

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

URN: 149875

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Shrewsbury

17 June 2026 – 18 June 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

- The school provides a welcoming, inclusive and nurturing environment where relationships are rooted in the school mission and lived out through the mission footprints.
- Outstanding pastoral support helps pupils to feel loved, safe, and protected, while members of the community are cared for and valued.
- In religious education, pupils make excellent progress and achieve high standards during their time at St Joseph's.
- St Joseph's is committed to ensuring that key events in the liturgical year, feasts, and holy days are recognised and celebrated with the whole school community.
- Senior leaders, supported by a dedicated staff team, promote and nurture pupils' spiritual and moral development.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that the religious education curriculum in the Early Years Foundation Stage is delivered effectively, so that, through careful planning, the religious education learning goals and ways of knowing are woven into each area of provision.
- Make Catholic social teaching and curriculum links explicit, ensuring that pupils and staff understand how these principles are woven through learning, prayer, and wider school life.
- Ensure planning, feedback, and assessment of pupils' work in religious education is consistently applied in all classes so that pupils of all abilities continue to make excellent progress and attain standards comparable to other core subjects.

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

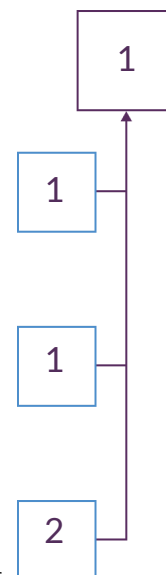
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 increasingly understand Jesus's teaching through the mission footprints and the values of love, compassion, respect, and service. Their commitment to this mission is evident when they comment that 'Jesus helped the poor and vulnerable' and that they 'want to follow him'. Pupils' actions: fundraising for Cafod, harvest donations to a local soup kitchen, and caring for the local environment, show genuine concern for creation and for those in need. They are proud of placing their well-supported Christmas toy collection on the church sanctuary as their offering for local children. However, their understanding of how these actions link with Catholic social teaching is not yet secure. These links need to be explicitly and consistently reinforced across the whole curriculum so that pupils connect what they learn with how they live. Pupils understand we are all equal and loved by God. Therefore, they show respect towards those of other faiths and cultures. Pupils say that they 'feel safe and protected in school'. They undertake roles as faith leaders, Mini Vinnies, and school councillors with pride saying they 'feel closer to God' and 'communicate with him by praying'. Their exemplary behaviour reflects the positive impact of the school's mission on daily life.

The school's mission statement, mission footprints and four values are deeply embedded. They have a clear impact on the daily life of the school, with Christ visibly at the centre. A parent says, 'Staff, pupils and parents really do live out the school's mission through not only teaching and learning but all aspects of life at St Joseph's.' Highly committed staff consistently witness to the mission through their relationships with pupils, families, colleagues, and the parish community. Their dedicated service, training, and programmes of support, particularly to the most vulnerable, result in high-quality pastoral care. This is much appreciated by

parents who say 'It is caring, supportive and I feel like my children are known and supported as individuals'. St Joseph's is strongly inclusive; pupils from other cultures and faiths are welcomed and supported to pray in their own tradition. Across the year, enrichment activities involve the whole school community coming together in the parish centre to create inspiring artwork and music, prayers, and celebrations of the word. These effectively contribute to pupils' spiritual and moral formation, through highlighting the Church's social teaching, scripture, the liturgical year, care for creation, and human dignity.

Leaders' and governors ensure that Christ is at the heart of St Joseph's. As a result, staff understand the school's mission and its centrality to school life. Professional development in school, through the diocese, and the Corpus Christi Trust, strengthens staff understanding and supports a shared commitment to the mission. Parish links are strong and have a positive impact on the life of the school, shown by the regular attendance of parents and parishioners at bi-weekly Masses, liturgies, First Holy Communion Masses, and feast days. Parents value these and the many opportunities they have to engage with the school. Catholic social teaching is identified in the whole-school planning but is not yet applied systematically across discrete subjects. Subject leaders now need to make these links more explicit and intentional so that pupils also encounter Catholic contributions to culture, justice and human dignity consistently across the curriculum. Staff appreciate the open-door policy of leaders, feeling that there is strong pastoral care and Trust support. There is an effective programme of support for staff new to the school. Trust-wide surveys of parents, staff, and pupils and learning walks contribute to monitoring and evaluation of Catholic life and mission. Leaders and governors now need to analyse these and ensure development points are actioned.

