

St Stephen's Catholic Primary School

URN: 142023

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Leeds

20 May 2026 – 21 May 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

2

1

2

2

Yes

Yes

Fully

What the school does well

- The school demonstrates exceptional commitment to supporting vulnerable pupils and their families, consistently exceeding expectations to meet their needs.
- Parish links within the school community are extremely strong and greatly appreciated by parents, staff, pupils and other stakeholders.
- The headteacher provides inspirational leadership that drives the school forward purposefully, uniting the whole community, in a way that is highly valued and respected by all stakeholders.
- Pupils' behaviour in religious education lessons, and in unstructured situations around school, is exemplary.
- Pupils actively engage in planning, leading and delivering prayer and liturgy in a very effective manner.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop pupils' knowledge of Catholic social teaching, including the theology that underpins it.
- Leaders and governors must ensure that all pupils, including those from vulnerable groups, make consistently good progress in religious education from their starting points.
- Ensure that opportunities for a more creative approach to prayer and liturgy are routinely planned, so that pupils can experience the richness of Catholic tradition.

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

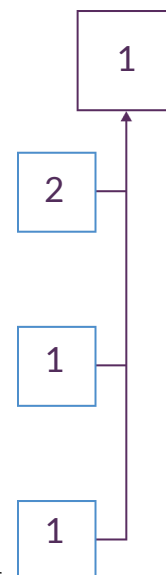
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 know and understand the school's mission statement, 'Learning, Living and Loving one another in God's name' and work hard to put it into practice including welcoming new pupils into school and raising funds for many different charities. Pupils are excited to 'grow a pound' to support the school's chosen charity work. Pupils feel loved, cared for and valued in school because of the warm relationships that exist in all aspects of the school community and, as a result, behaviour in structured and unstructured times is exemplary. The quality of welcome is outstanding. Pupils show a deep sense of respect for themselves and others, especially those from different cultures, faiths and traditions. A Year 4 child states, 'We can be friends with people from different places and cultures around the world,' in response to multi-faith teaching and learning. Chaplaincy roles are developing and an established group of Mini-Vinnies lead many aspects of this work; other chaplaincy roles are at an emerging stage. Pupils are enthusiastic about serving the common good through charitable works but are not explicitly aware of Catholic social teaching or the theology underpinning it.

All stakeholders in the school community are deeply committed to the values expressed in the mission statement and are supportive of it; there is a strong sense of community in the school and this is greatly valued by parents and pupils. Pastoral care is outstanding and outreach work to support vulnerable pupils and families is highly developed. As a result, there is a strong sense of inclusivity in the school and pupils with additional needs are very well cared for. Staff go the extra mile for all families especially those most in need. Staff are excellent role models for the pupils and encourage them to bear witness to Christ and the school's mission. 'We are a family!' is a common sentiment from staff and other stakeholders who feel

welcomed and supported by the school. Christ is at the centre of all that the school does and is reflected in the strong relationships that exist at all levels of school life. The ongoing spiritual formation of staff, which is inspired by the parish priest, is highly developed and greatly valued. Pupils enjoy their learning in relationships and health education. However, their ability to say how this impacts on their daily lives remains underdeveloped.

Leadership at all levels in the school is deeply committed to the Catholic life and mission of the school. The headteacher is highly regarded by all stakeholders and her inspirational leadership sets the tone for the school. Leaders are a visible presence in the community, they are accessible to parents and pupils and, as a result, the partnership with parents and families is extremely strong. Leaders and governors are ambitious for the school and work hard to achieve the school's aims. Parish links are exceptional and highly valued by all in the community. The parish priest is a known, loved and visible presence in the school; the pupils are excited to see him and his influence on the school is tangible. Pupils' engagement in the evaluation of the school's mission is limited. Opportunities for the wider curriculum to be taught through a Catholic lens are in their early stages. Induction processes and continuing professional development opportunities are well established and provide a smooth transition into school for new members of staff. The quality of the school's self evaluation is rigorous, accurate and developed in partnership with the Trust.

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

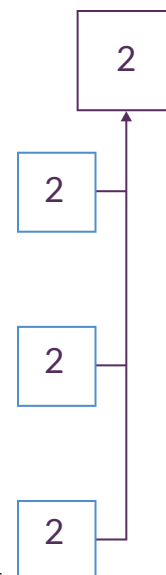
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 engage well in their religious education lessons and make thoughtful contributions. They respond in a positive way to their teachers. Behaviour for learning is good and there is a calm and purposeful atmosphere in most lessons. Pupils' responses in books, in most classes are good, but this is not consistent across school. Attainment, and progress over time, for all pupils including those from vulnerable groups, requires improvement. Pupils' religious literacy is good and their oral responses are often well developed but this is not always evident in their written work. Most pupils work independently in religious education lessons and there is good support for learning for pupils with additional needs, including those with English as an additional language, using published resources and those developed by the school. Older pupils appreciate the opportunities they have to respond creatively to religious education tasks. Occasions to respond at length in lessons are limited. Most pupils understand how they are progressing in religious education; however, this is not yet consistent across school. Marking and feedback is effective, but questions aimed at deepening pupils' learning lack impact.

