

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

URN: 116911

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

25–26 September 2025

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

2

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

2

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

2

Collective worship (p.7)

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

2

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

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 the diocesan bishop.
- This school has fully addressed all previous areas for improvement from its last inspection.

What the school does well

- The Catholic environment that has been created under the guidance of the head teacher is outstanding and inspiring. It is most conducive to prayer and reflection, and visitors are left in no doubt that they are entering a Catholic school.
- The behaviour of pupils is exemplary. Their attitude towards learning enables their teachers to fully focus on their core duties.
- The presentation of learning across the school is at least good and often outstanding. This is particularly praiseworthy because there is no significant variability in place. It is the result of the high expectations of leaders and the hard work of staff.
- The way leaders, governors, and staff have responded to the challenging recommendations from the previous Section 48 inspection is very impressive, and significant progress has been made as a result: the role of pupils in leading prayer and worship being a notable example.
- The head teacher is passionately committed to her role, and she is ably supported by the leadership team and by governors who know the school well. This leadership group has driven positive change, and it has created the potential for excellence to be achieved in the school's Catholic life and mission, religious education (RE), and collective worship.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that pupils are challenged regularly in their learning to develop the skills of independence and creativity.
- Refine policy to further develop the quality of teachers' questioning of learners, to ascertain the depth of their understanding and to improve the quality of their responses.
- Increase the depth of analysis in its self-evaluation procedures to allow for the accurate identification of targets for improvement.

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

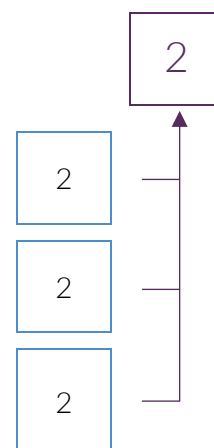
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 demeanour of pupils is outstanding. They behave with great respect for others and for themselves. They welcome visitors to the school enthusiastically. Their conduct allows their teachers to focus their attention on their core purpose of teaching. They are proud to be pupils at the school, and they exhibit an age-appropriate understanding of the demands placed upon them as young followers of Christ. Pupils are developing a good understanding of Catholic social teaching (CST), and they can articulate some of the ways in which it can be put into practice. During the inspection, for example, pupils spoke with inspectors about the dignity of each person and about the principle that all people are equal and deserving of being treated with respect. Pupils have good opportunities to take part in positive social action; for example, they raise funds for Cafod, and they support the local foodbank, Age UK and Operation Christmas Child. Pupils are appreciative of the opportunities provided to attend Mass regularly at the parish church, and of the active role in school life taken by the parish priest.

The school's mission statement is Gospel based, and it is known well by pupils. They understand its challenge, and they live it out well. All staff are firmly committed to implementing it. They actively participate in the Catholic life of the school. A very strong Catholic community has been developed, and staff support one another in earnest. A welcoming culture for all is in place. All pupils feel themselves to be fully part of the community; this is very impressive, as only 17% of pupils are baptised Catholics and marginally less than 50% are of the Christian faith. Staff provide positive role models for pupils, and the culture of pastoral care is strong. The most vulnerable pupils are supported well. The quality of the Catholic environment provided is inspiring and outstanding. It fully reflects the mission and identity of the school. It has been expertly created by staff, but it is full of the results of children's work. Consequently, it is

immediately apparent to any visitor that St Joseph's is a Catholic school and that it has clear principles in place, which it aims to put into practice. A strong relationship with the parish has been established and this contributes to the good way that pupils' moral and spiritual development is promoted. The programme of professional development followed by teachers, in relation to relationships and sex education, has allowed them to fully implement diocesan expectations.

Leaders and governors are committed to their roles as the guardians of the school's Catholic life and mission, and they genuinely want the best for all pupils. They see this as a core responsibility. The head teacher is very passionate about her work in this area, and she is prepared to go beyond normal expectations for the good of pupils. She is the driver of the school's environment, as referenced above. Parents appreciate the school's work, and their questionnaire responses were positive about it. Leaders and governors provide very positive role models for pupils, and they put CST into practice effectively. They are concerned for the well-being and dignity of the workforce; this is something that is acknowledged and appreciated by staff. Self-evaluation work in this area is generally accurate. However, it is mostly descriptive in nature and lacks thorough analysis. It does not cover the full range of the good work that happens across the school. Professional development work is good; for example, the level of staff's understanding of CST principles and their implementation has been impactful. New staff are well supported, and they rapidly become and feel a part of the school's team.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

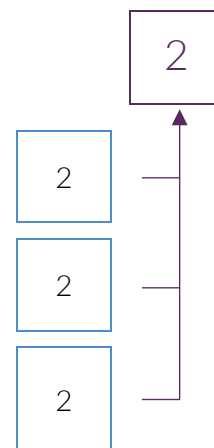
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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, including those of ethnic minorities and those with special educational needs, make good progress in their learning as they move through the school. This is consistently the case and there is no significant variability in evidence. Many learners can use the knowledge and skills acquired to reflect ethically and they articulate their subject knowledge well. Pupils spoke to inspectors, for example, about the events of Pentecost and the symbolism connected to it in a mature manner. Their knowledge of the sacraments is less well developed. Overall, levels of religious literacy are good. This is commendable, given the low proportion of Catholic pupils at the school. Most pupils show an impressive level of understanding of the demands made by a religious commitment. Pupils have insufficient opportunities to learn independently and to take the initiative with their learning. They produce good work and its presentation is at least good, and, in some cases, it is excellent. Impressive examples include older learners reflecting on 'what I want to witness in my life' and younger children discussing sins committed against God's creation in relation to Pope Francis' Laudato Si. Pupils' learning behaviour is excellent. They are very well engaged with their studies and enjoy lessons; they appreciate the work of their teachers. Learners are clearly informed by teachers when they attain lesson objectives. However, they do not consistently know what they need to do next to maximise progress.

