



St Nicholas of Tolentine Catholic Primary School

URN: 149915

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Clifton

10 June 2026 – 11 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

2

1

2

2

Yes

Yes

Fully

What the school does well

- Pupils are proud representatives of their school, expressing their mission of 'Where love and charity are, God is there' through a warm, authentic welcome to all. They speak with deep commitment about belonging to a special, diverse community where every language, background, religion and ability is valued and celebrated.
- Staff and leaders know their pupils and families exceptionally well and actively seek ways to support them, building relationships rooted in trust whilst seeking to reduce barriers. Their commitment to welcome and protection is affirmed in the school's School of Sanctuary status.
- Staff are fully committed to delivering the new religious education directory effectively, adapting teaching and resources in response to the specific starting points and needs of each pupil so that all can access learning.
- This is a community who treasure opportunities to worship together. A variety of worship experiences reflects the rhythm of the liturgical year and the traditions of the Church, enabling pupils and staff to participate with reverence, joy and growing confidence.
- Passionate and skilled leaders and highly effective governors are ably supported by the Newman Catholic Educational Trust and Clifton Diocese. High quality monitoring and evaluation informs planning and has driven accelerated improvement across the school.

What the school needs to improve

- To formalise the existing practice so that Catholic social teaching principles become the 'golden thread', so that pupils can clearly articulate how these principles influence their actions.
- To use resources and creative approaches to personalise the delivery of the religious education directory so that it reflects and celebrates the unique diversity of the school and local community.
- To enhance the school's community of prayer by establishing a staff and pupil-led culture that balances traditional, creative and personal prayer, underpinned by regular pupil evaluation.

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

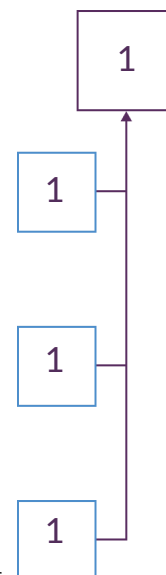
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 demonstrate immense pride and a secure understanding of the school's unique and culturally diverse identity, acting as ambassadors for its mission of welcome, love and respect. They show a deep sense of belonging and self-worth, articulating with maturity how diversity enriches their community. Pupils confidently celebrate the many languages, cultures and faiths represented within the school, recognising that each contributes to a shared identity rooted in Gospel values of dignity, inclusion and mutual respect. Pupils are developing a secure grasp of Catholic social teaching^{**},^{**} recognising how these principles shape their choices and actions. They show compassion and social responsibility, understanding that even small acts of kindness can make a meaningful difference. Chaplaincy provision, both through the pupil chaplaincy team and the whole-school Leaders in Faith initiative, is highly valued. One pupil explained their motivation simply, *"to share God's love – each person deserves love."* Pupils are committed to charity fundraising, supporting local, national and global causes such as the local foodbank, Cancer Research and CAFOD, where they raised funds to purchase a goat. The school places Christ firmly at its heart, evident in the warm, respectful relationships across the community. As one pupil reflected, *"If we work as a team, we are all one."*

A strong culture of welcome permeates the school, ensuring that every member of the community feels valued, supported and safe. As a recognised School of Sanctuary, it provides a genuine haven, where dignity and belonging are prioritised. Staff are exemplary role models who live out the mission statement with conviction, modelling Catholic values in their words, actions and relationships. They speak proudly of "making a difference" and work tirelessly to

build trusting relationships with families. The school knows its pupils and families exceptionally well, enabling staff to offer high-quality pastoral care that is bespoke, timely and rooted in deep understanding. The pastoral and inclusion team demonstrate considerable expertise, benefiting pupils, families and colleagues alike. Staff actively strengthen the Catholic life and mission by leading initiatives such as the environmental green team, the walking bus and additional foodbank support. Events like the cultural day, where pupils wear traditional dress and families share their heritage, further embed the school's commitment to inclusion. The physical environment, particularly classrooms and shared spaces, reflects Catholic identity while celebrating diversity. As one staff member reflects, "Our school helps children develop a truly holistic and loving appreciation for the Catholic faith... and reminds them to lead with love."