Teachers' subject knowledge is secure and lessons are well planned, enabling pupils to grow in faith and knowledge in most religious education lessons. Teachers provide good oral feedback in lessons which affirms pupils, allowing most to make good progress. Teachers' deployment of additional adults is highly effective, and their input helps pupils grow in confidence and knowledge. Teachers' use of questions to enhance and deepen learning is good but the opportunity to deepen learning through extended questioning is rarely taken

and therefore pupils' oral responses can sometimes be superficial and underdeveloped. A variety of planned activities is evident in most lessons and pupils respond well to these activities, however, a more creative approach to learning is not a consistent feature across the school. As a result, pupils are not always encouraged to use their own initiative in religious education lessons. The allocation of resources to support learning, including the deployment of support staff, is effective. Assessment in religious education follows diocesan and Trust guidelines and leaders ensure that moderation of standards is in place across the school and with a wider audience. Time and space for reflection is given in most lessons and pupils are encouraged to ask questions before beginning tasks.

Leaders and governors ensure compliance with the requirements of the *Religious Education Directory*. The religious education leader is highly effective and has a clear plan of action to improve standards, progress and provision; she is well supported by other senior staff. As a result of robust monitoring, evaluation and review processes, good progress towards identified targets is made. The impact of improvement is recognised by governors and the Trust representatives who support the school. There is core parity between religious education and other core subjects and the allocation of financial resources demonstrates that religious education is a key priority for school improvement. Leaders and governors ensure that staff at all levels have access to regular and well planned continuing professional development opportunities, provided in house, through the Trust and by the Diocese. Provision for pupils with additional needs using a variety of resources designed by staff with responsibility for special educational needs is well developed. Enrichment activities planned to enhance learning have a limited. The parish priest is a constant source of support to teachers and pupils in religious education.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

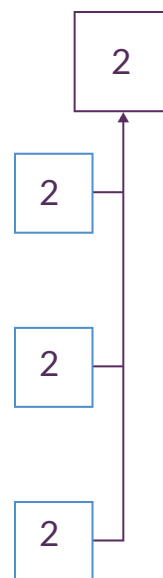
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

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 respond well in prayer and liturgy and enjoy these experiences. Behaviour is respectful, there is good attention to creating the right conditions for prayerfulness to thrive. However, the use of silence and stillness needs further development for pupils to engage more effectively in prayer. Pupils enjoy opportunities to pray and relish planning and delivering celebrations of the word; however, evaluation of these opportunities remains underdeveloped. Music is used well to create mood and atmosphere and communal singing greatly enhances the experience of worship and the celebrations of Mass. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the Church's liturgical year, detailing periods of prayer and the school's response in preparing them to celebrate the major events of the Church's year; for example, pupils can explain in detail how Lent has helped them prepare for Easter. Pupils can describe symbols, traditions and practices in the Church. Some pupils speak about how they turn to prayer at times of joy and sorrow in their lives. Pupils speak very warmly about their relationship with the parish priest and how he shapes their understanding of church and their faith.

The daily rhythm of prayer is embedded across school and pupils engage readily in a range of prayerful experiences that reflect the traditions of the Church. Opportunities for a more creative approach to prayerful experiences that encourage greater flair and individuality, are not universally applied and therefore, remain underdeveloped. The use of scripture in prayer and liturgy is well established and is employed at an age-appropriate level; scripture is at the

centre of all worship and this greatly enhances pupils' experience of prayer in school. Staff make good use of space in school and there is a dedicated area available to pupils who wish to pray in unstructured times in the entrance area; opportunities for prayer outside in the school grounds are limited. Staff are skilled at helping pupils to plan and deliver well constructed prayer and liturgy. As a result, pupils lead elements of celebrations of the word with increasing confidence at an age appropriate level. Music is used effectively to enhance pupils' experiences of prayer both in terms of setting mood and with joyful communal singing. The school's partnership with the parish and its involvement in local community life are well established and flourishing; the parish priest is a regular visitor to school and the school regularly attends Mass in the parish. This is greatly appreciated by parents and parishioners.

Leaders and governors plan an annual provision map for prayer and liturgy that, alongside the school's prayer and liturgy policy, enables the school to meet the requirements of diocesan policy. The plan, which reflects the Church's liturgical year and planned events, including feast days, saints' days and holy days of obligation, greatly enhances pupils' lived experience of the faith. Occasions to access the Sacrament of Reconciliation in school are regularly offered. The prayer and liturgy coordinator ensures that staff are well prepared to assist pupils in planning prayer and liturgy; these plans include well established induction practices. Opportunities for ongoing spiritual formation of staff are highly effective and led mainly by the parish priest. Leaders and governors' use of self-evaluation processes are both accurate and highly effective in identifying areas for improvements in relation to prayer and liturgy. However, some inconsistencies in provision and practice remain. The school's policy for Prayer and Liturgy does not always accurately reflect the progression for pupil participation across some mixed age class groupings. As a result, progression between year groups is not always clear and provision lacks consistency. Resources are used well to enhance the prayerful experience of pupils.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Stephen's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	142023
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8152003
Full postal address of the school	Gargrave Road, SKIPTON, BD23 1PJ
School phone number	01756 709451
Headteacher or Head of School	Mrs Jo Sykes
Chair of Governors	Mrs Anne Clews
School Website	www.st-stephens.n-yorks.sch.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non Selective
Age-range of pupils	3 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	18 October 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The Inspection Team

John Hutchinson Lead

Laura Wharton

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