

St Vincent de Paul Catholic Primary School

URN: 111358

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Shrewsbury

22 April 2026 – 23 April 2026

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 RE

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

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Yes

Yes

Fully

What the school does well

- Pastoral care is exceptional and firmly rooted in the school's mission, creating a highly nurturing and inclusive environment. All pupils are known, valued and supported to flourish in their social, emotional and spiritual development, with their dignity consistently upheld.
- The school is a beacon of faith in action within the parish and local community. Pupils actively engage in service and outreach, demonstrating a strong understanding of Catholic social teaching and responsibility for others.
- Gospel values are deeply embedded and consistently lived out across the school community. As a result, pupils' behaviour is exemplary and relationships are characterised by respect, readiness and belief.
- The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is outstanding. Pupils demonstrate secure knowledge, strong religious literacy and the ability to engage in thoughtful reflection, resulting in sustained progress.
- Pupil understanding and articulation of prayer and scripture is outstanding.

What the school needs to improve

- Systems for monitoring and evaluation within prayer and liturgy require further development to ensure they are consistently analytical and lead to precise, measurable improvements. Strengthening this practice will support leaders in securing sustained excellence in prayer and liturgy.
- Prayer and liturgy documentation should be reviewed to ensure it is clear, accessible and user-friendly for all stakeholders. This will enable greater consistency and confidence in the planning and delivery of high-quality provision.
- A coherent annual plan for prayer and liturgy should be agreed to ensure a structured approach across the school year. This should include the schools' provision for prayer and liturgy, the engagement and participation of pupils and staff, and the formation to undertake particular ministries.

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

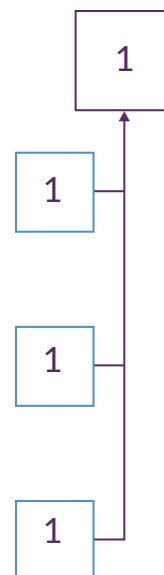
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 Vincent de Paul are exemplary witnesses to the school's Catholic life and mission, demonstrating an outstanding understanding of its identity and charism in both word and action. They articulate, with confidence, how the school's mission shapes their attitudes and behaviour, as reflected in the pupil voice: 'Be ready for whatever comes, believe in God and trust in Him.' Pupils recognise that they are deeply valued, stating, 'We are respected, we are fair, we are welcomed, we are taught how to show goodness and we are cared for'. They flourish as individuals, growing in virtue and moral responsibility, and are able to reflect critically on the world around them, stating, 'We see things we need to change and how to change it'. This is evidenced in their proactive commitment to social justice and the common good, for example in supporting care home residents at Sharston House. Rooted in their understanding of Catholic social teaching, including *Laudato Si'*, pupils demonstrate a deep awareness of equality, stewardship and human dignity. They take pride in, and actively engage with, a wide range of ministries, supported by the chaplain, parish priest and staff, showing enthusiasm, leadership and a strong sense of service.

The school's mission, inspired by its patron, is deeply embedded and consistently realised across all aspects of school life. There is a palpable sense of lived community which is evident within school and parish. Staff are fully committed to the mission, acting as exemplary role models whose daily witness significantly contributes to the school's distinctive Catholic character. This is affirmed by staff feedback, with 100% participation in activities that promote the Catholic life and mission of the school, and comments such as, 'We are guided by the Beatitudes and help pupils to understand God's forgiveness through reconciliation'.

Governance is highly effective, offering both challenge and support, with consistently positive evaluations. Staff relationships are a notable strength, fostering a culture of mutual respect and shared purpose. Their active involvement in parish and community life further enhances the school's mission. Pastoral care is exceptional, combining specialist support with a deeply embedded culture of compassion. Parents affirm this, with one stating, 'I feel I have won the lottery'. The school environment visibly reflects Christ at its centre with prayerful and welcoming spaces. The adoption of the *Life to the Full* programme ensures that the requirements for relationships, sex and health education are met effectively and appropriately.

