



Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School

URN: 123204

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Birmingham

24 June 2026 – 25 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

3

2

2

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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

Partially

Compliance Statement

- This school has addressed only three of the four areas for improvement identified in its predecessor inspection report.

What the school does well

- Sacred Heart is a joyful, family school with a clear Christ-centred Catholic identity and strong relationships.
- Pupils embrace the school's mission and wholeheartedly promote it. Consequently, behaviour across the school is exemplary. Pupils deeply enjoy their religious education lessons.
- Pupils enjoy preparing and ministering prayer in their classrooms.
- Catholic social teaching is well embedded throughout the school, and the curriculum is delivered through a Catholic lens.
- Pupils enjoy discussing their religious education learning and articulate their knowledge with confidence and clarity.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop effective strategies to engage parents and carers specifically with the school's Catholic life and mission.
- Address the variability in the provision of religious education, including the provision of challenge for all pupils.
- Implement a thorough and in-depth approach to monitoring and evaluating prayer and liturgy.

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

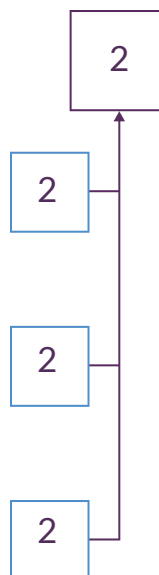
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 value the distinctive Catholic life and mission at Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School and embrace its mission, 'To grow in wisdom and in Grace.' The mission is well-understood, articulated, and lived out daily by the pupils. Pupils understand that they are cared for and loved by God, knowing they are unique; consequently, they recognise the importance of self-respect and of respecting others. As one pupil comments, 'You can be yourself around others, and no one will judge you'. This is clear in their excellent behaviour, considerate care for one another, and practical concern for those in need. Because of the example set by staff and the priority leaders place on Catholic social teaching, pupils actively seek opportunities to live out the Catholic faith in a meaningful way that impacts others; for example, supporting Cafod's Big Lent Walk, collecting for the food bank and bringing donations at harvest to benefit those in the local area. Pupils also engage in community action projects; for example, Year 1 pupils made 'Get Well' cards for parishioners. The school also supports Sacred Heart Church's hardship appeal. This is typical of how pupils are committed to following Jesus' example and living out Gospel values, which contributes to their moral development. Pupils recognise that they learn about the teachings of Jesus and how to apply them to their lives and the wider world.

Images and displays focusing on the Sacred Heart of Jesus, together with the mission statement rooted in gospel values, are highly visible throughout the school. The Church's mission to make Christ known inspires the whole school community. Staff are fully committed to embracing the school's Catholic life, supporting pupils through the strong relationships they build. Pastoral care is prioritised; staff feel valued and supported, and pupils report

feeling safe, cared for, and known as individuals. A strong sense of family and community exists; both pupils and staff feel listened to, and every voice is heard. A warm culture of welcome prevails, and parents comment positively on the school's inclusive nature, the values their children learn, and the approachability of staff. Class saints are celebrated around the school, including a display of special saints chosen by Year 6 pupils. Photographs of pupils receiving the 'Saint Theresa Award for Catholic life' are displayed, presenting them as shining examples of what it means to be a Sacred Heart pupil. Relationships and health education (RHE) meets diocesan requirements, and pupils thrive emotionally and spiritually.

Leaders and governors actively promote and lead the school's Catholic life and mission. Governors are ambitious and have high expectations, reflected in the recently created vision to promote the 'Hearts, Minds and Horizons' of pupils. School policies and procedures meet diocesan requirements by incorporating the school's Catholic life and mission. Staff ensure the curriculum is taught through a Catholic lens, with a clear focus on Catholic social teaching. The headteacher is a positive role model for staff, who appreciate her Catholic leadership; for example, high regard is given to staff's well-being, and staff value the pastoral care they receive. Leaders and governors ensure that staff receive regular training and participate in opportunities within the diocese network. Links with the parish priest are strong; Mass is celebrated regularly, and religious education provision benefits from his expertise. He enhances the spiritual formation of both pupils and staff, for example, by leading guided meditation sessions. Governors provide support and challenge to leaders; however, headteacher reports to governors do not provide them with all the information they need to thoroughly monitor and evaluate the school's Catholic life and mission. Parents are very supportive; however, leaders and governors do not provide a programme of events to help parents and carers to fully engage with the school's Catholic life and mission, as invitations are limited to joining the school for prayer and liturgy. This aspect of the school's work is not yet fully developed.

