



St Matthew's Catholic Primary School

URN: 149035

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

25–26 March 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

1

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

1

Collective worship (p.7)

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

1

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

1

What the school does well

- The school has flourishing partnerships with all stakeholders, especially with parents and the parish. These relationships enrich and enhance the daily life of the school
- The behaviour and attitudes of pupils in religious education lessons are exemplary: pupils take great pride in their learning, consistently producing high quality work which demonstrates the priority given to this subject
- The recently revisited mission statement, together with the school's SHINE values, are at the foundation of how the school explicitly and effectively communicates its purpose
- Leaders at all levels are passionate, committed and dedicated to the school's success; they have clear vision and are inspirational witnesses to Catholic social teaching
- High quality opportunities to share prayer and liturgy are a strong feature of school life, with pupils playing a key part in planning, leading and evaluating with high levels of confidence

What the school needs to improve

- Develop self-evaluation strategies in religious education so that subject development targets are more focused, specific and measurable
- Enhance opportunities for pupils to use authentic scripture so that they can develop a deeper understanding of the Bible and make links between different parts of scripture

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 Catholic life at St Matthew's is exemplary. The school provides a sanctuary of prayer and reflection that stays with the children long after the school day has ended.' This comment by a parent summarises effectively how pupils respond to the challenge of their mission, to 'let their light shine'. Pupils clearly express their understanding that each pupil at this school is respected and valued as a unique person. They say that their differences are celebrated. Pupils are happy, confident and secure. They care for each other well and are sensitive to the different needs of each other. Older pupils demonstrate this through their roles as playground leaders, peer mediators and buddies. They embrace their school mission and have a strong understanding of the 'SHINE' values associated with it and how it influences their lives. They are very knowledgeable about Catholic social teaching and recognise how they can live these out by making a difference locally and globally. Pupils willingly take on leadership roles through opportunities provided such as: Mini-Vinnies, Eco Warriors, RE Ambassadors, the Live Simply group and the Junior Leadership group. Pupils are closely involved in leading the school's chaplaincy provision and their influence provides excellent role models for other pupils.

The school's mission statement is an inspiring expression of the educational mission of the Church. Staff have been involved in updating this and translating the mission into values which the pupils can aspire to. These 'SHINE' values are linked to class and school awards. Staff readily support activities which develop the mission. This includes creating an inclusive experience for pupils and families, generating charitable support in the wider community, and outreach to the parish community. Staff are adept at managing sensitive issues with compassion. There is a strong sense of welcome and partnership; this is best summarised by one parent who exemplified what many others said, 'There is something very special about St Matthew's. You

feel it as soon as you walk through the door. The sense of community is outstanding.' The commitment to pastoral care is high and there is an explicit and concrete commitment to the most vulnerable. Focal points and prayer spaces explicitly demonstrate the school's strong Catholic character. The relationships and sex education programme is faithful to the teachings of the Church. It enables the school to support the strong personal development of pupils and reflects a Catholic understanding of the holistic development of pupils.

Leaders are energised, determined and consistent in their pursuit of the school's mission. They ensure Christ is at the centre of St Matthew's and are a source of inspiration for the community. Partnership with parents is a strength and leaders work hard to fully support and empower parents in their role as first educators. Parents hold the headteacher in the highest regard because of her knowledge of all pupils, high visibility and approachability. As one parent commented, 'This is not a headteacher who stays in her office.' There is a thriving partnership with the parish, resulting in a sacramental programme with strong engagement from parents. Leaders work closely with the parish priest to plan and provide an extensive range of activities across the school year. Leaders apply Catholic social teaching principles in their direction of the school at every level. They show strong commitment to the well-being of staff by taking effective action to ease workload. Leaders ensure that Catholic values are threaded through the whole curriculum. Governors are ambitious and actively involved in seeking out evidence to support the school's self-evaluation. Pupils are actively involved in evaluating the school's Catholic life and play a key part in leading improvements.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

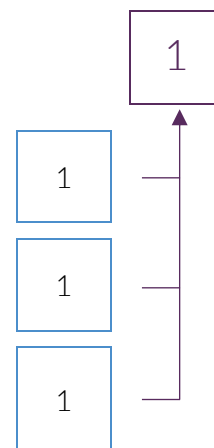
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 develop excellent knowledge, understanding and skills in line with the Religious Education Curriculum Directory. They make consistently good progress in all classes. Pupils use effective retrieval strategies to ensure that they learn more and remember more. They are using their knowledge and understanding to reflect spiritually and morally. Pupils understand the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. They can talk fluently, readily and with confidence about what they have learnt in religious education. This demonstrates their sense of commitment to their lessons. Furthermore, pupils ask incisive questions of adults which enhance learning. For example, one pupil asked, 'Do you think Jesus would be sad at the last supper knowing what was to come?' Pupils' work is of a consistently high quality. They can express their learning across a variety of tasks. Pupils concentrate well, love the challenge of learning and are curious and interested. Additionally, they use effective strategies to regularly reflect on their learning. This enhances pupils' understanding of their progress. Attainment in religious education is at least as good as other curriculum subjects. The behaviour and attitudes of pupils in lessons are exemplary because pupils enjoy their learning and are engaged in their lessons.