Leaders and governors are deeply committed to the school's Catholic life and mission, demonstrating passion, energy and a shared determination for excellence. They recognise that 'staff are a strength of the school – they are a shining light', and prioritise ongoing formation through diocesan training and initiatives, including active involvement in *Religious Education Directory* working parties. The school benefits from highly effective links with the parish and wider community. Pupils and families actively participate in liturgical life, including Mass, sacramental preparation, holy days and children's liturgy, supported by a dedicated parish priest. Parental engagement is strong, with over 92% affirming the school's partnership with the parish and wider survey responses highlighting a joyful, respectful community with a strong culture of prayer and commitment to religious education. Catholic social teaching is clearly evident through pupil-led initiatives and outreach, though it is not yet fully embedded across the curriculum. Leaders and governors demonstrate a strong commitment to staff wellbeing through regular support and innovative approaches, including governor-linked mental health partnerships. Monitoring by governors is purposeful and regular, encompassing pupil voice and work scrutiny. While leaders provide clear evidence of Catholic life in action, further systematic and strategic monitoring will ensure continued, targeted improvement and sustained excellence.

Religious education

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 key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

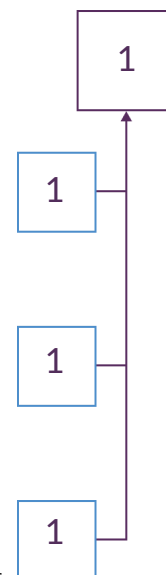
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 demonstrate outstanding knowledge and understanding in religious education, consistently building on prior learning to deepen their understanding in line with the expectations of the *Religious Education Directory*. The implementation of the new Directory is having a significant impact on pupils' progress, resulting in highly developed religious literacy across all year groups. Pupils confidently make meaningful connections within their learning, for example linking the actions of Peter to themes of forgiveness, and relating the Last Supper to the structure and significance of the Mass. Scriptural knowledge is a clear strength, with even the youngest pupils confidently articulating key beliefs, such as, "Jesus came alive after he was crucified." Pupils respond thoughtfully to questioning and, particularly in older year groups, demonstrate the ability to pose their own reflective and theological questions. Subject-specific vocabulary is used accurately and with confidence, as seen in a Year 1 pupil's explanation of Jesus' sacrifice. Engagement in lessons is consistently high; pupils show excellent concentration, enthusiasm and active participation in their learning. Work in books is of a very high standard, reflecting creativity, depth and pride. To further strengthen outcomes, pupils would benefit from more regular opportunities to independently articulate their progress and identify next steps in their learning.

Teaching in religious education is outstanding, reflecting a high level of subject expertise and a clear commitment to the principles of the *Religious Education Directory*. Teachers demonstrate excellent subject knowledge, enabling them to articulate key vocabulary with clarity and precision while making appropriate adaptations to ensure all pupils access the

learning successfully. There is a coherent and systematic approach to planning and delivery, resulting in consistently high-quality teaching across the school. Skilful questioning is a key strength, with teachers adapting explanations to deepen pupils' understanding. For example, complex concepts such as *Lectio Divina* are explained in a meaningful and accessible way, enabling pupils to understand key vocabulary and different approaches to Catholic prayer. High expectations are consistently communicated, ensuring pupils make strong progress. In Early Years, continuous provision is exemplary, offering rich and engaging opportunities that promote independent exploration. Assessment is used effectively to inform teaching, with both formative and summative approaches identifying prior knowledge and guiding next steps. Relationships within the classroom are highly positive, fostering confidence and active participation. Pupils' contributions are regularly affirmed and celebrated. A wide range of high-quality resources enhance learning experiences. To further strengthen practice, teachers need to consider the opportunity for pupils to respond to purposeful invitations for spiritual reflection.

The school has fully embraced the *The Vine and the Branches*, ensuring that the curriculum is coherently planned, sequential and firmly rooted in prior learning. Leaders and governors have prioritised religious education, securing parity with other core subjects, as evidenced through curriculum timetables and comprehensive lesson coverage. The programme is engaging and creative, enabling pupils to access rich and meaningful learning experiences. The subject leader demonstrates outstanding commitment, having engaged in high-quality diocesan professional development. Training is effectively disseminated across the staff team, including training on the *Religious Education Directory*, ensuring that teaching is consistently good and often outstanding. New staff are well supported through diocesan training and a structured induction programme rooted in the school's Catholic mission. Robust systems for moderation, both internally and within local clusters, ensure accuracy and consistency in assessment. The curriculum is deeply embedded in Gospel values, which are skilfully integrated across all subject areas. Adaptive strategies, including scaffolded language, drama and creative arts, ensure the needs of all learners are met. Strong parish links further enrich provision. Monitoring of religious education attainment and progress for all pupils groups is rigorous therefore ensuring excellent outcomes for all pupils.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

