



St Paul's Catholic Primary School

URN:148503

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

25–26 September 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

1

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

2

Compliance statement

- St Paul's Catholic Primary School is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- St Paul's Catholic Primary School is fully compliant with all the requirements of the diocesan Bishop.
- St Paul's Catholic Primary School has responded to and met the previous areas for improvement identified during the last inspection in June 2018.

What the school does well

- Pupils know that their uniqueness is celebrated and recognise that they make highly valued contributions to school and parish life. They are therefore confident and extremely proud members of the community.
- Staff demonstrate exceptional pastoral care to their pupils and to one another. Consequently, pupils know they are safe and deeply loved, and staff feel very well supported.
- Leaders are exemplary role models in the way they prioritise the well-being of pupils and their families; parents are highly appreciative of the high level of commitment shown by leaders to support them as their child's first educator.
- There is an embedded focus on developing a knowledge of scripture and an understanding of religious vocabulary. Systematic opportunities to reflect on prior learning ensure that pupils develop religious literacy.
- Pupils confidently and enthusiastically plan and lead celebrations of the word which link to the liturgical year or appropriate themes and have scripture at the heart.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that the principles of Catholic social teaching are explicitly embedded across the wider curriculum and that pupils have a deep understanding of the theology that underpins these principles.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to explore a variety of sources and reflect on a range of views in order to deepen their theological understanding.
- Ensure that the prayer experiences offered support all pupils to participate fully and respond joyously.

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

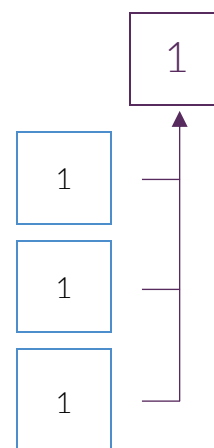
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



St Paul's pupils are extremely proud to be members of their school's community. They have a deep understanding of the school's mission statement, 'To grow in God's love to be the best that we can be,' because it is embedded and celebrated in all aspects of school life. They recognise the distinctive Catholic character of the school and welcome the many opportunities to contribute to its mission, including through Mini Vinnies and Faith in Action. They know they are loved, and consequently, they feel secure and treasured. They recognise that they are unique and can make a valued contribution to the community, and so eagerly care for one another and the environment, following the example of Jesus. One pupil commented, 'God has made this world and we need to make sure we protect it.' Pupils are highly respectful to all because there are explicit opportunities to explore the beliefs and cultures of others. Their behaviour across the day is exemplary and they flourish because of the deeply rooted culture of respect. Pupils are developing an understanding of Catholic social teaching; however, because the principles are not fully embedded across the wider curriculum, pupils cannot fully articulate the theology that underlies and inspires actions.

Staff are exemplary role models in the ways in which they welcome and serve pupils and their families. They are highly committed to embedding the Catholic charism of the school, frequently referring to the school's patron saint as inspiration. They ensure that the focus they give to the RESPECT values, (resilience; empathy; self-awareness; positivity; excellence; communication and teamwork,) enables pupils to live out the school's mission statement day to day. They provide excellent pastoral care to ensure that all pupils, and notably the most vulnerable, are valued. Parents recognise that staff sustain an ethos that, 'builds confidence; develops social skills and good moral fibre. It is character building to be a pupil here.' Staff create displays which explicitly

celebrate the mission of the school, and they ensure that their actions are Christ-centred. Consequently, pupils thrive in an inspiring and happy community. Staff are highly supportive of one another; they show a deep commitment to sustaining encouraging relationships which enable all to prosper. One member of staff commented, 'School is a special place to us all. Everyone is so included.' The provision for relationships and health education is embedded in the teachings of the Catholic church. As a result, pupils celebrate their human wholeness.

Leaders clearly articulate the mission of the school and promote the Catholic character with high levels of enthusiasm. The headteacher works exceptionally diligently to meet the extended needs of families in the school neighbourhood. One governor commented, 'She is inspirational and aspirational.' Leaders are witnesses to the Gospel in the decisions they make. They recognise the responsibility to serve others joyously and proactively seek opportunities to engage with their local community. As a result, their commitment and dedication is inspirational to those they encounter. They are highly successful in sustaining relationships with families, and consequently, parents trust them greatly. After meaningful evaluation, they implement training and resources effectively to enhance the Catholic charism of the school, prioritising opportunities for others to grow in virtue. They provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to lead initiatives, and one parent commented, 'My child often uses the values he learns [from school leaders] at home.' Leaders and governors are highly committed to engaging with the parish for sacramental preparation, charitable events and to worship, and this enhances the community greatly. Governors are regular visitors to school, and they are therefore able to make informed decisions which ensure that policies and procedures are rooted in Christian love.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

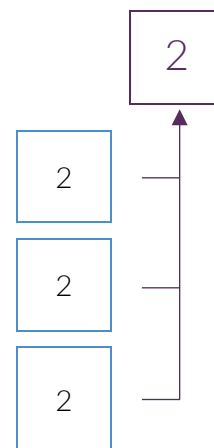
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 make good progress from their starting points because they engage well and try hard in lessons. They can recall prior learning and talk with confidence about what they have learned. Consequently, most pupils work within the expectations of the planned curriculum, in line with the requirements of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory, 2012*. They are able to reflect on their learning to understand the demands of religious commitment on believers and then use their knowledge to reflect ethically, as is appropriate to their age. Because lessons are adapted, pupils, including those with additional needs, access the curriculum and develop religious literacy. Pupils enjoy lessons, with one reporting, 'I love learning about Jesus.' They concentrate well and demonstrate an understanding of key concepts, making individual responses with levels of independence, using some religious vocabulary. They are keen to progress well and so respond to feedback given in lessons to improve their work. They are also able to ask questions to clarify their understanding. They have positive attitudes to learning in lessons and consequently develop their knowledge and understanding with minimal distraction. They produce work which is well-presented and comparable to standards in other subjects, demonstrating a pride in their achievements.