Leaders and governors are energised, joy-filled and determined guardians of the school's mission and identity, working with integrity to rebuild relationships of trust and partnership with parents, the parish and the wider community. They are a source of inspiration and steadfast support to all. The headteacher, with passion and determination, has worked tirelessly to re-establish and strengthen the Catholic character of the school following a period of challenge, ensuring that Christ remains firmly at the centre of its vision and daily life. Leaders are highly regarded by staff, parents and the community, who recognise the accelerated rate of improvement since the last inspection and openly praise the renewed sense of purpose across the school. Performance management for all staff includes a clear commitment to contributing actively to the school's mission. Governors bring high levels of expertise and provide effective, challenging monitoring that has significantly supported school improvement. Engagement with the local parish is strong, with the parish priest a regular and valued presence who enriches the spiritual life of the community. Staff feel valued, with wellbeing and professional development prioritised. Leaders and governors also engage effectively with trust and diocesan training, ensuring high-quality induction and ongoing formation for all, including early career teachers.

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

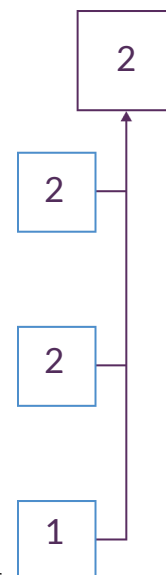
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 say they enjoy religious education lessons, particularly when teaching is adapted to meet individual needs and starting points. They value opportunities to be creative, including drama, hot-seating and artwork. Class floor books provide a rich record of these enrichment activities and can capture the quality of pupils' responses. Pupils with additional needs are well supported by teaching assistants, enabling them to access new learning alongside their peers. Behaviour in lessons is good, with most pupils demonstrating high levels of engagement and focus. From the earliest ages, pupils develop secure knowledge of scripture through approaches such as Godly Play and storytelling. With increasing skill and confidence, they can recall prior learning and make links between scripture, gospel values, their own faith lives and other world faiths. Pupils respond thoughtfully to 'I wonder**...' questions, now embedded as a shared practice across the school and in whole-school gatherings, supporting deeper thinking and discernment. They enjoy end-of-branch quizzes and vocabulary checks, recognising how these help them see the progress they are making. Staff continue to strengthen the school's focus on developing oracy, recall and opportunities for pupil self-reflection, ensuring ongoing improvement in learning and religious literacy.

Teachers demonstrate a deep commitment to the new *religious education directory* and hold high expectations for themselves and their pupils in both planning and delivery. Staff are consistently well prepared and benefit from ongoing professional development provided by school leaders and the diocese, in addition to termly planning sessions across the trust, which continues to strengthen their subject knowledge and confidence. In the strongest teaching

provision, adaptive teaching ensures that all pupils can access learning, and pupils themselves can explain how these approaches make a real difference. Customised use of the planning, including additional content such as work on St. Carlo Acutis for older pupils^{**},^{**} further inspires engagement and should continue to be developed. Younger pupils benefit from rich encounters, such as visiting the church with a parishioner and responding to reflective prompts like *"I wonder why the cross is an important symbol for Christians"*. Older pupils use YouCat to describe the Bible and recognise the value Christians place on both the Old Testament and the Gospels. A clear whole-school focus on specialist vocabulary is strengthening pupils' religious literacy and workbooks demonstrate progress over time. Explicit links with Catholic social teaching principles are becoming more embedded, deepening pupils' moral and spiritual awareness.

Leaders and governors place religious education firmly at the heart of the curriculum, ensuring it retains parity with other core subjects and aligns fully with the expectations of the new directory. Their commitment to securing regular, high-quality professional development, through diocesan, trust and in-house training, strengthens staff confidence and deepens subject knowledge. The induction programme for those new to teaching or Catholic education is very effective. The subject leader is inspiring in her commitment; articulating a clear, ambitious vision for colleagues across the school and engaging in purposeful collaboration with trust and diocesan partners. She responds to monitoring outcomes and self-evaluation with discernment and timeliness. Through active mentoring from the trust, diocese and the link governor, she is now a highly effective leader. Leaders seek to identify additional resources, outside agencies and the wider community to provide enrichment activities to promote pupils' engagement further. Examples are the RISE Theatre company workshops to further explore Catholic social teaching principles and the parish priest leading a whole school Passover celebration, making links with the Last Supper. Collaborative partnership with the trust at all levels, alongside full engagement with diocesan training, has directly strengthened leadership and staff capacity, contributing to sustained improvement.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

