



St Charles Catholic Primary School

URN: 148628

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

12–13 November 2025

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

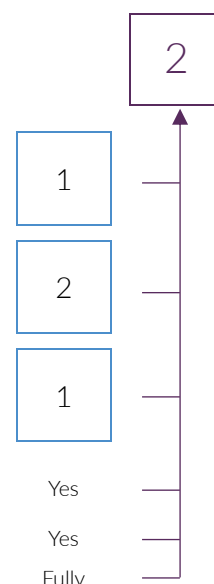
Collective worship (p.7)

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 any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection



Compliance statement

- St Charles' Catholic Primary School is compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- St Charles' Catholic Primary School is compliant with the requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- St Charles' Catholic Primary School has responded and fully met the areas for further development which were identified during the last inspection.

What the school does well

- Christ is at the heart of St Charles' Catholic Primary School. There is a lived sense of community evident in the quality of relationships and the strong culture of welcome to parents, the wider family network and parish.
- Staff and leaders are exemplary role models within their community. Through their relationships with each other and the love and care shown for all pupils, they consistently bear witness to the school's Catholic life and mission.
- Leaders are committed to securing high quality professional development for all practitioners in religious education. Development opportunities are well planned, well led and highly effective.
- Pupils are happy, confident and feel secure. There is a true sense of inclusion for all and a commitment to the service of those in greatest need.
- The school works hard to secure a flourishing partnership with the local parish to help pupils to participate more fully in prayer and liturgy.

What the school needs to improve

- Provide opportunities for pupils to demonstrate notable independence in their learning, accumulating what they have learned to show a deeper level of understanding.
- Enhance opportunities to develop pupils' religious literacy in order to use their knowledge and skills to deepen understanding and reflect spiritually.
- Develop the ways in which the experiences of prayer and liturgy provided by the school shapes how pupils think about themselves and the world and can explain how this has inspired them to action.

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



The school's charism and mission is known and actively lived out by all pupils. Their active participation significantly enhances the Catholic life and mission of the school. They are happy, confident and feel secure; they know they are loved, valued and cared for. Pupils are encouraged, through a range of opportunities, to contribute to the Catholic life of the school, actively supporting local, national and global charities. Pupils benefit from the strong community links that are well established and St Charles' school has been described as the 'heart of the community'. Pupils follow their golden rule 'treat others as you would like to be treated'. They have a high level of regard for their peers, evident in the '5 questions' restorative practice which is rooted in Gospel values. One pupil quoted scripture saying, 'We forgive not 7, but 77 times.' There is a deep sense of respect and inclusion for those from other faiths, religions and no faith background. Pupils find ways of responding to Catholic social teaching in addition to joining in enthusiastically with projects promoted by the school. They take on leadership roles readily and are active as mini-Vinnies, prayer leaders and 'big buddies' as older pupils are excellent role-models for their friends in Reception class. All pupils can articulate the school's mission statement explaining that, 'Anything we do, we know Jesus is there.' They display a clear understanding of how this relates to various aspects of school life.

Staff, including those new to Catholic education, actively embrace the mission statement and are exemplary role models to the pupils. There is a high level of pastoral support and care for all including the most vulnerable. One pupil stated, 'My teacher is my inspiration.' There is a strong and lived sense of community with Christ truly at the heart of the school. All children and families are welcome, supported and fully included within the life of St Charles'. Parents actively reciprocate in contributing to the Catholic life of the school stating, 'This is our home,' and

overwhelming express the positive impact that the Catholic life and mission has had on their family. The school environment is a clear witness to its Catholic identity proclaiming the mission and ethos to all. There are explicit and effective signs of the school's Catholic character throughout with careful thought and attention given to the quality of space. The provision for relationships, sex and health education is carefully planned to ensure that it fully meets diocesan requirements which have been successfully implemented across school.

Leaders, supported by governors are able to clearly articulate the Church's mission in education and have a very clear vision for St Charles'. Through their passion and high levels of expertise, leaders are ambitious and they inspire staff and the wider community to follow their commitment, as they are living witness to the school's Catholic life and mission. There is a flourishing partnership between the school, parents and the local parish which is acknowledged and appreciated by all. The school has highly successful strategies for engaging with parents using a variety of platforms to promote and celebrate aspects of Catholic life such as parish and school newsletters, online apps and display books. Parents comment that, 'The school is very involved with the local parish church and welcomes parents to participate. It is lovely to be able to celebrate special dates in the Catholic Church with our children.' Governors are actively involved in the school and its self-evaluation. They can discuss the ways in which they monitor and evaluate provision. Alongside this, leaders ensure that structures are in place which provide the highest level of pastoral care for staff.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

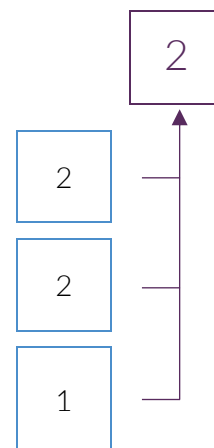
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 developing secure knowledge, understanding and skills that reflect the learning required by the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* and as a result they make good progress in knowing more, remembering more, and doing more when measured against the planned curriculum for each year. Pupils enjoy religious education lessons and take pride in their work; they produce good work that is presented well. Pupils display a positive attitude towards religious education resulting in a purposeful learning environment. There are self-assessment opportunities throughout lessons and at the end of every topic which supports pupils to have an understanding of how well they are doing, for example, the use of knowledge organisers and the double paged spread. Pupils speak with confidence about what they have learnt and are able to use subject specific vocabulary as a result of the school's focus on the development of oracy. However, pupils do not have the religious literacy to help them to reflect spiritually and deepen their understanding. Pupils are not yet suitably equipped with the core knowledge and skills in order to deepen their learning. Pupils' achievement in religious education is at least in line with, and in some cases better than other core curriculum subjects.

