

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

URN: 401018

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Cardiff-Menevia

12–13 June 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

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

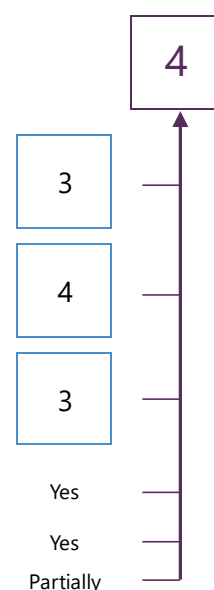
Collective worship (p.7)

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 any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

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



Compliance statement

- The school fully complies 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
- The school has partial compliance status in relation to previous areas for improvement relating to recommendations 1 and 3 from the previous report. Providing suitably differentiated work and ensuring that assessment procedures, including marking, directly inform planning in order to provide greater challenge for all pupils to achieve higher levels of attainment, and particularly for the more able and talented, are still relevant.

What the school does well

- Leaders and governors are committed to Catholic education and promote close links with the parish.
- The school provides effective pastoral support, promoting pupils' emotional wellbeing within a caring, respectful Catholic environment.
- The school encourages enthusiastic participation in charitable activities that reflect its Catholic mission.
- The school fulfils its 10% curriculum time for religious education (RE).
- Leaders and governors actively support staff wellbeing.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in RE.
- Develop a cohesive, ongoing, internal professional development programme that deepens staff knowledge of the *Religious Education Directory*, strengthens differentiation, and boosts teacher confidence in delivering high-quality RE for all pupils. It should also include targeted training for staff and pupils to lead meaningful collective worship, enriching the school's prayer life and increasing opportunities for spiritual growth.
- Strengthen self-evaluation processes to make them more rigorous and analytical; driving strategic planning, improved teaching, and stronger outcomes in RE, collective worship and the Catholic life and mission of the school.

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

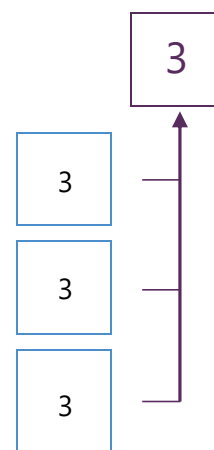
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 recognise that they are important members of a caring, nurturing, Catholic community. They embrace the mission statement, 'One Family, Many Gifts', understanding that they are valued and appreciated as unique persons, and showing respect for one another. They show compassion as they place spontaneous prayers for others on the prayer tree in the hall and contribute to the clothing recycling appeal. Prefects contribute to the smooth running of the school, and pupils are keen and enthusiastic to take on roles that support the Catholic life, such as Eco Committee, School Council, and Mini Vinnies. However, the work of these committees is underdeveloped. Pupils are keen to collect litter but respond in a very limited way and lack awareness of the call to care for our common home and pursue the common good. Pupils participate enthusiastically in fundraising events for the St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP), Cafod and Mind, but are unable to link scripture and the teachings of Jesus Christ with their actions. Nearly all struggle to articulate their understanding of Catholic social teaching. Pupils enjoy attending assemblies, however opportunities for pupils across the school to lead prayer are in the early stages.

The school's mission statement reflects the educational mission of the Church. Its recent review, alongside the Curriculum for Wales, confirmed its continued relevance in expressing the inclusive, shared ethos of 'One Family, Many Gifts'. Pastoral systems are effective, ensuring that pupils' emotional health and wellbeing is well supported. Staff are committed to nurturing the Catholic life of the school and fostering relationships across the community that are built on kindness and respect. Virtues and values are displayed across the school, however, opportunities during lessons to deepen pupils' understanding and application of these virtues and values to their daily lives are missed. School entrance displays, such as prayers for Ukraine, the altar, and Stations of the Cross, enhance the Catholic character of the school. Religious key words are visible in classrooms, although few classroom displays are linked to current themes in RE, or reflect Pentecost. Pupils have opportunities to attend Mass, receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, participate in services linked to the liturgical year, and support parish events. The parish priest is supportive of the school and is also a member of the governing body. These links, together with the close links with the parish SVP,

further enrich the school's Catholic life. The school's relationships and sexuality education provision meets both statutory and diocesan requirements, upholding the dignity of the human person and contributing meaningfully to the school's Catholic mission.

