

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

URN: 141477

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Birmingham

02–03 April 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 school provides a profound culture of welcome, inclusion, collaboration, and community.
- All pupils make excellent progress in religious education because of the high expectations of staff and their consistent challenge.
- Catholic social teaching is thoroughly embedded in all aspects of the curriculum and is truly lived out by the whole school community.
- Staff are very well supported in all aspects of their well-being.
- Pupils are very well supported in systematically developing their skills in planning, preparing, and leading prayer and liturgy.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure pupils know more about other faiths, religions, and cultures.
- Routinely involve pupils in the self-assessment of their work in religious education so that they know how to improve and can articulate how they have made progress.

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

1

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

1

The school is consistently described as a place of welcome, family, and community. Pupils deeply value and celebrate the differences and talents of everyone, demonstrating pride and commitment in their proactive participation in the chaplaincy provision, each aspect having its own motto and action plan. Examples of pupil commitment include their initiative of a Bible Group for younger pupils, a pupil who expresses a calling to serve as a liturgy leader, and another who sees his vocation as evangelising others. Parents comment, 'The Catholic life and mission at this school create a nurturing and faith-filled environment where pupils can grow spiritually and academically'. Pupil voice demonstrates a profound and proactive sense of welcome and value of all faiths and cultures. Achieving the Live Simply award and the flourishing Gardening Club are examples of their understanding of stewardship, as are pupil initiatives such as providing Easter Eggs for a local Food Bank.

The school's mission statement, 'In following the Gospel values of Jesus, we are called to love, to learn and to respect one another', is lived out throughout the school and the profound experience and knowledge of scripture, which pupils quote regularly and confidently to explain their actions, shows that Christ truly is at the centre of their whole educational experience. All are welcomed and valued for who they are, including pupils with significant additional needs. All staff are exemplary role models, and their collaboration and mutual support of one another are remarkable. The bright and stimulating school environment reflects its Catholic character and ethos. It includes many opportunities for spontaneous prayer, such as the 'prayer stops'. Staff comment, 'This is more than a workplace. We are a community rooted in our faith where support and love are the foundations of all we do.' Parents comment that staff 'go above and beyond in their care, guidance and support of each pupil.'

The energy and commitment of leaders and governors are inspirational. Catholic life and mission are a clear priority, and the school has strong links with the diocese. This truly is a 'parish' school, serving the local parish and offering considerable support to parents who comment that they have an excellent knowledge of their child's progress through staff's openness to enquiry. They say, 'The school and the local parish work together to aid the child with their first confession, holy communion and confirmation...a truly beautiful journey that led us into a deeper understanding of the sacrament as well as allowing our daughter to take that next step on her faith journey.' Another adds, 'I had strayed away from my faith over the years but...I have started to embrace my faith and learn more due to the constant support and openness of the staff members.' Catholic social teaching is truly embedded in every aspect of school life, and initiatives such as 'Big Questions' develop this across the curriculum. Staff feel exceptionally well supported in their well-being, with flexible arrangements for lesson preparation, reasonable expectations of formal feedback, and senior leaders' 'open door' approach. They know whom to ask for support and work incredibly hard, always in collaboration. The contribution of governors is hard to overestimate, with frequent presence, constructive challenge, volunteering within the school, and support in link governor roles. Appropriate staff training is a clear priority, and the mapping of relationships, sex and health education, and Catholic social teaching is exemplary.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

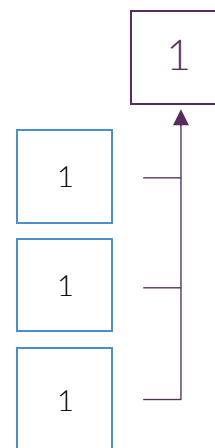
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Pupil knowledge is excellent, reinforced by regular recall activities such as 'sticky knowledge'. Achievement by all is the best possible, and that of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is remarkable. Pupils' religious literacy is excellent; they make links in a sophisticated and powerful way, happily collaborating and debating their ideas. They understand the importance of deepening their knowledge and relish the challenge. An example of independence in work is an interactive information display about the sequence of Holy Week, created by one pupil for younger pupils to learn from. Written work is consistently excellent; pupils see their books as 'a gift to God', and work is displayed around the school, with appropriate Gospel references. All pupils actively engage in lessons, with impressive collaboration, active learning, and regular knowledge recall. The behaviour of all pupils is exemplary. While they know how well they are doing, pupils do not have a more profound sense of how to improve their work. Their attainment is nevertheless consistently above average compared with other core subjects. Parents comment, 'Religious education is engaging and meaningful, helping pupils develop a deeper understanding of their faith and how it applies to their daily lives,' and 'My children love their religious education classes, telling me about things they have learnt; they ask thought-provoking questions about what it means to be part of God's creation and how we can grow in his image.'