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

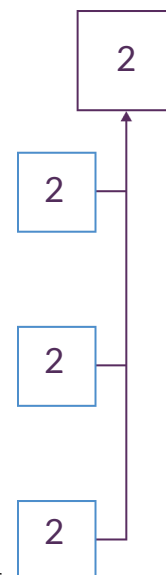
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 mostly develop secure knowledge, understanding, and skills in religious education. They articulate what they have learnt confidently, showing an awareness of key concepts, and often make good progress in knowing more, remembering more, and doing more when measured against the diocesan curriculum. Pupils approach religious education lessons with interest and enthusiasm, leading to exemplary behaviour. They are engaged in learning and answering teachers' questions articulately using accurate religious vocabulary. Pupils work independently and take the initiative in their learning, particularly when applying their 'hearts challenge', when issued. The coverage of work in books is generally good, particularly in Upper Key Stage 2, though it is not consistent throughout the school. Pupils enjoy discussing their learning and articulate their knowledge with confidence and clarity. In Year 4/5, pupils recall a range of stories from the Bible and reflect thoughtfully on them. For example, they argue that when Jesus heals the blind man in the Fourth Gospel, he shows us that 'anything is possible', and that when Peter is imprisoned, we are 'shown God is always there for us'. Pupils' attainment in religious education is much higher than in the other core subjects.

Teachers are generally confident in their subject knowledge and have a good understanding of how pupils learn, appropriate to the phase they teach; this leads to well-planned lessons and, more recently, to a wider range of creative opportunities to engage pupils. Teachers value religious education and communicate this effectively to pupils, making good use of diocesan resources to support their lessons. Pupils recognise that staff make lessons engaging and

enjoyable. Teachers are generally skilled at using questions during lessons, and pupils can recall their learning. Assessment questions at the end of each unit of work enable older pupils to understand how well they are doing in religious education. However, this is not the case across the school, as pupils are not always clear about how to improve further and make progress. Inconsistencies in pupils' learning outcomes in books and the use of the 'hearts challenge' show that the level of desirable difficulty is not always strong enough for pupils. As such, a consistent approach to teaching religious education is yet to be securely in place across all year groups. Pupils' work is generally presented well, but opportunities to model and display excellent work are not yet fully developed. Staff generally provide feedback verbally, from which pupils do not always know the next steps to take to improve their work. In turn, this makes it difficult for teachers to assess how pupils have improved their learning accurately. Additional adults are deployed effectively to support pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Leaders ensure that pupils develop the knowledge, understanding, and skills required by the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* through a clearly sequenced curriculum. Leaders and governors ensure that religious education is resourced, timetabled, and staffed comparably to other core subjects in the school. The subject leader for religious education has a clear vision for the subject and the knowledge to drive further improvement. She supports and develops staff effectively to ensure pupils develop secure knowledge and skills. As a result of well-crafted professional support, teachers are increasingly planning creative and engaging lessons. All leaders are committed to securing regular, high-quality staff training in religious education about subject knowledge and teaching strategies. Staff benefit from this training, for example through a focus on lesson sequencing and the use of 'deeper learning mats'. Leaders ensure that staff confidence increases as their subject knowledge develops, thanks to their skill and attention to detail. Consequently, staff are committed to securing good outcomes in religious education across the school. Leaders' and governors' self-evaluation of religious education is informed by monitoring and evaluation, which they use to improve the standard of teaching and pupils' achievements. School leaders usually take strategic action, leading to further improvements; however, the previous area for improvement related to challenge has not yet been fully addressed. Pupils are not yet consistently supported to think deeply, apply their learning securely, and achieve as well as they should.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