Leaders and governors show a clear commitment to promoting the Catholic life of the school and supporting its ethos. They carry out their responsibilities in accordance with diocesan guidance and prioritise staff wellbeing through appropriate systems and policies. The link governor for RE and the head teacher regularly communicate with the governing body on matters relating to Catholic life and mission. Monitoring and evaluation activities, including learning walks and book scrutiny, take place; however, the conclusions and reports currently lack sufficient evaluative depth to drive improvement effectively. Policies for RE and collective worship exist but are not yet fully embedded or impactful in ensuring consistent practice or raising standards. Positive links with the parish are reinforced through regular visits by the school and the visible and active involvement of the head teacher and governors. Parents are valued as key educators, although engagement strategies are limited, particularly for families whose children travel by bus. Few links are in place to support prayer or RE in the home setting. While governors aim to uphold the Catholic mission, their contributions to self-evaluation processes are limited. They tend to adopt a supportive rather than a challenging role. A more rigorous approach would strengthen the impact and direction of Catholic life across the school.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

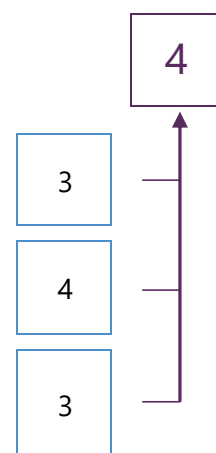
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 generally enjoy RE, particularly in the younger years, where creative activities, such as role play, storyboards, making Christingles, and building nativity scenes, capture their interest and encourage engagement with scripture and tradition. This enjoyment, however, does not consistently lead to secure achievement. As pupils progress through the school, there is little evidence that enjoyment translates into deep understanding or skill development. Older pupils participate in class discussions, but rarely show meaningful progress, due to the absence of recorded reflection or follow-up work. Books reveal limited differentiation and lack of challenge for more able pupils. Many pupils struggle to recall prior learning or articulate basic religious knowledge, such as the significance of Christmas or messages from *Laudato Si*. Few are aware of Catholic social teaching. Generally, responses across the school to tasks often remain superficial, involving colouring or short answers that do not promote higher-level thinking. Work is frequently poorly presented or unfinished, and pupils receive little feedback on ways to improve their learning. Peer and self-assessment skills are underdeveloped. Overall, although pupils enjoy RE, their achievement is inconsistent, with noticeable gaps in knowledge and skills.

Teachers at St Joseph's use the *Religious Education Directory* to inform teaching. They attend diocesan training and use well-structured planning templates; however, messages from training have become confused, resulting in tasks that lack appropriate challenge for pupils, and which are not sufficiently differentiated to support diverse needs. In many lessons, teachers demonstrate limited subject knowledge, which restricts their ability to explore religious concepts in depth or respond confidently to pupils' questions. This hinders the development of knowledge, understanding, and progression of skills across the school. Expectations are generally low, with lessons lacking ambition or academic rigour. Pupils are not consistently encouraged to think critically or reflect meaningfully. Planning often does not build on prior knowledge, and teachers rarely share required learning outcomes. Questioning

is typically closed, offering limited scope for reflection or dialogue. Feedback is mainly verbal, with books showing little evidence of impact on pupils' progress or informing teaching. Creative and independent activities, such as using peg dolls to retell the story of the good Samaritan, or building the boat that Jesus used, engage pupils but do not purposefully deepen learning. Outdoor areas are underdeveloped and are not utilised to support or enhance the teaching of RE effectively.