Teachers demonstrate a deep commitment to the teaching of religious education and are confident in their subject knowledge. This is enhanced through a wide range of professional development opportunities in order to develop their personal knowledge and skills. As a result, increased levels of confidence with religious education planning means that pupils learn well. Celebration of effort is clearly evident leading to high levels of motivation from pupils. Teachers use questioning during lessons to identify where pupils are in their understanding, and in some lessons, these questions are more skilful and precise. Learning is well-planned and pupils are provided with opportunities to show what they know in a variety of forms of expression, although opportunities to show notable independence and greater creativity are limited.

Resources, including other adults are used effectively to support learning. Teachers provide pupils with feedback in the form of 'even better ifs' and 'challenge questions'. As a result, pupils understand what they need to do to improve their learning. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop critical thinking skills, in order to make more meaningful and deeper reflections on their learning. This would allow pupils to maximise their understanding of what they need to do to make greater progress.

Leaders and governors prioritise religious education to the extent that it has at least full parity with other core curriculum areas. A real strength in the leadership of religious education is the commitment to offering high quality and relevant professional development to staff members and ongoing support through professional dialogue. Development opportunities are carefully planned and tailored to meet the needs of all staff. Leaders have responded proactively to staffing changes to ensure they provide high quality induction and ongoing support to the full staff team. As a result, consistency and embedded practices across all phases is evident. Self-evaluation is robust and based on a rigorous cycle of monitoring and evaluation. This results in strategic action. The school is pro-active in seeking opportunities for moderation of standards including in-house, Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust and diocesan wide moderation to affirm judgements. The subject leader for religious education has an inspiring vision and is deeply committed to sharing her expertise for the benefit of others. Staff speak highly of the fantastic support they have received stating that they value the time and patience from senior leaders to enable them to become flourishing practitioners.

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

1

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

1

Leadership

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

1

1

Pupils fully engage in a prayerful and reverent way with a wide variety of opportunities for prayer and liturgy provided by the school. They demonstrate their attentiveness and response to prayer through the use of liturgical music, singing, relevant scripture and appropriate gestures. Groups of pupils are actively involved in ministry, for example sharing the Liturgy of the word. Pupils work collaboratively with others, such as teachers and other pupils to prepare creative and well-constructed experiences of prayer and liturgy and their skills progress as they move through the school. The children regularly lead prayer in their own classrooms, and their skills are well-embedded. Pupils often write their own prayers in prayer journals and are able to select appropriate scripture as a central aspect of the celebration of the word. Pupils know and understand the different elements of prayer and liturgy, and they are able to evaluate the delivery of this. They can talk about how they have progressed in their knowledge of scripture and the four-part celebration of the word. However, pupils cannot yet clearly articulate how these experiences have inspired them to action and have shaped how they think about themselves and the world.

Prayer and liturgy is central to the life of the school. There is a naturally embedded daily pattern of prayer which is fundamental to St Charles' and clearly reflects the Catholic traditions, for example stations of the cross and the rosary. Pupils show respect during all prayer times discussing how these important opportunities help them to feel, 'calm and grow in faith and love'. Staff, including senior leaders, are inspiring role models to other staff and pupils by engaging in and leading prayer and liturgy. They help pupils to confidently plan well-constructed prayer and liturgy over the course of the school year. The school makes imaginative and creative use of the indoor and outdoor spaces available which provide a wide range of opportunities to pray. An indoor dedicated prayer space, currently reflecting the Jubilee Year of Hope and the

outdoor provision for a prayer garden significantly enhances these experiences for all. The school works hard to secure a flourishing partnership with the local parish to help pupils participate more fully in prayer and liturgy. This is welcomed by parishioners who value pupil participation at Mass. One parent commented that, 'The prayer life of the school is exceptional, my child is a prayer leader, and they are proud and honoured to be actively taking part in worship each day.'

The school's policy on prayer and liturgy is carefully formulated; there is a clear plan of provision linked to the liturgical year and key events in the school life and community. Leaders prioritise opportunities for pupils to celebrate Mass and the teaching of the Sacraments in an age-appropriate way. Leaders, including governors, place the highest priority on professional development for all staff that focuses on liturgical formation and the planning of prayer and liturgy. As a result, all staff understand the centrality of prayer and liturgy to the life of the school. Pupils and staff are able to provide prayer and liturgy opportunities that are engaging, of high quality and are accessible, meaningful, and relevant for the whole community. Leaders and governors prioritise resourcing and expenditure for prayer and liturgy. The voice of pupils, parents and staff are an integral and a valued part of the school's evaluation cycle. Collective Worship is paramount to the life of the school. Governors play an active role in monitoring and evaluating prayer and liturgy stating how proud they are of the school noting the positive impact of prayer and liturgy for pupils and parents.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Charles Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	148628
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8403444
Full postal address of the school	Durham Road, Spennymoor, County Durham, DL16 6SL
School phone number	01388814285
Executive headteacher	Not applicable
Headteacher	Lisa Thompson
Chair of local governing committee	Vanessa Mains
School Website	https://stcharles.bhcet.org.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	March 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

Claire Garbutt
Martin Macaulay

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