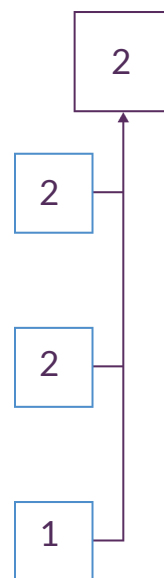
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

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 speak with sincerity about the value of prayer in their lives, describing it as a way of building a relationship with God: *"I pray to have a connection with God and a bond that will never break."* They appreciate gathering as a whole school for prayer and liturgy, delight in singing, and equally value opportunities for stillness. Behaviour during worship is excellent; all pupils are invited to pray and respond with engagement and respect. Pupils from other faiths often express that they wish to be included. The use of scripture, symbol, and action, particularly in well-established routines for 'gather' and 'listen', is embedded across the school. Music, focal points and meditation effectively draw pupils and staff into a shared sense of reverence. Pupils show an age-appropriate understanding of how prayer reflects the rhythm of the liturgical year, referring to practices such as saying the Rosary, participating in the Stations of the Cross, and attending Lenten Reconciliation services. Pupil-led opportunities, such as prayer club's *'web of solidarity'* for the feast of the Sacred Heart, enable pupils to participate meaningfully, including offering spontaneous prayer intentions. Leaders seek to develop pupils' experience of the breadth of traditional and creative prayer further.

A clear focus on the Sunday Gospel, the liturgical season, school values and Catholic social teaching shapes the rhythm of prayer and worship across the school. Class worship, singing and celebration assemblies further enrich the spiritual life of the community. The school's annual prayer offer is well planned and thoughtfully sequenced, marking traditional feast days and holy days of obligation while also introducing pupils to wider traditions of the Church such as Lectio Divina, the Rosary and other contemplative practices. Senior leaders and teachers act as positive role models, fully committed to delivering engaging prayer and

liturgy that inspire pupils. Mass is celebrated regularly in both the church and school, with pupils participating with reverence and joy. The parish priest plays an active role in planning and leading worship, offering valuable support to staff and ensuring inclusive opportunities such as the Reconciliation service. Pupil-led worship is established across the school, and leaders continue to develop staff and pupil confidence in planning and delivery. Opportunities such as the lunchtime prayer club demonstrate strong engagement, and leaders aim to introduce more pop-up prayer opportunities throughout the Liturgical Year. Developing an age-related bank of mission and action activities will help pupils recognise how prayer and life influence one another.

Leaders and governors are passionate in their commitment and ensure the liturgical year is fully reflected in the school's prayer and worship life; working to meet the expectations of the new Prayer and Liturgy Directory. Holy days are marked reverently through Mass, alongside celebrations such as the school feast day and Little Way Week. The school works closely with the parish to support pupils preparing for the sacraments, and leaders prioritise welcoming parish and parent communities into worship. Leaders' and governors' commitment to staff training and formation is clear. Recent trust and school INSET days were highly valued and strengthened staff confidence and spiritual formation. Investment in high-quality resources, music, focal points, artefacts and dedicated leadership time further enriches the school's prayer life. The Trust Prayer and Liturgy Handbook is used well to guide monitoring and evaluation, ensuring consistency and clarity. The religious education link governor's skilled, systematic approach to monitoring has been shared across the trust as an example of strong governance. Together with leaders' strategic oversight and the school's strong partnership with the parish, this work continues to strengthen the quality and impact of prayer and liturgy across the school, ensuring worship remains of the highest quality.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Nicholas of Tolentine Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	149915
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8012125
Full postal address of the school	Pennywell Road Lawford's Gate, Bristol, BS5 0TJ
School phone number	0117 3772260
Headteacher or Head of School	Mrs Rachel James
Chair of Governors	Mrs Colleen Collett
School Website	www.stnicholas.bristol.sch.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Newman Catholic Educational Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non Selective
Age-range of pupils	4 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	17 May 2023
Previous denominational inspection grade	Requires Improvement

The Inspection Team

Rita McLoughlin

Lead

Angela Bennett

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