



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

URN: 111373

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Liverpool

28 January 2026 – 29 January 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

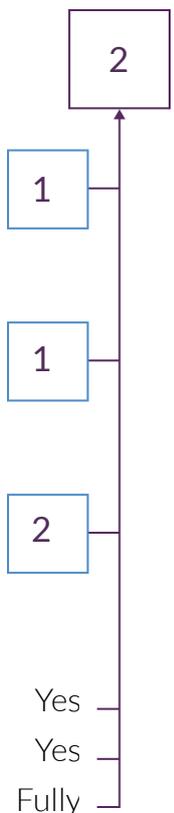
Collective worship (p.7)

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



What the school does well

- ● The Catholic life and mission of St Joseph's is firmly rooted in the word of God which is lived out and celebrated for the benefit of all.
- ● The whole environment is enriched by well-presented displays and prayer stations that witness the school's Catholic identity.
- ● Pupil outcomes are consistently above average. This is exemplified through creative learning and beautifully presented work.
- ● Pupil behaviour is exemplary, which is evident through mature, caring attitudes and respect for others.
- ● Teachers' searching questions and verbal feedback in religious education challenges learning, so that pupils develop excellent knowledge, understanding and skills.

What the school needs to improve

- ● In prayer and liturgy provide on-going training that includes sharing of best practice, and evaluation of its impact.

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

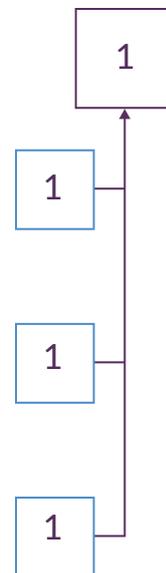
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 understand and fully embrace the Catholic mission of St Joseph's. They actively support the needs of others who are vulnerable, both locally and globally. They raise money by organising pyjama days, filling rucksacks with clothes for those in need, and through the Big Lent Walk for *Cafod*. The Squires group makes cards and rosary beads, using them to say prayers for their community. Pupils hold tea parties for parishioners and collect items for the local food bank. Pupils clearly understand the reasons for their actions, linking their ideas to the message of the Gospels. One pupil explained, "We live out our lives as Jesus wants us to." Pupils show a deep respect for themselves as unique individuals, saying, "We're not perfect, Jesus just wants us to be ourselves." Year 6 pupils have special friends in reception, whom they guide and support. This is testimony to their sense of responsibility and caring attitudes towards each other. Pupils are interested in learning about other faiths and religions. A visit to the school, by the local Imam, provided an enriching experience in discovering more about Islam. A member of the *happiness heroes* group explained, "All are welcome here. We all belong."

The mission statement, 'Learning, growing, belonging ...happy together in God's family', is a clear and inspiring expression of the educational vision at St Joseph's. A staff member stated that, "Christ truly is at the heart of our school. Our mission statement underpins all aspects of school life and shapes our decisions, relationships and daily practice." This is unanimously echoed by all who work at St Joseph's. Staff live out this mission through their personal commitment and strong relationships with each other. There is a lived sense of community. All are valued and belong. Staff provide the highest levels of pastoral care for pupils. This is

evident in gentle incidental interactions and through the praise and encouragement by support staff. From the entrance hall, the emotional learning support room, through corridors and classrooms, the Catholic character is shared and joyfully celebrated. Teachers ensure that links to Catholic social teaching are made explicit across the curriculum. For example, in early years, the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand was skilfully linked to the children's experience of fundraising for Children in Need. The programme for relationships, sex and health education is firmly rooted in the teaching of the Church. It is well sequenced and fully mapped out against other curriculum areas.

