



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

URN: 125719

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Birmingham

04–05 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

1

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

2

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

- Pupils demonstrate a strong connection to the school's Catholic values, actively participating in its spiritual and charitable life with enthusiasm and a clear sense of purpose.
- The school community is welcoming and inclusive, where staff lead by example and ensure that every child feels respected, supported, and encouraged to grow in confidence and compassion.
- Pupils make good progress in religious education, developing a solid understanding of key religious concepts and showing the ability to think about faith and its role in everyday life.
- The prayer and liturgy policy is clear and regularly reviewed, providing staff with explicit guidance for progression, ensuring that prayer and liturgy remain central to school life and enrich the spiritual experience of all.
- The headteacher leads with clarity and conviction, inspiring the whole school community to live out its Catholic mission with purpose. Their leadership is visionary and compassionate, creating a culture where Gospel values are not only taught but lived every day.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure Catholic social teaching is integrated into all areas of the curriculum so that pupils develop a deeper theological understanding of the Church's call to justice, stewardship, and service.
- Provide frequent opportunities for pupils to explore and express their relationship with God, encouraging them to reflect deeply and engage in spiritual questioning.
- Offer a broad range of pupil-prepared worship opportunities, encouraging greater creativity and ownership while maintaining a strong sense of reverence.

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

St Joseph's is a school where the Catholic ethos is visible and actively lived by the whole community. Its mission, 'Live wisely, think deeply, love generously,' shapes the culture, entire curriculum, and relationships. Pupils grow in faith, character, and service, guided by the school's 'discovery values', which are rooted in scripture. The school's Catholic life is deeply embedded, with pupils showing a strong understanding of its identity and mission. They participate enthusiastically in charitable outreach, such as the sponsored sleepout, and take pride in being part of a faith-filled community. Pastoral care is exemplary, ensuring every child feels safe, valued, and supported. Pupils are guided by Gospel teachings and Catholic social teachings, growing in virtue and compassion. They regularly visit a local care home, sharing time and kindness with residents, for example. Respect for self and others is central, with pupils showing courtesy, compassion, and appreciation for diversity. The chaplaincy provision is vibrant and inclusive, with pupils seizing leadership roles in prayer, liturgies, and fundraising. It supports the formation of the whole person and reflects the school's commitment to Gospel values. Pupils know they are created in God's image, and this understanding is evident in their confidence, joy, and respectful behaviour.

The school's ethos is firmly rooted in Gospel values, with Christ at the centre of all relationships and decisions. The mission statement is widely known, widely embraced, and lived by staff and pupils, shaping a joyful and inclusive community. Staff typically describe it as 'a community built on kindness,' inspiring service and generosity. They are deeply committed to the mission, acting as compassionate role models and providing exceptional pastoral care, especially for the most vulnerable. Inclusivity is a key strength, with all cultures and faiths welcomed and celebrated. Chaplaincy is vibrant and central to school life, offering rich opportunities for spiritual growth

and leadership. Relationships and health education (RHE) is fully aligned with Church teaching, promoting a holistic understanding of human dignity. The school environment reflects its Catholic identity through prayer areas, inspiring displays, and a beautiful prayer garden. This sacred space features 59 steps symbolising the Rosary beads and a cross-shaped path, reminding all of Christ's presence and sacrifice. It is cherished as a place of peace, prayer, and reflection, supporting the spiritual development of the whole community.

Leaders and governors are deeply committed to the school's mission, modelling Gospel values in their actions and decisions. They work closely with parents and the parish to support pupils' holistic development. Chaplaincy, supported by the parish priest, plays a vital role in nurturing the school's spiritual life. Pupils are encouraged to lead and participate in chaplaincy activities, helping them grow in faith and confidence. The headteacher's leadership is visionary and faith-driven, setting a clear direction for the school's growth as a Catholic community. This inspires a culture of high expectations, compassion, and unity, making the school a joyful and inclusive place 'where there is always someone there for you.' Strong partnerships with families, the parish, and the diocese enrich the school's mission. Rigorous and inclusive self-evaluation, including pupil and stakeholder voice, drives continuous improvement. Parents value the school's pastoral care, describing it as 'a supportive family.' One parent shared, 'Faith is an integral part of the children's education and it's lovely to see them engage with spirituality in many different ways.' Mission-led training ensures staff are well-equipped to contribute meaningfully. As a result, the school thrives as a faith-filled community where all grow in faith, love, and learning.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

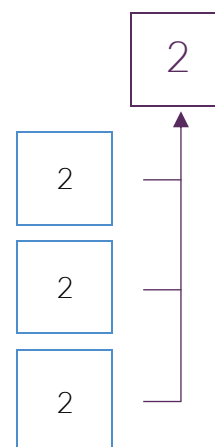
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Religious education at the school is thoughtfully planned to support pupils' understanding of Catholic beliefs, scripture, and moral teaching. It is a valued and integral part of the curriculum, helping pupils connect faith to their daily lives. Lessons are generally engaging and purposeful, with pupils responding positively to opportunities for learning, reflection, and spiritual growth. For instance, one pupil shared, 'We learn about God and how he wants us to live our lives.' Pupils make good progress across all year groups, demonstrating the ability to recall key concepts, scripture stories, and Church teachings. They apply this knowledge in thoughtful, age-appropriate ways, saying, 'It teaches us to respect God, who created us.' Lessons are structured to build on prior learning and encourage connections across topics, helping pupils develop a solid foundation in religious knowledge. However, adaptations to support all learners are not consistently applied, which can limit access and personal connection for some pupils. Despite this, the subject is taught with care and intent, and pupils are beginning to explore more complex ideas with growing confidence.