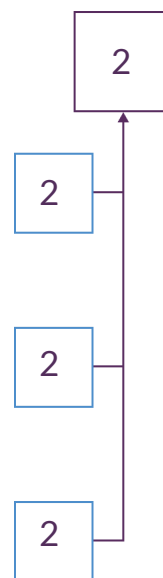
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

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' engagement and participation in prayer and liturgy is respectful and reverent. They are eager and confident in contributing to class prayer. They are attentive during prayer and liturgy and clearly enjoy these experiences. Pupils know the prayer structure they have been taught; they welcome 'the Light of Christ' and say the prayer to the Sacred Heart with joy. Pupils are confident in a range of prayer forms, such as guided meditation and silent prayer. Pupils are offered various opportunities to pray, including those that reflect the Church's liturgical year; for example, they join a Rosary club in May and October. Catholic social teaching is regularly explored through prayer and liturgy, contributing to pupils' knowledge and understanding of its core themes. All pupils have the chance to prepare and minister prayer in their classrooms. A 'gather, listen, respond, mission' framework is used throughout the school to ensure consistency in prayer opportunities, and pupils are confident and proud to prepare prayer. Staff support pupils in planning prayer, incorporating their own choices of reflective questions and prayers, including prayers they write themselves alongside the traditional prayers of the Catholic Church; this is developing throughout the school at age-appropriate levels. Pupils evaluate the Masses celebrated in school; however, they do not evaluate prayer and liturgy more widely. As a result, pupils are unsure how to improve further or to articulate how their experiences of prayer and liturgy lead them to action.

Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of this school. Planned prayer and liturgy form part of a regular and comprehensive programme of routine gatherings, including the celebration of Mass, assemblies, and class worship. There is a daily pattern of prayer that reflects the rhythm of the Church's prayer life and celebrates significant moments in the school's life.

Mass is held regularly. Pupils know many traditional prayers and responses, consistently taught throughout the school. The headteacher leads the Gospel assembly at the start of the week, linking the message to the *Catholic School Pupil Profile* and/or Catholic social teaching principles, modelling strong knowledge and high expectations for pupils and staff. Pupils are then supported in planning and ministering their own pupil-led classroom prayers. These often have specific themes relating to the liturgical year. For example, during Lent, pupils focus on reconciliation and forgiveness. The environment is prepared carefully during prayer to create a space for meaningful reflection. Prominent and attractive prayer areas in classrooms provide permanently dedicated spaces for pupils to access. Time and attention are given to ensure that these spaces are used appropriately, well cared for, and conducive to prayer.

Clear expectations regarding the progression of pupils' planning and delivery of prayer are set out in the prayer and liturgy policy. Staff are increasingly knowledgeable about how prayer and liturgy are central to the school's life and positively impact the school community. Leaders and governors plan the school's calendar and timetable to include regular opportunities to celebrate Mass and to observe key times in the liturgical year. The school provides sacramental preparation. Holy days of obligation during term time are observed when whole-school Masses are celebrated. Staff participate in training for prayer and liturgy and access diocesan resources to support this. Senior leaders recognise the importance of prayer and liturgy when allocating resources. However, leaders and governors do not routinely monitor and evaluate prayer and liturgy; as a result, they do not have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement in this area. Furthermore, pupils do not evaluate the quality of their pupil-led prayer and liturgy across the school. Consequently, pupils do not readily reflect on the changes needed to improve their experiences.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	123204
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9313820
Full postal address of the school	Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Greys Hill, Henley-on-Thames, RG9 1SL
School phone number	01491 572796
Headteacher or Head of School	Rachel Sanders
Chair of Governors	Lisa Glen, Thomas Smith
School Website	www.sacredhearthenley.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	11 February 2020
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The Inspection Team

Krystyna Bickley

Lead

Margaret Elizabeth Mary Gourlay

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