Leaders and governors have a shared passion for the Catholic life and mission of St Joseph's. Every decision they make has Christ at its heart. Meetings always begin with a prayer and a review of Catholic life. Governors effectively target resources towards those who are vulnerable, for example, investment in provision for an Emotional Learning Support Assistant. Leaders fully embrace their responsibilities and are a source of inspiration for the whole community. A parent spoke of the huge contribution made by the headteacher, stating, "His dedication to Catholic life and encouraging that ethos on a daily basis is borne out by a lovely atmosphere in school: with happy, polite, caring and incredibly well-behaved children ... my son thrives." The school places itself at the service of the local church. Pupils benefit greatly from sacramental preparation and learning about religious education themes. Parents and carers are highly supportive of the school. One parent described the school as, "a second home." The whole curriculum has religious education at its core. Subject leaders have ensured that their subjects reflect Catholic social teaching and links are made to the moral and spiritual aspects of religious education. Leaders are deeply committed to supporting the well-being of staff. Staff new to the school receive high quality induction and training.

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

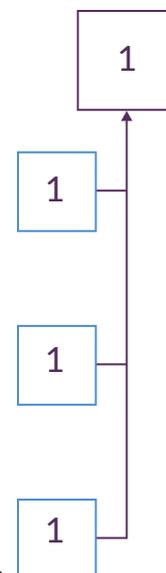
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 are developing excellent knowledge, understanding and skills in religious education. They make exceptional progress and achieve consistently above average standards of attainment. Pupils remember more and apply previous knowledge. They are skilled in flicking back over work to check and research their ideas further. They make tangible links in their learning, for example, comparing the proclamations of Elijah, Isaiah and John the Baptist. They are actively engaged, concentrate well and work independently. Pupils greatly enjoy their learning. Consequently, behaviour during lessons is outstanding. Pupils of all ages are religiously literate. They use and understand mature vocabulary when expressing detailed ideas. Children in early years talk articulately about miracles in the scriptures, while older pupils discuss the sacraments and their meaning in everyday life. Pupils are inquisitive and well-motivated. They ask incisive questions which enables deeper learning. Pupils know how well they are doing. A year 6 pupil said, "We are guided in our learning, not told that something is wrong, but sensitively moved on." They produce work of a consistently high standard. It is beautifully and creatively presented, through artwork, well-constructed writing and role play. Pupils are very proud of their work in religious education.

Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. Together, with supporting adults, they have a deep commitment to teaching religious education. They have welcomed the revised Religious Education Directory, introducing successful planning across the whole school and through mixed age groups. One staff member said, "The RED has helped pupils to understand how to live out the values from scripture in everyday life." Skilful questions, clear explanations and

use of stretching vocabulary, maximises pupil learning. Teachers' ongoing assessment of pupils' progress and knowledge provides effective opportunities for sharing good work and addressing any misconceptions. Pupils receive live feedback about their learning, which celebrates effort, and both motivates and encourages further exploration. Teachers understand the impact of religious education on pupils' moral and spiritual development. Reflection time in lessons enables pupils to think deeply. Opportunities for pupils to talk with a partner, enable quality interactions and sharing of moral ideas. Teachers plan sensitively, to enable pupils to present their work creatively. They ensure a clear focus on learning objectives in religious education, whilst providing exciting and engaging activities, for example, making mobiles to learn and re-tell the Our Father, using Venn diagrams to sort phrases from scripture or ordering cards to express ideas about the sacraments. This creativity brings excitement and high-quality learning.

Leaders and governors ensure that religious education has equal parity with other core subjects. High priority is given to staff training, which has ensured the successful and systematic introduction of the revised Religious Education Directory. Investment in valuable time for staff to plan with the Warrington Cluster of Catholic Schools has ensured that the curriculum is well-sequenced, structured and imaginatively thought out. The subject leader has an inspiring vision for religious education and is a model of best practice. One teacher spoke about the high-quality support provided by the subject leader for religious education, saying, "She leads by example and is enthusiastic and passionate about RE." Another said, "She is always willing to help with any questions or interpretations of scripture." The school supports the archdiocese by sharing the subject leader's expertise with a core cluster group in the development of religious education. Leaders and governors are knowledgeable about the development of religious education and ensure it is given high priority in the school improvement plan. They describe the place of religious education in their school as, "The core of the core curriculum." Their self-evaluation is searching and challenging, which results in outstanding outcomes.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

