



# St John's Catholic Primary School

URN: 126429

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Clifton

13–14 November 2025

## Summary of key findings

### Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

1

#### 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

## Compliance statement

- 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 fully to the areas for improvement from the last inspection.

## What the school does well

- This school is immersed in Catholic social teaching (CST), it guides behaviour, it permeates the whole curriculum, and it is the focus of school events such as camp, sports day and the outdoor play and learning initiative.
- The inspiring head and the expertise of the religious education (RE) lead provide strong leadership where all are supported and there is a constant drive for improvement.
- The staff are dedicated and committed to the school, to each other and to the pupils and, as a result of the strong relationships, behaviour is exemplary.
- The sacredness of scripture is celebrated in religious education (RE) lessons and prayer and liturgy.
- High quality prayer and liturgy opportunities ensure pupils respond with enthusiasm, showing particular enjoyment of singing.

## What the school needs to improve

- Provide consistent feedback to pupils in their religious education lessons and in their books to enable them to deepen their understanding and know how to improve their work.
- Provide well-constructed tasks in religious education lessons so that pupils of all abilities are able to access the learning, including those working at greater depth.

## 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

Pupils highly value the Catholic identity of the school and opportunities to actively participate in the mission of the school, for example, by organising fundraising for local charities. From the youngest age they know that they are made by God and are unique, 'I am so special just the way I am' (pupil aged 4). They enjoy coming to school and are happy, confident and secure due to the strong relationships and the culture of the school. 'Catholic social teaching is a golden thread that runs throughout' the school and therefore pupils have a clear understanding that they have a duty to look after others, especially those in need, and embrace the responsibility to care for our common home. They relish the opportunities to support local, national and global charities and flourish as they grow in virtue. Their understanding of the dignity of the human person results in a deep sense of respect for those of other faiths and none. Their behaviour is exemplary throughout the school. Pupils embrace all opportunities for leadership including the chapel champions which are highly valued. They see themselves as role models and they see their role as trying to deepen their own faith and that of others, as well as supporting younger pupils.

The life and mission of the school are deeply rooted in the Word of God and the mission statement is currently being reviewed, with the involvement of pupils, staff, governors and parents. Staff embrace the Catholic life of the school and provide excellent role models in their relationships with each other, with pupils and families. Providing for those in need is seen as living the mission of the school. There is a strong culture of welcome, where all are valued and looked after in a spirit of generous hospitality. Families from other faiths are welcomed and encouraged to share their celebrations and faith with the school. There is an explicit commitment to support all pastorally particularly those with specific needs. The school

environment reflects its Catholic identity with some high-quality displays including one that shows different images of Jesus and Mary from across the world and from different cultures. The chapel champions have a well-planned programme that provides creative opportunities for the spiritual and moral development of the school, including, eco panels for the school, deepening the faith of others through prayer and liturgy, and fundraising for charities. Relationships education provision meets diocesan requirements and has been adapted to ensure that there are links to Catholic social teaching.

Leaders, and in particular the head, are passionate about the mission of the school and ensure that Christ is at the heart. The head provides authentic, inspirational leadership for the whole school community and beyond. As a result, leaders and governors embrace the Catholic life and mission as a core responsibility. The school has embraced the Bishop's vision for the diocese in implementing the new *Religious Education Directory (RED)*. Parents value the school and are supportive of its mission. Leaders have sought high quality training and resources which enable staff to look at subjects through the lens of Catholic social teaching, resulting in the whole curriculum being a compelling expression of Catholic understanding. Training in all subject areas includes discussions on where Catholic social teaching sits within the subjects. There is a real commitment to the physical and mental wellbeing of the staff, embracing high levels of pastoral care and the respect and dignity of all. Staff feel highly supported by each other and the leaders of the school. The governors, some of whom are highly experienced, are fully informed through detailed head's reports and regular visits to the school, including being involved in monitoring and evaluating. As a result, they are able to provide support and challenge as appropriate. Effective monitoring, including pupil voice, has ensured that Catholic life is constantly improving. The school's focused and effective induction process includes diocesan and bespoke training ensuring that new staff have a clear understanding of their role.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

**Pupil outcomes**

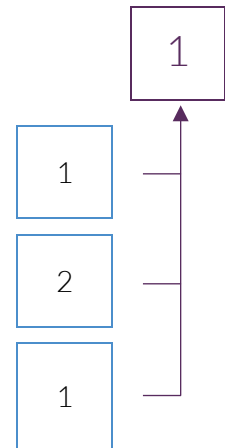
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

**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 enjoy religious education lessons and are developing secure knowledge and understanding reflecting the learning required in the *Religious Education Directory (RED)*. Pupils' learning is embedded due to the school focus on retrieval, which is interspersed throughout lessons, covering learning from the last lesson, last week and last term. Pupils are able to articulate their learning using religious language and are able to think spiritually and ethically from the youngest age. Most pupils are able to work independently and concentrate well. Most are fully engaged, especially where the task is creative such as wondering play, drama or artwork, and they are enthusiastic to contribute to class discussions. Work in individual pupil's books is of a comparable standard to other core subjects and is generally presented well. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of scripture is of a consistently high standard across the school as a result of the sacredness that is placed on reading from the Bible, following the school wide ritual of lighting a candle in a darkened room, with a set response from the pupils, welcoming the Word. From the youngest age pupils are beginning to self-assess showing an understanding of their learning. Attainment is in line or better than other core subjects.

