupils. Leaders are well supported with regular training. Those who receive it share it with others, meaning all staff share the same vision for prayer, a significant strength of the school. Leaders give support to, and receive support from, the MAC, which means their leadership capacity is increasing, and areas identified for improvement are swiftly addressed. As a result, leadership has a positive impact, and governors have a thorough and accurate understanding of the school's prayer provision. Resources enhance staff and pupils' ability to lead prayer. Regular, reflective evaluation of prayer and liturgy is well established and meaningful; it always involves the voice of pupils, so that they are empowered to shape the school's provision.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Wulstan's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	143352
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	860 3466
Full postal address of the school	Church Lane, Wolstanton, Newcastle-under-Lyme, ST5 0EF
School phone number	01782 973722
Headteacher	Ben Grove
Chair of governing board	Gillian Regan
School Website	www.st-wulstans.staffs.sch.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Christ the King Catholic Collegiate
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	September 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Karyn Oakley
Laura Cole

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