



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

URN: 114276

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Hexham & Newcastle

30 September 2026 – 01 October 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

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 diocesan directives

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

- Leaders and governors are exemplary in their drive, ambition and rigour, resulting in the significant strength of the Catholic life and mission of the school.
- Pupils are happy, secure, and rightly proud of their school; their behaviour and engagement in all of its activities are outstanding.
- Religious education is prized by the whole school community. The implementation of the new curriculum has been highly successful, with a positive impact on pupils' learning.
- All staff and pupils are sincerely committed to the school's mission statement: 'St Joseph's... loving, respectful and resilient, with Christ as our guiding light'.
- The breadth and richness of prayer and liturgy, both within the school and in its links with the parish, are commendable.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop the implementation of the religious education curriculum through building teacher confidence, authentic subject knowledge and teaching expertise.
- Develop pupil independence, individuality and creativity in religious education through plentiful opportunities to use a wide variety of forms of expression.
- Develop the skills of relevant staff in helping pupils to prepare well-constructed, spiritually engaging, prayer and liturgy through effective, regular modelling and formation.

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

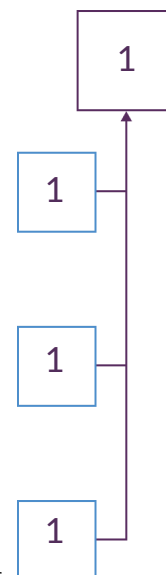
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 fully understand and embrace the Catholic identity of the school. They are proud of their part in creating the school mission statement - 'St Joseph's... loving, respectful and resilient' - because it accurately describes their most significant features: 'We love and include everyone, treat everyone with respect, and we never give up', as one pupil put it. They acknowledge that they are 'guided by the light of Christ', in following the example of Jesus in the Gospels. As another pupil said, 'He can guide us to do good things, and He will forgive us anything.' Pupils are happy and confident, friendly and welcoming, displaying excellent manners. They are invigorated by the demands of Catholic social teaching, eager to show their knowledge of how the principles link to their actions and those of wider society. They take their desire to show their responsibility for the care of the world and others into charitable action, such as supporting a local food bank, visiting a care home, and raising money for Cafod, just a few among several ventures. They take on responsibilities willingly, particularly through the membership of groups: Mini-Vinnies, eco group, school council or religious education ambassadors: 'We have to work at being stewards of God's creation', is a pupil's way of summing up their motivation.

The school mission statement, recently revised with the involvement of pupils, staff, parents and governors, is a clear indication of the school's charism, and is adhered to by all, with visible impact on the school. Staff willingly commit to its implementation throughout all of school life. The sense of community is very strong: 'A small school with a huge heart' as one staff member commented. The school's role in the wider community is particularly significant - singing carols, visiting care homes, taking part in remembrance memorials, and salvation

army support being a few examples. Staff are positive role models, deeply involved in the promotion of the school's work. They have helped pupils understand the scope of their support for others through colour-coding local national and global involvement, as the school works towards the Live Simply award. Relationships in school are excellent, formed of mutual respect. Pastoral care of families is supported by access to a school counsellor. The school's physical environment reflects its values, with signs of the Catholic character portrayed attractively in its vibrant displays. The chaplaincy provision is highly valued by pupils, staff and parents. Provision for relationships, sex and health education meets diocesan requirements.

Leaders and governors are passionate about the school's Catholic ethos, and the Church's mission in education. They are involved in all aspects of school life, and care deeply about its success. The care and support for the wellbeing and development of staff is a strength. This includes the quality and regularity of professional development, and the induction of new staff, who feel extremely well supported. Leaders and governors are inspirational witnesses to the gospel. They ensure that all decisions are taken with Catholic social teaching principles at the heart. Parish links have developed significantly, acknowledged by the parish priest, who welcomes the school's full, active involvement. The partnership with parents has been enhanced by more regular communication, and the invitation to share in the Catholic life of the school, including the chaplaincy programme. Engagement with the diocese is marked by active participation in diocesan initiatives, and attendance at diocesan courses. Catholic links to the wider curriculum are well planned. The quality of the school's self-evaluation of Catholic life and mission is very rigorous, including the involvement of pupils.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

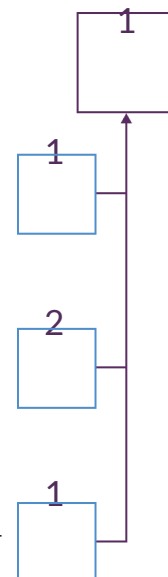
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 are fully engaged in, and enthusiastic about, their learning in religious education. Their knowledge of subject-specific vocabulary is a strength, helping them to understand new religious concepts quickly. Pupils make very good progress in new learning, and attainment has been in line with or exceeding standards in other core subjects. Pupils, relative to their age and ability, are religiously literate and engaged young people. They reflect on their learning, and have a good recall of the scripture that they have studied. They are eager to extend their learning into each new branch of the curriculum. Pupils' work in books is very well presented, completely consistently, with pride taken in what they have produced: 'I've really missed this book', one pupil said when looking through last year's work, summing up her love of what she had learnt. Pupils understand how well they are achieving, through self-assessment and feedback from teachers, and how to improve their work. They concentrate very well, responding to the challenge of learning, but have less opportunity to develop this in independent, original and creative ways.

