



# St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

URN: 139532

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Birmingham

09 October 2025

## Summary of key findings

### Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

2

#### 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

2

#### Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

2

#### Collective worship (p.7)

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

2

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

Fully

## Compliance statement

- This school fully complies with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- This school is fully compliant with the additional requirements of His Grace.
- This school has fully addressed all previous areas for improvement.

## What the school does well

- There is a powerful sense of community, belonging, and commitment to the mission. The example and personal witness of the headteacher inspire this.
- Catholic social teaching across the school has resulted in pupils clearly understanding their duty to those in need and the environment.
- Pupils enjoy their religious education lessons; they are enthusiastic and engaged about their learning.
- Committed leadership and governance have supported the school to make significant progress in all areas.
- Prayer and liturgy opportunities enhance respect, reverence, and spirituality amongst pupils.

## What the school needs to improve

- Deliver the full breadth of the curriculum through a Catholic lens.
- Ensure planning is more closely informed by pupils' current understanding so that tasks consistently consolidate and extend learning, enabling greater independence.
- Develop the confidence and skills of all pupils to prepare and evaluate prayer and liturgy throughout the school.

## 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**

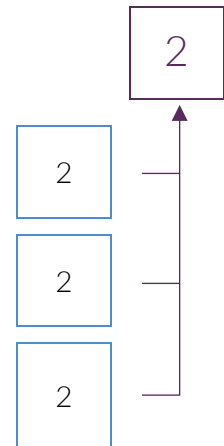
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

**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



As soon as you enter St Joseph's, a strong culture of welcome and an inclusive Catholic ethos is evident. The mission 'Inspired by Christ' is alive and active, lived out by the pupils, and nurtured by staff and the school community. The pupils are proud to be part of the St Joseph's family and participate fully in the opportunities to celebrate their faith. They understand that they are cared for and valued and that they are, as a Key Stage 1 pupil told inspectors, 'Inspired by Jesus as he tells us to look after the less fortunate'. Pupils in Key Stage 2 typically say that God is always at the centre of what we do, helping us to make good choices. Consequently, pupils show mutual respect towards each other and demonstrate good manners. This leads to good behaviour and a sense of calm and order in classrooms across the school. Pupils demonstrate stewardship of God's creation, actively leading and contributing to chaplaincy opportunities, such as charitable acts of kindness, fundraising, food bank contributions, sponsoring children's education in Rwanda, litter picking, and caring for our common home. Although Catholic social teaching links are not explicitly planned in discrete subjects, pupils are actively involved in responding to teachings concerning the dignity of workers by supporting Fairtrade initiatives and have successfully campaigned for their local council to provide only Fairtrade products. As a result, Catholic social teaching responses demonstrate a growing outward witness to the Gospel, where pupils respond proactively to local, national, and global issues.

Staff are firmly committed to the school's new mission and serve as excellent role models in embodying it. Consequently, the sense of community is highly tangible and has enabled the school to flourish. Their strong relationships and caring nature result in all pupils, including those receiving enhanced learning provision, feeling safe and confident in a school where everyone is welcomed, valued, and treated with dignity and respect. Leaders and governors have invested

strategically in the school; as a result, the physical environment effectively celebrates the Catholic mission, ensuring Christ is clearly at the centre. Chaplaincy at St Joseph's is developing, with pupils recently engaging in 'Growing In Faith Together' training and hosting schools from the Pope Francis Catholic Multi Academy Company (MAC) for a retreat. The provision for relationship, sex, and health education (RSHE) is carefully planned, and pupils discuss its application to their lives; they can confidently talk about what they have learnt in these lessons.

Leaders and governors are deeply committed to promoting the school's Catholic life and mission. The headteacher is inspirational in modelling this commitment to ensure all pupils and staff encounter Christ, resulting in a community firmly rooted in its mission and faith. Leaders and governors are highly effective in evaluating the school's Catholic life and mission because they visit the school regularly, conduct learning walks, and participate in school events, enabling them to understand the school's strengths and areas for improvement firsthand. This leads to impactful school development work. Leaders ensure staff receive high-quality training and induction so that the school's Catholic life and mission are well understood. Staff highly value the attention leaders give to their well-being, resulting in a very dedicated staff team. One member of staff described the care of the school and the MAC as '...having a warm blanket around you.' The school collaborates closely with the parish priest, ensuring robust sacramental preparation and supporting parents as the primary educators of their children. Staff use effective strategies to engage with parents, including inviting them to Multifaith Week and an art exhibition.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

**Pupil outcomes**

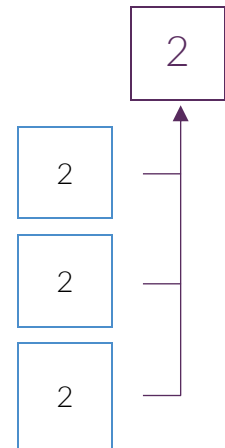
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

**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 enjoy their religious education lessons; therefore, most pupils demonstrate engagement and enthusiasm in their learning. Behaviour in lessons is good. Learners can recall previous knowledge through the effective review activities at the beginning of lessons, which make good use of religious vocabulary. However, consistent challenge throughout the school is not well structured across all units, resulting in variable levels of pupil progress in terms of 'knowing more' and 'doing more'. Pupils with higher prior attainment do not always make the progress they are capable of because they are not given the independence or reflection time required to demonstrate the full extent of their knowledge and understanding. The mobility rates of pupils, combined with the lack of rigorous analysis of achievement groups, hinder accelerated progress. Pupils are well-motivated in religious education lessons as they know their work is valued and celebrated.