Leaders and governors at St Joseph's School show clear dedication to RE, recognising it as a core element of the school's Catholic ethos. A committed link governor and the head teacher play a key role in prioritising RE, maintaining a visible presence in its monitoring and offering regular support to staff. However, while their efforts affirm the importance of RE, current evaluation practices are too focused on strengths, such as pupil behaviour and pupil views, at the expense of meaningful analysis of areas needing improvement. Self-evaluation lacks rigour and does not sufficiently address teaching quality, pupil outcomes, or the effectiveness of provision. As a result, there is limited evidence of targeted action to address underperformance or inconsistency. Although the curriculum aligns with the Directory, the absence of strategic planning and limited internal professional development have hindered its effective implementation and the adaptation of learning to meet all pupils' needs. While enrichment opportunities such as Mini Vinnies are well received, links to scripture are underdeveloped, reducing their impact on curriculum depth. A more robust, evaluative approach is needed to drive improvement in RE.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

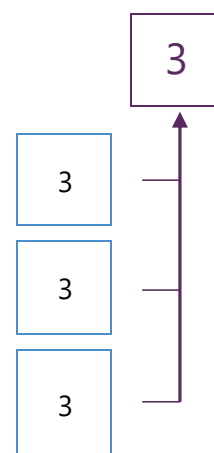
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

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



The extent to which pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship requires improvement. Pupils enjoy preparing acts of prayer and worship and are respectful, however, they are not exposed to a variety of ways in which to respond. This is an area which requires further development. Pupils are consistently well behaved but require encouragement to share their thoughts. Pupils experience prayer in the Catholic tradition and participate in their own school prayers. Older pupils contribute to prayer and worship with personalised prayers, and some pupils are able to reflect in silence. Pupils sing known hymns confidently. During the inspection, the school sang joyfully to 'The Holy Spirit Fills Me Up' when focussing on the mystery of the Holy Trinity. The fruits of the Holy Spirit and how these fruits could influence everyday life was discussed; for example, being patient when turn taking. Most pupils find it difficult to reflect on their experience of prayer and liturgy, which limits their understanding of how prayer can lead to action. This is exacerbated by inconsistent systems to evaluate prayer and liturgy, resulting in pupils not understanding how to make improvements.

The quality of collective worship requires improvement. The requirement to provide a daily act of prayer and worship is met. Acts of prayer and worship are planned as part of school life but are not prepared in a meaningful way to enhance the pupils' prayer life. Pupils listen well, but when asked questions on scripture, they require prompting to answer. Response to scripture was limited. Pupils reflected on the word in silence, but they could not talk about their experiences of responding in a variety of creative ways. Pupils share grace before and after meals and participate in school and traditional prayers, for example, saying Hail Holy Queen during the month of May and the May Procession. Acts of prayer and worship include scripture appropriate to the liturgical calendar, but scripture was not selected for the capacity of the participants. Staff delivered acts of prayer and worship, but were inconsistent in their ability to plan, lead, and develop the prayer life of pupils. Opportunities were missed to help pupils make links between scripture and their daily lives. Where

staff had stronger practice, art and music were appropriately used to enhance the experience for pupils. Prayer spaces in classrooms were not always well cared for, and not all were conducive to prayer. Some prayer tables were too busy, lacking a prayer focus. The school works well with the local parish. Pupils attend Mass on a regular basis, with planned Masses to reflect the liturgical year, holy days of obligation, and feast days. Members of the St Vincent de Paul, known as 'Big Vinnies,' support the school's Mini Vinnies. For example, undertaking a shoe box appeal for Harvest Festival in 2024.

The extent to which leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for collective worship requires improvement. The school's Collective Worship Policy has limited impact on the work of staff who prepare prayer and worship. The school's policy does not address differentiation by age or capacity. Systems for monitoring, evaluating, and reviewing collective worship were not evident. The importance of prayer and liturgy is not widely understood, and staff would welcome opportunities for professional development. Sacramental preparation is parish-based, and pupils have regular opportunities to attend Reconciliation during Advent and Lent. Leaders have not created a variety of ways for pupils to pray, and they do not consistently support staff through professional development to enhance experiences of prayer and worship. As a result, the quality of prayer and worship is insufficiently developed.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	401018
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	6713309
Full postal address of the school	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Cook Rees Avenue, Neath, SA11 1UR
School phone number	01639635099
Headteacher	Philippa Brooks
Chair of governors	Richard Hopkins
School Website	st-josephs-catholic-primary-school16.j2bloggy.com
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	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	10 th – 11 th November 2014
Previous denominational inspection grade	GG

The inspection team

Catherine Power
Diana Pearce

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

