



Our Lady & St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

URN: 148206

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

03 June 2026 – 03 June 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

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Yes

Yes

N/A

What the school does well

- The leadership team demonstrates unwavering determination to secure continuous improvement. Their clarity of purpose and consistent presence means that they are held in high esteem by all stakeholders.
- Inclusion is at the heart of the school's mission. Pupils who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs benefit from well-planned, high-quality support that reflects the school's belief that every child matters.
- Pupils achieve well in religious education because expectations are consistently high. Their books show excellent presentation, demonstrating pride, care, and a strong commitment to producing their best work.
- The school's prayer and worship spaces are creative, well-designed, and inviting. They offer pupils quiet, purposeful opportunities for individual prayer and spiritual reflection.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase planned opportunities for pupils to explore Catholic social teaching in greater depth, enabling them to articulate its meaning confidently and apply its principles to their own lives.
- Strengthen the consistency of creative and imaginative learning strategies in religious education, ensuring that all pupils benefit from engaging and varied learning experiences.
- Develop pupils' ability to plan, lead, and evaluate worship, enabling them to take greater ownership of the school's prayer life.

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

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Pupils are happy, safe, and confident at Our Lady and St Joseph's Catholic Primary School. They enjoy being part of the school community and speak positively about their experiences. Parents share this view, with the significant majority expressing strong confidence in the school and its leaders. They comment that the school, 'helps our children see that not everyone is as fortunate as them, and they want to help other people'. Behaviour throughout the school is very good, both in lessons and during less structured times. Pupils show high levels of respect for others, including those of different faiths and cultures, as reflected in displays such as the mirror installation. Pupils explain that, 'This is the most important display in our school. The reflections show we all share the same spirit and walk as Jesus.' Pupils are confident in following the teachings of Jesus and the gospels, which is clearly demonstrated through their understanding and explanation of the school 'Rainbow Rules'. However, limited opportunities for pupils to have meaningful leadership roles means that their understanding of some aspects of Catholic social teaching remains underdeveloped; as a result, pupils find it difficult to articulate its meaning confidently and apply its principles to their own lives.

The mission statement is clearly known, understood and valued by the whole school community, who recognise the expectations it sets for daily life. Relationships across the school are warm, respectful and rooted in dignity, with staff and pupils demonstrating genuine care for one another, a sentiment strongly affirmed by parents, who note that, 'There is always thoughtful intent shown through little gestures such as the seeds of hope.' Staff speak positively about the culture of the school, stating that, 'The values, expectations and culture that underpin Catholic education are embedded in everyday practice, creating

environments where pupils are encouraged to grow spiritually, academically and personally'; however, despite this strong ethos, not all staff are confident in their understanding of Catholic life and mission. Pastoral care is a significant strength, particularly for vulnerable pupils and their families, with highly effective support for those who struggle to attend school in the morning and exemplary nurture provided within the Lighthouse provision. Relationships, sex and health education is very strong, outward-looking and enriched by the inclusion of the No Outsiders programme, which parents value highly for the positive impact it has on their children's understanding of equality, respect and human dignity.

Leadership has been relentless in its work to transform the Catholic life and mission of the school, and this determination is reflected in the high regard in which they are held by all. Parents are highly supportive of school leaders and speak positively about the impact on their children, with parents noting that although the amalgamation between the schools, 'wasn't always easy, school leaders always made sure pupils were at the heart of all decisions.' Governors place a high value on the Catholic life and mission of the school and are fully committed to its continued success, offering both support and appropriate challenge. Leaders seek to work closely with the parish, inviting them into school for special occasions and celebrations, strengthening the sense of shared mission. Staff value the strong pastoral care offered to them, recognising leaders' willingness to support their spiritual and personal wellbeing; staff comment that the executive headteacher, 'has helped to create a strong sense of purpose and identity, ensuring that faith is at the heart of all that we do.' However, while leaders' commitment is clear, the evaluation of Catholic life and mission is not sufficiently rigorous to identify precise priorities for improvement or to ensure that developments are consistently embedded across the school.

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

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Pupils make very good progress in religious education across all year groups and for all groups of pupils, including those who access the Lighthouse provision. They are religiously literate, demonstrating excellent understanding of scripture and explaining confidently how it shapes their thoughts, choices and actions. For example, in Year 3, pupils explore conscience and describe how scripture informs their understanding of right and wrong, linking this to previous maths learning about fairness and balanced choices. Year 5 pupils show strong discussion skills, using precise religiously specific language when exploring the Ten Commandments and articulating how these guide Christian living. However, in some lessons, pupils can become passive due to an over-emphasis on teacher-led approaches, which limits opportunities for deeper independent thinking and active engagement. Pupils speak with maturity about the purpose of the subject, with pupils commenting that, 'Religious education lets us learn about Jesus, follow in his footsteps and how to act like Him.' They enjoy their lessons, mainly engage well and build securely upon prior learning. Presentation of work is consistently high across the school, reflecting sustained expectations and pride in their learning, and pupils respond to feedback with a similar sense of pride and care.