Teachers at St Matthew's have strong subject knowledge and there is a high standard of teaching expertise across all classes. They demonstrate their deep commitment to the value of religious education through communicating high expectations to pupils. As a consequence, religious education is seen by teachers as 'the core of the core'. Skilful use of questioning means that staff know where pupils are in their understanding and that all pupils are enabled to access the full curriculum. Adaptations are used sensitively to support learning activities, with other adults effectively deployed to ensure all pupils can succeed. Teachers use good examples of pupils' work to enthuse and motivate others. They make good links between religious education lessons, Catholic social teaching and how pupils can apply their learning in practical ways.

Extensive opportunities are provided so that pupils can present learning in a wide variety of ways. Furthermore, time for reflection and meditation is provided every day. A variety of high-quality resources are used to support learning. However, some opportunities are missed to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of authentic scripture. Whilst many religious education lessons feature extracts from scripture, too few of these involve pupils using the Bible to deepen their understanding and develop their skills of navigating the Bible.

Leaders and governors ensure that the curriculum is a faithful expression of the Directory. Religious education has at least full parity with other core subjects. This is evident in class timetables; the resources provided for the subject and the commitment to providing the highest quality professional development for staff. A clear understanding of what strong teaching and learning looks like in religious education is communicated effectively by the subject leader. An effective marking and feedback policy is consistently applied across all classes. The subject leader has an inspiring vision, deep commitment and a high level of expertise. She works effectively with staff to ensure that the curriculum is thoughtfully planned to meet the needs of all pupils. Excellent enrichment activities with other local Catholic schools, Cafod, Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust and the Youth Ministry Team enhance the curriculum and further promote pupils' learning. A comprehensive monitoring plan involves all stakeholders, including pupils. This self-evaluation means that leaders understand the subject's strengths and areas for development well. However, targets for development within the subject action plan and self-evaluation document lack precision. Governors hold leaders to account well and are active in evaluating the school's work, independently seeking evidence to verify judgements.

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 relish opportunities to share experiences of prayer and liturgy. They are deeply engaged and demonstrate this through joyful singing, prayerful silence and eagerness to participate. Pupils enjoy planning and leading celebrations of the word for each other and for the whole school. Their planning and leadership skills are well-embedded. Pupils read aloud and present with confidence and ensure that well-chosen scripture is a central feature of every celebration of the word. They undertake liturgical ministries with confidence, understanding and skill. Pupils understand and experience a wide variety of ways to pray, including post-lunch Catholic meditations. They know the Church's liturgical year well and have an excellent understanding of how this is expressed in their school. Pupils are increasingly able to articulate the links between celebrations of the word, the curriculum and their own lives beyond the school. They have a well-developed understanding of how prayer and liturgy links with Catholic social teaching and their mission. Pupils of all ages are involved in evaluations of prayer and liturgy and recognise the purpose of this. One pupil commented, 'It is to see if we could do anything better, but also an opportunity to celebrate what has gone well.'

Staff are inspiring models of good practice in prayer and liturgy and are highly skilled in helping pupils to plan and lead well-constructed experiences. A wide range of engaging creative approaches are integrated into prayer and liturgy in ways that significantly enhance experiences and reflect the breadth and richness of the Catholic tradition. Explicit links between prayer and liturgy, the school's mission, Catholic social teaching, the Shine values and the religious education 'word of the week' enable pupils to deeply understand the value and purpose of each experience. Lovingly cared-for spaces around school, in classes and outdoors, are used imaginatively to provide opportunities for formal and informal prayer. Excellent parish links ensure there is a flourishing partnership with the local parish community. These are enhanced

by opportunities for pupils to attend Mass at church or at school. A strong example of the strength in this community can be seen, an example of this was when older pupils voluntarily lined the street to pay respects as the funeral cortege of a former volunteer of the school community passed by the school. The school works exceptionally well with parents to include them in regular celebrations of the word and Masses, and parents highly value these opportunities.

An effective policy for prayer and liturgy, now incorporated into an annual plan of provision, is regularly reviewed and fit for purpose. It clearly sets out expectations in the frequency of worship opportunities. The policy makes clear the school's high expectations for pupils in relation to the prayers that they know and how they will develop their planning and leadership skills as they progress across the school. A range of evidence sources demonstrate how leaders effectively support others to lead high quality experiences of prayer and liturgy. A wide range of significant moments are identified and celebrated in prayer. Leaders ensure that the plan for the year includes major feast days and celebrations, including Mass at least half-termly. School leaders ensure that they and other staff access regular training and readily model good practice within the school. Governors are actively involved in informally monitoring provision. Leaders have a thorough understanding of a broad range of ways to pray. Staff, parents and pupils all contribute to the school's self-evaluation, and their views are an integral part of how the school identifies strengths and areas for improvement.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Matthew's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	149035
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3933311
Full postal address of the school	Alnwick Grove, Jarrow, Tyne and Wear, NE32 5YT
School phone number	0191 4898355
Executive headteacher	Not applicable
Headteacher	Eve Alderson
Chair of local governing committee	Mrs Angela Boyle
School Website	https://stmatthewsjarrow.co.uk/
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education 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	12 September 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

Michael Ewing
Ruth Whyte

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