Teachers' subject knowledge is secure. They use questioning to ascertain the levels of pupils' understanding; this is a particular strength in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). However, sometimes opportunities are missed to use questioning to adapt explanations or tasks to maximise learning for all pupils. Teachers are committed to the value of religious education, providing time for reflection, which enables pupils to develop morally and spiritually by reflecting on what they have learned. However, pupils' responses sometimes lack depth in explanation. While teachers plan to meet the requirements of the diocesan scheme of work, they do not always ensure that tasks are planned based on pupils' prior attainment. This means that teachers' expectations for pupils are not always sufficiently high concerning independent work. Pupils enjoy a range of tasks in religious education lessons, including the use of QR codes, drama, and art. However, these are sometimes too heavily scaffolded, limiting opportunities for some pupils to express their learning independently, creatively, and with individuality. When

opportunities are provided, pupils can think deeply, especially when asked to reflect on what they have learned and its significance to them through 'think pink' questions; however, these opportunities are not consistently offered. Pupils understand how well they have performed in lessons because of the feedback they receive. However, they cannot clearly articulate in detail what they need to do to improve their achievements because this is not always made clear to them.

Leaders and governors ensure that the requirements of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* are taught through the diocesan strategy. Staff training is prioritised highly by leaders and governors, resulting in staff who feel that they benefit from the professional development they receive from the diocese, Pope Francis MAC and the headteacher. Religious education is a priority for leaders and governors, as evidenced by the time and resources allocated to the subject, which have improved since the last inspection and are now compliant with the Bishops' Conference requirements. Monitoring teaching and learning within the subject allows leaders and governors to identify strengths and areas for development. Action plans include clear timescales for reviewing the impact of improvements, ensuring that implementation leads to continuous improvement. Leaders have begun work to ensure that teachers understand the requirements in the curriculum for each year group, thereby meeting the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) and those with higher prior attainment. However, it is too soon to see the impact of this on pupils' written work. Religious education has a high priority in the timetable, and as a result, pupils are making evident progress in their learning, and the quality of work in pupil books is at least as good as that in other core subjects.

## 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

2

#### Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

#### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

2

2

Pupils engage in prayer and liturgy with reverence and respect. They are keen to join in with singing and prayer and respond to questions when asked. They sit quietly and listen carefully. Pupils with additional needs are well-supported, enabling them to access the provision fully. Pupils know the liturgical cycle and that the Church uses colours to show the different times of the year. They also know that there are times of the year when specific prayers and services are particularly appropriate, such as praying the Rosary during October. Relevant resources, including scripture and liturgical music, enhance the school's prayer life. The pupils have a good understanding when discussing the shape of the liturgical year and its meaning within the school. The Chaplaincy team monitors the prayer spaces around the school and has some knowledge of traditional Catholic prayers. Pupils enjoy participating in and organising prayer and liturgy for their peers using the four-part planning template; this happens regularly and is central to the school's weekly prayer pattern. However, pupils lack confidence in articulating how the evaluation of prayer and liturgy in the classroom leads to future improvements or changes.

Prayer is central to school life and occurs daily in various forms. There is a range of prayer opportunities, including a gospel assembly led by senior leaders, a weekly assembly where pupils are encouraged to celebrate each other's God-given gifts and talents, and a weekly Mass celebrated by the parish priest. Scripture is used regularly and appropriately, remaining the focus of each liturgy. Senior leaders' training has enhanced staff capacity to guide pupils in planning and leading high-quality prayer and liturgies. While the impact is evident, consistency across all areas of the school has not yet been fully established. Opportunities for pupils to confidently and independently prepare and evaluate their prayers, so that they can articulate the process and the links between scripture and the chosen theme, are in the early stages of development and are yet to be fully effective. Parents are encouraged to engage and participate

in times of worship throughout the year by joining their children for Mass and special celebrations.

The prayer and liturgy policy is effective and lays out the expectations for all stakeholders, enabling clear expectations of progression when coming together to pray. This is not yet consistently embedded across the school in a way that positively impacts pupils' ability to prepare and evaluate prayer with increasing ease and independence. Leaders and governors offer regular training, which has increased the staff's confidence in supporting pupils to engage meaningfully in worship. Leaders have developed an Annual Plan of Provision (APOP) to ensure that significant liturgical events and important days are celebrated, with regular opportunities for the school community to attend Mass in the parish church, alongside the parish priest. Leaders and governors recognise that prayer and liturgy are central to the school, and as such, allocate appropriate resources, as evident in the school environment and prayer areas. Routine monitoring influences the school's self-evaluation concerning prayer. However, leaders recognise the need for more rigour in monitoring and evaluating pupil-prepared prayer to ensure that its findings directly affect the quality and impact of worship across the school.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	139532
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	931 3556
Full postal address of the school	Lawton Avenue, Carterton, Oxfordshire, OX18 3JY
School phone number	01993 841 240
Executive headteacher	N/A
Headteacher	Cheryl MacLennan
Chair of governing board	Paul Concannon
School Website	<a href="http://www.stjosephsprimarycarterton.co.uk">www.stjosephsprimarycarterton.co.uk</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	The Pope Francis Catholic Multi Academy Company
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	July 2022
Previous denominational inspection grade	3

## The inspection team

Teresa Cotter  
Debbie Enstone

Lead  
Team

## 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