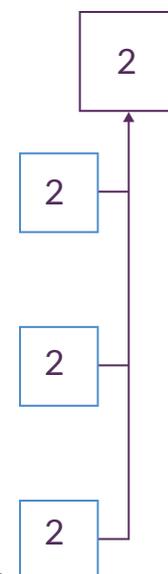
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

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 respond well and participate in acts of prayer and liturgy. They reflect in silence, join in with community prayer and sing beautifully. Pupils know a range of traditional prayers, for example, children in Reception confidently enjoy saying the Glory Be to the Father. Pupils can describe the parts of the Church's liturgical year and the celebrations attended. Religious Education Ambassadors are proud to be given responsibility and are keen to lead aspects of prayer and liturgy and to serve at Mass. Pupils prepare the environment, by turning off the light and lighting candles to prepare the atmosphere for prayer. They place a sign on the classroom door, so their time for prayer is not interrupted. They read from the Bible. They read response prayers. Older pupils undertake ministries willingly and have begun to evaluate quality and effectiveness. They can explain how their experiences of prayer have led to action. Pupils enjoy personal prayer at the sacred prayer stations around the school. They bless themselves with holy water in the entrance hall, or pray for someone in need, as they hold a tiny heart, in front of the statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Prayer and liturgy is central to the life of St Joseph's. There is a daily routine of prayer at key parts of the day, such as prayers before meals and at home time. Seasonally appropriate scripture is carefully selected, read from the Bible, and is at the centre of the celebration. Prayer responses, which are sometimes inspired by the scripture are shared. Where spontaneous prayers are invited, pupils offer their thoughts. The Senior leaders are models of good practice for other staff and pupils. They lead well-constructed prayer and liturgy. Their expertise should be shared further to raise staff skills in ensuring intrinsic links across the whole of the celebration when planning and leading prayer and liturgy. Music is thoughtfully

chosen to create a calm atmosphere, for example, the use of Taizé in Year 2. The use of live music accompanies singing of 'The Lord's My Shepherd', during whole school prayer and liturgy. The school environment is enhanced by beautifully prepared prayer spaces. Families are invited to take part in the prayer life of St Joseph's, through the monthly family Mass, Christmas celebrations, assemblies and sacramental preparation. Staff value the opportunity to pray together at special times, arranged especially for them by the headteacher.

Leaders have a clear strategy for building up the skills of pupils in participating in and leading prayer and liturgy. This has been translated into a new document which provides guidance for staff and for the training of Religious Education Ambassadors. The school's policy for prayer and liturgy is well-formulated and useful to staff. Leaders and governors have planned an annual cycle of Masses, feast days and celebrations, for example, the joint Mass with another school for the feast of All Saints, the Year 6 Leavers' Mass and opportunities to pray the Rosary. Leaders have a thorough understanding of the Church's liturgical sources, and this expertise provides ongoing support for staff. Training has been provided through staff meetings and attendance at the archdiocese Prayer and Liturgy Directory launch day. As a result, new responses, 'The word, the truth, the light', have been introduced as pupils gather. This training helps staff to plan prayer, liturgy and worship that is engaging, accessible and relevant. Further modelling of best practice and feedback from leaders would enable staff skills to grow when planning and leading cohesive prayer and liturgy. Governors ask challenging questions of leaders and are involved in the self-evaluation and planning of improvements. The link governor visits the school and ensures that prayer and liturgy is given priority within the school improvement plan.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	111373
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8773622
Full postal address of the school	Walton Avenue, Warrington, WA5 2AU
School phone number	01925 723340
Headteacher or Head of School	Mr Alan Saunders
Chair of Governors	Mrs Kathryn Price
School Website	www.stjprimary.co.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	
Age-range of pupils	4 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	27 February 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The Inspection Team

Christine Mason

Lead

Anne Marie Webb

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