Staff are confident in teaching religious education and have a secure understanding of what and how to teach to meet the needs of their individual classes. Teachers have high expectations, exemplified in Year 6 where the teacher ensures pupils draw on previous learning and use scripture to compare the different miracles of Jesus. In Reception, pupils were given time to map out Jesus' journey with his disciples before writing about it, enabling

them to build early skills in sequencing, understanding Scripture and expressing ideas with increasing independence. However, in most year groups, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to engage in creative learning on a regular basis, which limits the range of ways in which they can demonstrate their understanding. Questioning is effective, providing regular opportunities for pupils to reflect upon their learning and enabling teachers to respond to pupils' answers in ways that strengthen assessment for learning. Marking and feedback are consistent across the school, with clear opportunities for pupils to self-assess and respond to challenges, meaning pupils know how well they have achieved and what they need to do next. There has been a deliberate focus on developing high-quality, extended written work.

There is clear fidelity to the religious education curriculum and the *Come and See* programme, with strong coverage in pupils' books in terms of both quality and quantity, demonstrating clear parity with other core curriculum subjects and reflecting high expectations across the school. The curriculum is well sequenced, ensuring pupils build securely on prior learning and are appropriately challenged as they move through the school. Staff benefit from well-planned, focused professional development, which they value highly; staff comment that they, 'appreciate being able to take part in the training programmes, as each session has brought something to my own personal development, religious education teaching and understanding of my faith.. Adaptation is effective, enabling all pupils to access the religious education curriculum through scaffolding, prompts and individual support where needed. Evaluation of religious education is regular and ensures leaders have a clear understanding of standards across the school; governors also play an active role by reviewing pupils' books and meeting with the religious education subject leader to discuss strengths and next steps. Whilst written outcomes are strong, there are less opportunities for enrichment and creative learning to deepen pupils' engagement and broaden the ways in which they can demonstrate their understanding.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

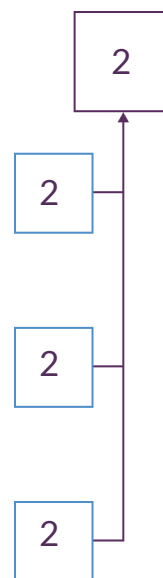
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

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



Most pupils enjoy taking part in all aspects of prayer and liturgy, and they participate with both reverence and enthusiasm. Most pupils join in with singing, although there is some reluctance from older pupils to participate as readily. Pupils are always respectful and quiet during prayer, both in class and in whole-school settings, demonstrating an understanding of the sacred nature of these moments. They also enjoy opportunities to use the prayer stations around school for quiet personal reflection, engaging thoughtfully with the resources provided, which are attractively presented and carefully designed to draw pupils into prayer and reflection. During class worship, however, some pupils can be passive and are not always full participants, which limits the impact of these opportunities. Pupils have a secure understanding of the liturgical year and can explain confidently the significance of liturgical colours. Pupils are in the early stages of developing their ability to plan, lead, and evaluate worship, beginning to build confidence and ownership as they reflect on the quality of the worship they plan and deliver. Pupils can make clear links between the school's mission, the meaning and purpose of worship, and how this influences their daily lives, demonstrating an emerging understanding of how faith shapes actions and choices.

There is a clear pattern of prayer across the school, and pupils know the rhythm of when and where to pray, with most engaging reverently in both class and whole-school contexts. Scripture is very well linked to worship, and staff show a strong understanding as to how it shapes the themes and focus of prayer. Senior leaders model high-quality leading of worship, and while staff have the skills to support pupils in planning and leading worship, this remains inconsistent in some year groups. Prayer spaces, including prayer stations, are of a high

quality, and pupils welcome opportunities to use these for spontaneous personal prayer and quiet reflection. Elements of creative prayer are beginning to influence the variety of prayer and liturgy across the school, including opportunities for pupils to participate in liturgical dance, although this is not fully embedded. Families are regularly invited into school to share worship and feel welcomed as part of the prayer life of the community, with parents commenting that, 'Our Lady and St Joseph's Primary School help children at school to have a prayerful environment that is safe and comfortable to grow in faith and discipleship.'

There is a clear and well-structured policy for prayer and liturgy, which identifies the skills expected of pupils in each year group and ensures a coherent progression of worship across the school. The annual plan of provision provides strong strategic oversight, clearly mapping holy days of obligation, sacramental preparation and key moments in the liturgical year. Staff have received high-quality professional development to enhance their confidence and skill in leading and facilitating worship, contributing to increasingly consistent practice. Governors are regular participants in worship, giving them meaningful opportunities to evaluate the quality of provision and engage in informed dialogue with leaders about strengths and next steps. The school ensures that all pupils have access to regular Mass with the parish and priest, strengthening their understanding of the Eucharist and deepening parish-school links. Leaders also foster strong parish and home links, with parents noting that, 'The school leaders ensure that hope and prayer come through strongly. It is the fabric of how they work, and our children can apply this to their home lives.' The school is beginning to incorporate further opportunities for worship beyond the classroom, such as the Year 5/6 pilgrimage to Ushaw with another local Catholic school, enriching pupils' spiritual experience and strengthening connections within the wider Catholic community.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Our Lady & St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	148206
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9133483
Full postal address of the school	Durham Road, Ushaw Moor, Durham, DH7 7LF
School phone number	0191 373 0355
Executive Headteacher	Mr David Miller
Headteacher or Head of School	Mrs Joanne Readshaw
Chair of Governors	David Low
School Website	ourladyandstjosephsushawmoor.bwcet.com
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non Selective
Age-range of pupils	4 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed

The Inspection Team

Paul Craig

Lead

Nicola Noble

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