Staff are committed to religious education and value it as a core subject. Teaching is at least good, with some outstanding. Staff are confident in their subject knowledge due to the training that they have received from the diocese, the religious education lead and the head. Effective questioning is used in most lessons to assess pupils' learning and deepen their thinking. Staff use 'I wonder' questions to develop curiosity. Where teaching is strongest, teachers are able to adapt their questioning and explanations to ensure the understanding of all pupils, this is valued by the pupils. Pupils are offered a variety of ways to present their learning to ensure access for all. Staff have a profound understanding of the impact of religious education on the spiritual and moral development of the pupils and seek to make links with Catholic social teaching throughout

lessons, some incorporating moral issues, seeking to develop pupils as 'changemakers.' Due to the recent transition to the new *Religious Education Directory*, tasks set do not always enable pupils to show the extent of their knowledge and understanding. Feedback in books does not always make it clear enough for pupils to know how to deepen their learning and improve their work. Tasks are adapted to ensure those with specific needs are able to access the learning, however not for those working at greater depth.

The school has recently made the transition to the new *Religious Education Directory* planning across the whole school and resources have been selected to support the delivery of this. Religious education enjoys parity with other core subjects in terms of timetabling and training and is seen as 'the core of the core subjects' by all. Leaders have accessed a wealth of high quality training for staff and leaders and which, alongside the ongoing support of the religious education lead, is highly valued by the staff. The subject leader has an inspiring vision for religious education, and, alongside the head, there is a high level of expertise in securing this vision. They provide strong role models in teaching and learning. Teachers adapt learning so that those with specific needs work with teaching assistants, who are highly skilled in sensitive support, ensuring all can access the religious education learning. The school plans a wealth of activities to enrich religious education and ensure pupil engagement including a whole school pilgrimage of hope walking along the local canal, visitors to the school including those of other faiths and a theatre group encompassing Catholic social teaching. Rigorous monitoring of religious education ensures continuous self-challenge results in the accurate priorities targeted for improvement.

## 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 engage in all prayer and liturgy with enthusiasm and reverence. They clearly enjoy singing and therefore sing well. They participate in communal prayers and value the opportunity to reflect in silence. They are able to describe parts of the liturgical year and say how it influences the prayer life of the school, such as the desert to garden reflections in Lent. Pupils are given the opportunity to build up their skills in leading and planning creative and well-constructed experiences of prayer and liturgy, and they value this. They are well-prepared to take on ministries during Mass and are proud to do this. They are able to evaluate prayer and liturgy from a young age and are beginning to build up skills in identifying how to improve next time. Pupils own prayers show gratitude and compassion and an awareness of praying for the needs of others. Pupils understand that prayer leads to action with challenges incorporated into prayer and liturgy, such as 'think about who you can stand up for', linking this to their mission of being changemakers.

The 'prayer life of the school is central, deeply valued and embraced by all.' Staff gather each Friday before school in the chapel to share prayer. There is a daily pattern of prayer, and weekly planned worship follows the liturgical year. Pupils are given many rich opportunities for prayer including, stations of the cross in the school grounds led by the Year 6, the Rosary during May and October, and the house saints' afternoon. Scripture is at the heart of all high quality prayer and liturgy, it is informed by the liturgical year or carefully chosen to support religious education learning. Leaders are inspiring role models in leading high quality prayer and liturgy, and staff are good role models in their participation. Staff are confident to support pupils in planning and leading well-constructed worship. Liturgical music is a strength of the school with a group of talented parishioners supporting singing in the school. Pupils value the beautiful sacred spaces around the school including the much cherished chapel which is treated with reverence and

respect, and the prayer garden, both of which are well used. Prayer tables in classrooms support the liturgical year and some include age appropriate artefacts. Families and parishioners are invited to all school Masses and services throughout the year and parish links are strong recognising that the school 'adds a vitality to the parish.'

The current policy is well supported by the St John's Framework which outlines expectations and format of prayer and liturgy, and the St John's Prayer book which staff find really useful. There is comprehensive strategy in place to ensure that all pupils build up their skills and confidence in participating, planning and leading prayer and liturgy at an age appropriate level. This is beginning to be embedded across the school. Holy days of obligation, feast days, and other services are planned over the year including reconciliation services at Advent and Lent. Training has led to increased staff confidence in leading prayer and liturgy and supporting pupils in this. Leaders are highly skilled in consciously including the needs of their community and others in their planning of prayer and liturgy. Leaders prioritise funding for high quality resources to enhance and enrich prayer experiences for staff and pupils. The prayer and liturgy coordinator plays an integral and valued role alongside the prayer and liturgy faculty, reviewing and planning high quality opportunities. Governors are highly visible at school Masses and services and contribute to monitoring that leads to identifying targets for improvement to ensure that prayer and liturgy continues to be high quality and has an impact on the lives of pupils and staff.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	St John's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	126429
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8653430
Full postal address of the school	Wingfield Road, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, BA14 9EA
School phone number	01225752006
Headteacher	Kim O'Rourke
Chair of governors	Michael Simmons
School Website	<a href="http://www.st-johns-trowbridge.wilts.sch.uk">http://www.st-johns-trowbridge.wilts.sch.uk</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	November 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

## The inspection team

Dawn Summers-Breeze  
Sam Land

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