Teachers are fully committed to the value of religious education, recognising its priority in the school curriculum. The school's approach to marking and feedback has enabled the early identification of gaps in pupils' learning, with individual questions giving pupils the chance to respond, and thereby make quick progress. Staff have high expectations, and are confident in their subject knowledge, given the relatively recent introduction of a new curriculum that has increased demands on their own pedagogical development. The structure of the new diocesan teaching resource: *The Way* is giving all teachers the tools with which to develop pupils' understanding, with further enhancement and enrichment developing. Teachers

celebrate pupils' achievement and effort regularly, thereby increasing motivation. Questioning is used effectively to develop pupils' understanding. Pupils are given time and space to reflect on their learning, as a result of teachers' recognition of the impact of religious education on their moral and spiritual development. Teachers provide pupils with opportunities to present their learning in a variety of ways, but this is at an early stage of development within the context of the adoption and implementation of the new scheme of work.

Leaders and governors have engaged very enthusiastically with the new diocesan scheme for religious education, *The Way*, having volunteered to be one of the pilot schools in the previous year. The whole school community recognises the impact of the scheme, which is a faithful expression of the *Religious Education Directory*. The scheme 'has really supported us in embedding Catholic values with all children and staff and we have seen a huge increase in engagement, enjoyment and understanding in lessons' is a typical staff member's response. Parents, too, recognise the impact of the subject: 'My children have thrived on learning about their religion,' being a representative comment. Leaders and governors have ensured that the subject has at least parity with other core subjects in relation to staffing, timetabling and resources. Their commitment to the quality of religious education is unquestionable. Professional development has been extensive over this period, and very effective. The leadership team are highly ambitious in reaching for the highest standards and are rigorous in monitoring and evaluating in order to effect continuous improvement. The subject leader has been exemplary in sharing her passion, expertise and vision for religious education. Staff and governors alike acknowledge the quality of her influence and the impact of her work. Action planning, pupil voice exercises with the religious education ambassadors, team teaching and lesson observations have helped to ensure excellent pupil learning and rapid staff development.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

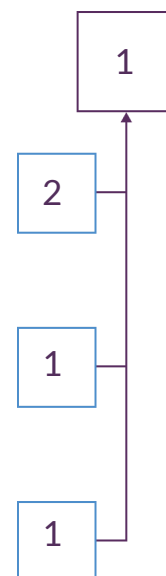
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

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 enjoy and appreciate their experiences of prayer and liturgy. They willingly participate through joyful singing, communal prayer, responses to questions and silent reflection. Without exception, they show reverence and respect in every gathering. They have a detailed understanding of the structure and variety of the Church's year and how it is reflected in celebrations. They have very good recall of common prayers, and are able to create their own spontaneous prayers, especially in their prayer books during times of meditation. They work well with others to prepare celebrations of the word for their peers, understanding how these acts of worship are organised, and contributing good ideas as to how they can be presented. They willingly take on roles in each celebration and are confident in doing so. Their evaluations of the quality of the celebration are at an early stage of development, tending to focus on operational aspects rather than the spiritual impact. This can also be a feature of the celebration itself. Pupils recognise that prayer and liturgy are intrinsically linked to the religious education curriculum and the Catholic life and mission of the school.

Prayer is central to the life of the school, and every effort is made to immerse the school in prayer regularly throughout each term. The weekly pattern, incorporating whole-school celebrations, meditation, the Examen, and class-based celebrations of the word are carefully prepared to link to each other. Each week starts with 'Mission Monday' which, along with the statement of belief, gives pupils a focus to take into subsequent days, and this is highly effective in helping pupils to respond. Catholic social teaching and the school mission statement are important constants in this process. The pupils are given fortnightly opportunities to attend Mass in the church, and to take on associated ministries. There is a

richness to the variety and ways of praying that the school offers. Scripture is used well, appropriate to the seasons of the Church's year or to other chosen themes. Staff and leaders are fully committed to engaging pupils in prayer and liturgy. They have worked enthusiastically to help pupils plan and prepare celebrations of prayer and liturgy, letting pupils take the lead from an early age. Modelling by staff to increase pupils' understanding of the liturgical norms of the Church and their focus on spiritual engagement has been under-used. The school makes imaginative use of spaces for prayer, in the hall, in classrooms, in the Church, at prayer stations and in the developing prayer garden.

The prayer and liturgy policy is accessible and useful to staff. It includes the celebration of the word progression of skills policy, which is a detailed document and is accompanied by other advice for staff, emanating from recent professional development. Together, these documents give excellent, comprehensive guidance for all staff. The Annual Plan of Provision thoughtfully addresses the school's navigation of the Church's year, ensuring that all important feasts and stages are marked appropriately. Through the Eucharist, the sacrament of reconciliation, or other forms from Catholic tradition. Creative innovations to include families, through the regular invitation to school celebrations, and the resources for prayer sent home periodically, such as the rosary folders in October and the travelling crib during advent, have been well-received by parents, carers and pupils alike. Leaders have an impressive understanding of the broad range of ways of praying appropriate to the age of pupils. Resourcing of prayer and liturgy gives evidence of the importance given to it in the life of the school. The school's accurate self-evaluation of its prayer and liturgy provision has led to welcome improvements over time.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	114276
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9133501
Full postal address of the school	Church Lane, Seaham, SR7 9RD
School phone number	0191 5261795
Headteacher or Head of School	Mrs Jill Cartwright
Chair of Governors	Ms Elaine Matterson
School Website	www.murton-st-josephs.durham.sch.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	16 November 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The Inspection Team

Alan Dewhurst

Lead

Martin Macaulay

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