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

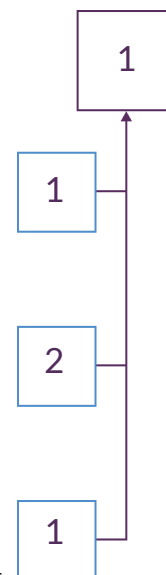
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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, including those who are disadvantaged or have additional needs, make excellent progress from their starting points in religious education. Attainment is consistently above average and compares favourably with other core subjects. Religious literacy is particularly strong in Key Stage Two. Pupils are confident, reflective learners who think deeply, ask thoughtful questions, and make meaningful links between their learning and their daily lives. A pupil reflects, 'Following Jesus means showing the gospel values in my life'. Expectations increase appropriately as pupils move through the school, and they respond positively to challenges. One pupil says, 'I enjoy writing -a lot-and I like it when my teacher gives me time to finish my work'. In lessons, pupils are highly engaged, motivated, and proud of their work. They enjoy the different creative opportunities they are given to express their learning. Pupils readily recall their previous learning and can use this to support their discussions in lessons. Independence, concentration, and behaviour are exemplary across the school, supporting strong readiness for learning. Pupils complete end of topic self-assessment tasks, however, responses to this are inconsistent and, as a result, some pupils are unclear about how well they are doing.

Teachers are confident, with secure subject knowledge and a good understanding of how pupils learn. Their enthusiasm for religious education, high expectations and deep commitment to the subject, are evident in lessons. Planning is closely aligned with the religious education curriculum, and the *Religious Education Directory*. However, assessment, including monitoring pupils' self-assessment, is not yet used consistently well enough.

Feedback supports pupils' understanding during lessons, but this is not always reflected in pupils' books. More effective assessment enables teachers to adapt planning more precisely to pupils' needs. Where teachers' questioning is skilful it deepens learning and identifies pupils' understanding effectively; However, this practice is not yet consistent across the school, which impacts on pupils' future learning. In lessons, teachers give appropriate time and space for reflection so that pupils have time to think about what they have learnt and how this influences behaviour in everyday life. This supports pupils' moral and spiritual development. Pupils are given a wide variety of opportunities to consolidate and express their understanding in creative ways. At meetings, parents are invited to write a comment about the work they have seen in the religious education books. The pupils highly value these reflective comments. Teachers also value the opportunity to share the high standards of religious education taught at St Joseph's.

Leaders and governors ensure that the curriculum for religious education is faithful to the aims of the *Religious Education Directory (RED)*. Parity with other core education subjects is evident in whole-school policies, curriculum time, and staffing. Professional development and formation are prioritised and are a significant strength. The new subject lead has a clear vision, secure expertise and provides effective support for planning, assessment, and school-based training to further improve teaching and learning. Teaching is at least good, with some outstanding practice. Planning is adapted carefully to meet pupils' needs and creative approaches enable pupils, including those with additional needs, to demonstrate understanding successfully. Additional resources ensure that pupils with additional needs can demonstrate their learning and understanding. Leaders plan regular enrichment days enabling the whole school to engage in creative and expressive activities linked to their learning. Governors undertake learning walks and regularly receive written and verbal reports from senior and subject leaders regarding religious education. However, findings from monitoring activities need a sharper focus to ensure consistent best practice. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, religious education needs to be closely aligned to the *RED* and planned across continuous provision.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