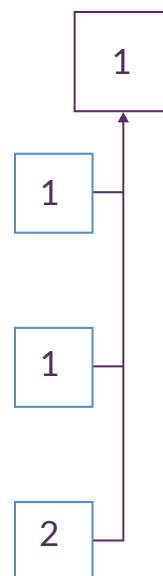
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

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



Pupils demonstrate outstanding engagement in prayer and liturgy, reflecting the centrality of faith within the life of the school. They consistently show reverence, maintaining prayerful silence and deep reflection during prayer. Participation is meaningful, and pupils engage confidently and respectfully in a range of prayer experiences. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of the variety and purpose of prayer. They can articulate where and how they pray, recognising its presence throughout the school day in classrooms, the hall and during gatherings. They confidently recall traditional prayers and demonstrate an ability to compose spontaneous prayers, valuing opportunities such as contributing to shared prayer books. Their knowledge of the liturgical year is secure, with pupils able to explain church seasonality and its significance. Pupils collaborate effectively with staff in planning and leading prayer and liturgy, often undertaking ministries with confidence and enthusiasm. They express a deep personal understanding of prayer, describing it as a way of communicating with God and reflecting on its impact on their emotions and wellbeing. Pupils thoughtfully consider how prayer influences their attitudes, including gratitude, forgiveness and awareness of global issues. To strengthen this further, pupils would benefit from developing the ability to independently evaluate and enhance the quality of their prayer and liturgical experiences.

Prayer is central to the life of school; it is carefully planned and embedded within the daily rhythm of school life. This ensures strong spiritual development across all year groups. Pupils confidently articulate a wide range of prayers, including thanksgiving and forgiveness, demonstrating secure understanding of their meaning and purpose. A prayer progression document, developed by the subject leader, supports the deepening of pupils' understanding

of prayer and liturgy as they progress through school. Daily prayer is well established and enriched through creative approaches, including the use of religious art, which enhances engagement and reflection. There is a rich tradition of prayer and liturgy. Pupils are given regular opportunities to compose their own prayers, evidenced in prayer journals and class worship. Scripture from both the *Religious Education Directory* and the liturgical year is used effectively, although older pupils do not yet use the Gospel acclamation in some of their celebrations of the word. Staff support pupils in developing confidence in ministries, although opportunities for pupil evaluation of prayer and liturgy are still developing. Music and art are thoughtfully integrated to enrich prayer experiences, with pupils reflecting on themes such as personal gifts and the Road to Emmaus. Families are highly engaged in the prayer life of the school and parish.

Senior leaders, governors and the parish priest demonstrate a strong and passionate commitment to promoting and supporting the prayer life of St Vincent de Paul. Staff act as strong role models of faith, positively influencing families and the wider parish community. The school's prayer and liturgy policy is well developed, bespoke to the school and regularly reviewed as a working document. Staff have received appropriate training and can access ongoing guidance, while the annual overview of provision is currently in draft form and being refined to support continued improvement. Leaders work closely with the parish priest to plan the school calendar termly, ensuring regular and meaningful opportunities for the celebration of the Eucharist. The headteacher provides a strong example of faith in action, which is highly valued by families. Chaplaincy support further enhances the quality of liturgical provision. Professional development is a clear priority, with input from external providers strengthening staff confidence and expertise. Leaders are increasingly secure in their understanding of ministry and the planning of prayer and liturgy. Weekly liturgical newsletters support reflection on Gospel values. While evaluation of prayer and liturgy is taking place, further development of more analytical monitoring would strengthen impact and support sustained improvement.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Vincent de Paul Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	111358
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8953559
Full postal address of the school	Manor Park South, Knutsford, WA16 8AL
School phone number	01565 633637
Headteacher or Head of School	Miss Bernadette Groarke
Chair of Governors	Mr Mike Dobson
School Website	www.stvincentsknutsford.co.uk
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	19 March 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The Inspection Team

Patricia Chapman

Lead

Susan Lyonette

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