The authenticity of subject knowledge and the confidence and openness with which staff share their faith are key teaching strengths: high expectations are clearly communicated to the pupils, who describe the subject as 'special'. A consistently systematic approach to pace and flow in lessons leads to excellent progress. Carefully and thoroughly annotated assessments demonstrate teachers' exceptional knowledge of pupils' attainment; teachers consistently plan to build on this. A wide range of challenging questions, live marking, and open questioning are

also strengths, along with genuine celebration of effort. The level of challenge is impressive, encouraging pupils to reflect upon their learning meaningfully. Initiatives such as using QR codes in books to link to recordings of work mean all pupils' achievements are recorded to enable teachers to make accurate assessment judgements. The collaboration of additional adults in all classes is impressive, seamlessly supporting and enhancing pupils' learning. A parent comments, "I am happy that the religious education in the school provides a sound moral and cultural foundation which supports a good school ethos and promotes good values...The school seems to listen to parental feedback and makes a lot of effort to share with families and get families involved.'

The weaving of Catholic social teaching throughout the religious education curriculum is exemplary and reflected in the children's experience and understanding. Religious education is always given priority, seen in termly homework and other projects such as Stations of the Cross and Easter Gardens. With her quiet humility, inspiring vision, and exemplary commitment, the subject leader for religious education is highly valued by all staff and pupils. Staff comment, 'The religious education lead has led this subject well and implemented changes for the better, with lots more pupil-led groups and children taking ownership of their faith, lessons and worship.' Careful curriculum design to build upon prior learning in every lesson shows the thoughtfulness of planning, and the collaboration with the parish priest, the lay chaplain, and other schools enhances work in the subject. Rigorous, thorough and thoughtful analysis leads to clear improvement actions and excellent 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

A wide variety of experiences of prayer and liturgy engage the pupils profoundly throughout their time at St Joseph's. This is demonstrated by their full, active, and reverent participation and joyous singing in whole school and class worship. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the variety of Catholic ways of praying, including spontaneous prayer in times of challenge or difficulty, which one pupil describes as 'a quiet chat with God'. Pupils have a real sense that faith can lead to action. Their knowledge and experience of scripture through thorough immersion and regular exposure enhance their spiritual and moral development. They have excellent knowledge of traditional prayers and the liturgical year, and relish celebrating each other's gifts and talents. The progression of their collaborative skills in planning, preparing, leading, and evaluating prayer and liturgy is rapid and well supported. This starts in Reception with choices offered during class prayer and liturgy, enhancing their participation and building their skills, and continues with reflective evaluation by pupils in each year. Staff comment, 'Children enjoy opportunities to pray creatively and spontaneously and take any opportunity they can to lead prayer and guide those younger than themselves in reflection and prayer,' and parents add, 'Prayer is a central part of the school community, fostering a sense of reflection, unity, and connection with God. It's inspiring to see how faith is woven into every aspect of school life, shaping pupils into compassionate and values-driven individuals.'

An ethos of collaboration, consistency, and catholicity in its broadest sense is at the heart of the school. The wide variety of formal and spontaneous prayer opportunities demonstrates its centrality in school, with the 'prayer stops', a memorial garden, and many other areas for quiet contemplation. A four-part structure to prayer is consistently applied and supports the pupils; all, including pupils with significant additional needs, are included in the celebration. Staff, including senior leaders, are exemplary and inspiring role models, and all staff lead staff prayers.

Music is a significant strength and strongly contributes; relevant artwork is also an important focus. Class Masses transform classrooms into sacred spaces, which are blessed each year by the parish priest. Parents greatly appreciate the invitations to be part of the prayer and liturgical life of the school, and the regular 'Stay and Pray' sessions are particularly appreciated. Parents comment, 'As parents we are frequently invited to masses and individual class prayer times which are always lovely and very inclusive of all the children,' and 'Opportunities for inviting families to stay and pray, engagement with Catholic traditions, and service to the wider community help nurture a deep sense of compassion and responsibility.'

The prayer and liturgy policy is unambiguous and fit for purpose. It also identifies the full range of prayer experiences provided, outlining the development of pupils' active participation and leadership. The progression of skills in pupils is rapid and well supported by the efforts of leaders and governors, who also ensure frequent opportunities for the celebration of Mass, and that all aspects of the liturgical year are at the heart of school life. Opportunities include the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which staff and pupils receive at appropriate times, such as Advent and Lent. The familiar presence of the parish priest and the lay chaplain are a great strength, and a wide variety of approaches enhances the school's prayer life and spiritual formation; this aspect is very well resourced. Evaluating prayer and liturgy is also an absolute priority; it is extensive and leads to well-planned developments.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	141477
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	332 3355
Full postal address of the school	Leavale Road, Norton, Stourbridge, DY8 2DT
School phone number	01384 431980
Headteacher	Anthony Wilkes
Chair of governing board	Joanna Griffin
School Website	st-jo-st.dudley.sch.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Emmaus Catholic MAC
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	December 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Andrew Maund
Maureen Collier

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