The quality of teaching overall is good, and some elements of practice are excellent. When this is the case, notable features are high quality relationships, high expectations, deep levels of subject knowledge, strong pace and clarity of explanations. All staff exhibit strong levels of commitment to RE. The regular use of templates for written work can, at times, place a limit on the learning of the most able pupils. Teachers employ good initial questions to pupils, however, insufficient opportunities are taken to follow up on pupil responses, to develop their depth of understanding. Teachers display positive attitudes during their classroom work, and they are

keen to acknowledge the achievements of learners. Their marking tells pupils when they have attained learning objectives, but it does not consistently help them to understand what they need to do to improve. An impressive element of practice is the way teachers orchestrate opportunities for reflection during lessons. A good number of teaching assistants are in place. They are a valued part of the team, and they work well in partnership with teachers.

Leaders and governors have worked diligently to implement a new curriculum, and they are fully committed to the primacy of RE in the life of the school. They have appropriate policies in place in line with diocesan expectations. Good professional development is firmly established. Good use has been made of an external consultant to raise standards. The subject leader supports the vision of the head teacher diligently. Their impressive and committed work since the last inspection has resulted in significant improvements in standards being achieved. Consequently, the school is in a strong position to achieve excellence in the short term. The scheme of learning chosen by leaders (The Vine and the Branches) ensures that sound progression is in place and that the demands of the *Religious Education Directory* are met. A cycle of monitoring is in place, and reports, making reasonable points, flow from this process. This work has identified some, but not all, of the areas in need of development. Self-evaluation of RE lacks sufficient analysis of standards and of practice. Leaders' judgements match that of the inspection process in two of the three areas in this section of the report.

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

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

Leadership

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

2

2

Pupils respond well to the range of prayer and liturgy provided. A particularly strong feature is their ability to gather calmly and to reflect in silence. They show high levels of respect at all times in collective worship, ranging from class-based prayer to whole-school Masses. They readily join in with communal prayer, and their singing is good. Pupils are developing a good variety of ways to pray in the Catholic tradition, and they have an appropriate understanding of the liturgical year and its influence on prayer. Pupils collaborate well to plan and lead class-based prayer. Consistently good examples of this were observed during the inspection, focussing on themes such as 'building on firm foundations' and 'the effect that our words can have on others'. Pupils can relate Gospel messages and the virtues studied impressively to everyday actions. Examples include a class holding their own harvest festival to support the local foodbank, or the way Year 6 pupils escort Reception children into the dining hall and help them to develop the necessary skills. Pupils reflect well on a range of Gospel texts, and they regularly record their thoughts in class books.

A well-established pattern of prayer is in place across the school, and it features in routine gatherings, such as the introductory meeting that inspectors had with staff. Scripture features strongly and staff create impressive opportunities for pupils to reflect on its meaning in an age-appropriate way. Staff and senior leaders provide good role models for colleagues; this benefits non-Catholic staff and those who are new to the school. A great deal of effort has been made since the last inspection to develop ways to allow pupils to take greater responsibilities for planning, leading, and reflecting on prayer and liturgy. This work has had a significantly positive impact on standards. However, the use of music to enhance the quality of experiences for pupils is limited to the recorded form. Outstanding and imaginative use of space is made throughout the school to promote reflection; it is most conducive to prayer. Parents are invited to join school

Masses and class assemblies. They appreciate the work of the school and the family atmosphere that is created. A class attends Mass at the parish church every week, and Reconciliation is celebrated during the seasons of Advent and Lent. The work of the parish priest is a strength of provision.

Leaders and governors ensure that all relevant policies are in place in relation to collective worship and that pupils develop good skills of participation in a suitable and age-appropriate way. They show a strong and commendable commitment to the centrality of the Eucharist in the life of the school. Good levels of professional development for staff have allowed them to effectively support pupils to play an active role in the school's prayer and liturgy. This is a good example of the impressive manner in which leaders and governors have responded to the demanding recommendations made in the previous inspection. A good range of resources are in place to facilitate strong levels of provision; this is reflected, for example, in the good quality of focus areas for prayer that are a consistent and impressive feature of the school. Leaders show a good level of awareness of areas for future improvement, and there is a good and clear link in place between the results of monitoring and self-evaluation. The resulting plan, which currently highlights the further development of pupils' active involvement in prayer and liturgy and the creation of external areas to promote reflection, is good.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	116911
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8843372
Full postal address of the school	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, The Avenue, Walford Road, Ross-on-Wye, HR9 5AW
School phone number	01989564655
Headteacher	Hayley Francis
Chair of governors	Lindsay Wise
School Website	www.st-josephs.hereford.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	2-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	25 th – 27 th March 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	AG

The inspection team

Lyndon Watkins
Rebecca Langley

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