Teachers place the highest priority on the teaching of religious education. They proactively seek training opportunities to develop their own subject knowledge and deepen their understanding of key religious concepts. They work collaboratively to help one another, with one member of staff commenting, 'Support from colleagues is generous and willingly given.' Teachers are well-placed, therefore, to plan progressive lessons which extend the prior learning of their pupils. They explain religious concepts systematically so that their pupils build understanding and develop religious literacy appropriate to their age. They use insightful questions to provoke deeper thinking and encourage pupils to reflect on how religious understanding influences the

actions of believers. Teachers inform parents of the curriculum content, so that learning can be further explored at home, and this is highly valued by parents. Staff encourage pupils and praise successes so that most pupils are motivated and engage well. Teachers adapt explanations and tasks so that all pupils are supported to access lessons. They develop varied tasks so that almost all pupils can express their learning in ways which capture their understanding effectively. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to deepen their theological understanding by exploring and comparing a range of sources in depth.

Leaders and governors have high aspirations for the provision of religious education, and consequently there is parity in standards to other core subjects. They ensure that lessons are well resourced. They monitor provision systematically and therefore make well informed decisions that lead to accurate strategic action and improving outcomes. In response to recent monitoring procedures, leaders have implemented a revised approach to the structure of lessons and to the teaching of scripture. These actions have impacted positively on the quality of learning. Governors play a role in the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of religious education and are therefore well informed and confident to challenge leaders, so that improvements are sustained. Leaders ensure there is fidelity to the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory, 2012*, and prioritise professional development for staff that addresses gaps in subject knowledge. The expertise of the parish priest and other members of the school community are harnessed regularly to refine the understanding of staff so that they can deliver lessons with confidence. The subject leader has a clear vision which inspires others, and she acts as a role model in supporting teachers to develop their pedagogical skills and to prepare sequential lessons.

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 understand that there are many ways to communicate with God, including through traditional Catholic prayers, spontaneous prayer and creative expressions, as they are provided with a range of opportunities to explore. Working collaboratively, they are able to plan and lead celebrations of the word with increasing confidence, using what they have learned in the religious education curriculum to inform their plans. They proudly undertake ministries because they are well prepared. One pupil reported, 'We feel calm and proud. We spread how we feel when we lead our prayers.' Many pupils join in community prayer readily; however, some pupils show greater reluctance to participate willingly. Pupils can describe the liturgical year and how prayer expressions change according to the liturgical season. They recognise that prayer and liturgy is central to the life of the school. Many pupils can explain how prayer shapes their thinking and inspires their actions, and this is highly valued by parents who report, 'I know that [my child] is growing in God's love in this school. He shared things that he learns in collective worship at home and the values ... reflect being a Christian person who cares and loves others.'

Planned prayer and liturgy forms the rhythm of the day across St Paul's, and staff regularly model good practise in supporting pupils to plan and lead celebrations of the word. Staff create an environment which is conducive to prayer, and they develop prayer spaces in classrooms and other shared areas which are reflective and stimulating. The prayer room is an oasis, filled with inspiring texts, images and creative prayer experiences which pupils respond to well. Pupils recognise that prayer can bring consolation in times of challenge because staff generously and empathetically create opportunities for pupils to turn to prayer as a source of comfort. Scripture is central to the prayer life of the school and staff encourage pupils to use their talents to enhance varied community celebrations. Staff use the opportunities provided by Open the Book and Ignite to enable pupils to reflect and be inspired in varied ways so that the spiritual

development of all is supported. Staff work enthusiastically with parents to ensure they feel welcomed and fully involved in prayer and liturgy both in school and church. Resources are also shared to support the prayer life of families at home. One parent proudly commented, 'My child's spiritual needs are being fully met and developed.'

Leaders have developed a policy which reflects the demands of the *Prayer and Liturgy Directory, 2023*. They have a planned programme of varied prayer and liturgy which links to the liturgical year, and they work closely with the parish to ensure that pupils regularly attend parish Masses. Staff and pupils understand the importance of prayer because leaders prioritise the prayer experiences offered by the school. They have developed a programme of creative prayer which supports the spiritual development of all members of the community, and they ensure that resources are used to enhance prayer spaces, including prayer stations and school chapel, so that pupils are inspired. Their investment in the Spiritual Ambassadors has resulted in the development of pupils' skills which enrich the prayer life of the school. Governors frequently attend prayer and liturgy, and along with leaders, they regularly monitor the impact of provision so that relevant strategic priorities are identified. Leaders ensure that staff have appropriate training opportunities and consequently, staff continue to build their understanding and confidence in leading prayer and liturgy. Leaders ensure that parents and parishioners are welcomed to pray with pupils, and all members of the community highly value this.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Paul's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	148503
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9293713
Full postal address of the school	South Road, Alnwick, Northumberland, NE66 2NU
School phone number	01665602547
Executive headteacher	Not applicable
Headteacher	Mrs Eileen Lomax
Chair of local governing committee	Mrs Frances Sinclair
School Website	www.stpaulsalnwick.co.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Choose an item.
Age-range of pupils	2-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	18-19 June 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The inspection team

Lead inspector	Barbara Reilly-O'Donnell
Team inspector	Stephanie Brown

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