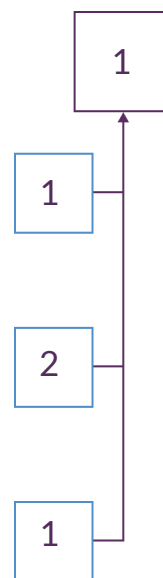
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

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 sing joyfully and engage readily with prayer from the earliest years. As they progress through school, they pray silently, join in confidently in familiar prayers, and speak thoughtfully about a range of prayer experiences across the liturgical year. For example, creating and praying the stations of the cross, taking home a Lenten prayer bag, and performing a nativity. Pupils work effectively with clergy, staff, and one another to plan creative and meaningful prayer and liturgy and they confidently undertake particular ministries within these times too. By the end of Key Stage Two they do this with confidence, understanding, and skill. Older pupils proclaim scripture clearly during celebrations of the word, helping others to understand the word of God. Pupils have opportunities to evaluate what they prepare. However, to be more effective, evaluation needs to consider how celebrations engage others as well as what is presented. Pupils explain how prayer and liturgy are shaped by school life and their own experiences and how these influence their actions. For example, older pupils reflect on their move to secondary school as a journey of opportunity and challenge, drawing on scripture and God's promise, 'I will be with you always', as they prepare for change.

The liturgical year is central to school life and is reflected in the increasing range of prayer experiences and liturgy offered to the pupils and the wider community. Prayer is embedded in daily routines for pupils and staff. Prayer and liturgy floor books show wide-ranging creative opportunities for pupils to experience Catholic tradition. However, as pupils progress, the range of prayer should reflect the age and stage of pupils. Staff are committed to supporting pupils well in preparing engaging prayer and liturgy. They help them

to choose appropriate, thoughtful, and seasonal scripture linked clearly to each celebration. Attention now needs to be given to ensuring that the Bible is revered in all classes when it is used. Leaders model strong practice. Creativity, especially through art and music, enriches prayer, whole school liturgies, and celebrations of the word. Staff use their talents to compose songs and hymns and pupils quickly learn to sign and sing the mission footsteps. They create vibrant artwork for prayer and liturgy. Staff also make imaginative and creative use of limited indoor and outdoor space. Parents and families are regularly invited to share in the school's prayer life and speak positively about class celebrations of the word, First Holy Communion Masses, bi-weekly Masses, and assemblies.

The school has a prayer and liturgy policy in place, which now needs to fully reflect the *Prayer and Liturgy Directory*, the school's individuality, and Diocesan expectations. Leaders understand how to develop pupils' spirituality according to their age and understanding, and this is detailed in the prayer and liturgy policy. Leaders continue to support the staff's understanding of different ways of praying, so this is developed consistently throughout the school. They ensure staff provide appropriate formation so that pupils can confidently undertake ministries such as proclaiming the gospel, which is well established by upper Key Stage Two. Leaders and governors, together with the parish priest, ensure the sacraments, holy days, key celebrations, and Marian feasts are celebrated in the prayer life of the school. Staff benefit from regular formation and professional development through the diocese, Corpus Christi Trust, and senior leadership team. Leaders understand the breadth of Catholic prayer traditions, which is evident in their planning. Senior leaders regularly model and support high-quality prayer experiences and together with the governors recognise the importance of high-quality professional development, resources, artefacts, artwork, and time in supporting effective prayer and liturgy. Prayer and liturgy leaders monitor and evaluate prayer and celebrations of the word prepared by both staff and pupils so that appropriate support and formation is given.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	149875
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3583312
Full postal address of the school	Main Office, Marlborough Rd, Sale, M33 3AF
School phone number	0161 973 4938
Executive Headteacher	Mr Damian Arthur
Headteacher or Head of School	Mrs Rosie Birchall
Chair of Governors	Mr Stefan Brochwicz-Lewinski
School Website	www.stjosephstrafford.co.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Corpus Christi 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	14 November 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The Inspection Team

Carol Morgan Lead

Susan Lyonette

Louise Conlon

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