Pupils make good progress in religious education, developing secure knowledge and the ability to reflect on spiritual themes. They are encouraged to ask questions, explore different perspectives, and consider how faith impacts their lives. Teachers employ a range of strategies, including discussions, creative tasks, and reflections, to engage pupils. Classrooms are safe spaces where pupils feel confident expressing their thoughts. They are encouraged to explore the meaning behind religious stories and relate them to their own experiences. While many pupils show signs of deeper theological thinking, this is not consistent across all lessons. In some cases, limited opportunities for deeper reflection hinder spiritual growth. Teaching is generally effective, with most teachers demonstrating strong subject knowledge and effective questioning techniques. However, inconsistencies remain, with some lessons overly reliant on teacher talk,

which can lead to a degree of disengagement among pupils. Feedback is constructive, helping pupils understand their progress, and effort is celebrated, which boosts their confidence. Pupils enjoy religious education lessons, participate actively, and show respect for others' views. Behaviour is positive, and the school community clearly values the subject.

Leadership of religious education is strong. The headteacher, who also leads the subject, brings vision, expertise, and dedication, resulting in rapid improvements. Her commitment, attention to detail, and open-door approach provide valuable support to staff, especially early career teachers and those new to Catholic education. Leaders and governors ensure religious education has equal status with other core subjects. The curriculum is well-designed, aligned with the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*, and enriched through cross-curricular links, visits, and themed days that bring learning to life. The subject is well-resourced, with appropriate time allocated in all classes, as required by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. Significant investment in training has boosted staff confidence, particularly among non-Catholic teachers, who appreciate the accessible support. They all say, 'You can ask for help at any time.' Monitoring and evaluation of religious education are regular and supported with substantial evidence. However, the current approach to monitoring requires greater precision and regular review to verify that improvement targets are being achieved. The subject is prioritised, with leadership that inspires and supports a culture of continuous improvement. The school's commitment to high-quality religious education is evident in the progress made and the confidence of staff delivering the curriculum.

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

Worship is thoughtful and rooted in scripture, often delivering clear, age-appropriate messages that inspire reflection and action. Whole-school Gospel assemblies use liturgical music effectively to create a reverent atmosphere and reinforce key themes. However, the use of music in classroom prayer is inconsistent and underdeveloped. Pupils engage positively in prayer and liturgy, taking pride in their roles. There is strong evidence of pupil involvement in planning, leading, and evaluating, which fosters ownership and spiritual growth. Their confidence and reverence reflect the school's commitment to pupil leadership. While pupils participate well through responses and gestures, some class-based worship lacks opportunities for spontaneous or traditional prayer, limiting deeper personal expression. The 'Let's Pray Together' initiative has been welcomed by older pupils, who work well with staff, but it has not yet been consistently embedded across the school.

Prayer is central to school life, evident not only in formally planned worship but also through the creative use of sacred spaces. These include a prayer area dedicated to St Anthony, a 'Sleeping St Joseph' statue for written prayers and worries, and a space for saying sorry prayers, for example. The rosary stepping stones and the beautifully maintained prayer garden—spoken about with pride by pupils—offer rich opportunities for reflection and spiritual growth. These spaces are thoughtfully designed and well-resourced, supporting personal prayer and fostering a deeper spiritual experience. The prayer and liturgy policy is well-structured, showing clear progression across year groups. However, further embedding in classroom practice would enhance consistency in pupil-led worship. In some cases, the absence of a defined structure has contributed to moments of reduced engagement and reverence. Staff actively model participation in the school's prayer life, sharing gifts such as music and reading to enrich collective worship. This fosters a culture of reverence and joy. Classroom prayer areas are

consistently prominent, seasonally relevant, and well-maintained. A whole-school approach ensures coherence, supported by an effective chaplaincy team that monitors progress. Strong parish links further enrich the school's prayer life, particularly in preparing pupils for the sacraments and strengthening their sense of belonging to the wider Church.

Leaders have established a comprehensive calendar of liturgical celebrations and a weekly timetable of prayer and worship, including Gospel assemblies, class worship, daily prayer, and singing assemblies. In collaboration with the parish priest, they have planned a schedule of whole-school and class Masses, both in school and at church, as well as monthly weekend Masses led by different classes. The headteacher's strong faith and leadership serve as a powerful example within the community. Leaders and governors recognise the importance of religious education and worship, ensuring it is well-resourced and supported through high-quality training. This commitment is reflected in the school's vibrant prayer life. Governors and leaders monitor the quality of collective worship and Masses, although current analysis lacks the depth and rigour needed to evaluate their impact thoroughly. Pupils are actively involved in evaluating class worship, contributing to its ongoing development and relevance. The school's approach ensures that prayer and liturgy are central to daily life, fostering a strong sense of community, faith, and spiritual growth.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	125719
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	937 3547
Full postal address of the school	Rowley Road, Whitnash, Leamington Spa, CV31 2LJ
School phone number	01926 427552
Headteacher	Julia Wallace
Chair of governing board	Anne Buttrum
School Website	www.sjcwhitnash.co.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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	May 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Paul Madia
Christina Hall

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