



# St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

URN: 139529

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Birmingham

20–21 June 2024

## Summary of key findings

### Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

2

#### 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

2

#### 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 curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

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

Fully

## What the school does well

- It works well with the parish to support the pupils' faith development.
- It fosters a culture of nurture in which pupils feel safe and happy.
- Displays often use the pupils' work to celebrate the school's Catholic life and mission.
- Leaders clearly envision where improvements can be made to make this school a thriving Catholic community.
- Pupils enjoy the opportunities they are given to join in prayer.

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## What the school needs to improve

- Introduce Catholic social teaching throughout the curriculum and wider school life.
- Ensure that religious education lessons meet all pupils' needs to ensure maximum progress.
- Routinely provide pupils with opportunities to plan and evaluate prayer and liturgy.

## 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

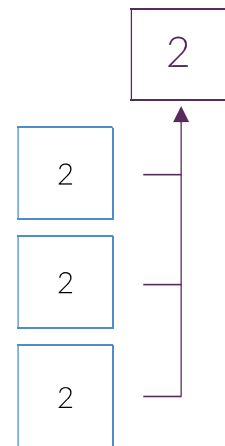
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### 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 are proud to be part of St Joseph's and can explain what it means to be 'Inspired by Christ' in everything they do. This mission statement is highly visible in each classroom and around the school, and each class now signs it at the start of the year to underline its importance and highlight everyone's responsibility for enacting it. Pupils can take the lead in promoting their Catholic identity; for example, Year 6 researched and presented facts about the 'house saints' to other pupils and designed posters with information about them for display in the school hall. The school is researching its original foundations to mark its 50th anniversary appropriately next year. Pupils show respect for each other during lessons, prayer, play, and as they move around the school. In a recent multi-academy company (MAC) wide survey, 90% of pupils said that Christ is at the centre of St Joseph's, attesting to the intense recent work undertaken in the school. The school has correctly identified that they need to explicitly teach Catholic social teaching to help pupils recognise why they are called to behave in specific ways, as this work is currently underdeveloped.

In addition to the highly visible mission statement, the school has recently invested in displays that immediately make its Catholic nature clear. Thought has gone into making sure spaces now support this, with statues and displays in common areas, often using the pupils' work. Parents, governors, and staff recently joined together to help clean, tidy, and improve the decoration of the building. All classes have prayer tables that reflect the current liturgical season and use the pupils' work. Staff model high standards, and consistent behaviour management prompts are used throughout the school, which helps pupils feel confident. One parent commented, 'I love to see my child inspired to walk in the footsteps of the Lord, inspired by Christ daily and acting it out at home and in the community.' Pupils feel safe and happy at the school, with one saying,

'Teachers are very respectful. If someone does something wrong, they will talk to them about it.'  
Relationships, sex, and health education (RSHE) meets statutory and diocesan requirements.

Leaders have recently worked extensively with MAC to improve the provision of the school's Catholic life and mission. The religious education subject leader and acting head teacher have visited other schools in the MAC to benchmark the provision at St Joseph's against that made in other local Catholic schools. They have utilised the extensive support made available by the diocese and have already outlined how to use this more as the school continues to move forward. The school has a flourishing relationship with the local parish; pupils are regular visitors to the church for Mass and other occasions, and the parish priest is a regular and popular visitor in the school. A parish religious sister supports pupils during hymn practices, furthering school and parish links by ensuring the repertoire of hymns used in school and the parish church are the same so both congregations benefit. Leaders recognise that they work in partnership with parents and have renewed efforts to communicate more clearly with them around events in school. For example, events such as the sports day picnic on the field help to include parents in the life of the school. Parents appreciate this, but leaders know this work is incomplete. Staff have received training on the school's Catholic life and mission, but some feel they would benefit more to understand it fully.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

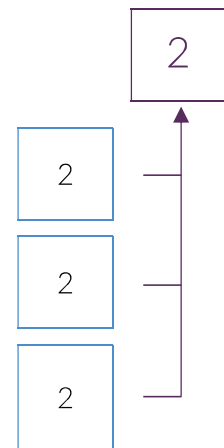
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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 can speak confidently about what they learn in their lessons and can make links with what they have previously learned. They are engaged with religious education, eager to learn new skills and share their knowledge with teachers and peers. Pupils respond well when allowed to work independently, for example, when using the internet for research on the Archbishop of Birmingham or to identify the 'I am...' sayings in the Fourth Gospel. Pupils are now being given the opportunity to discuss how to improve their work through more detailed marking and pupil voice interviews. There has recently been a marked improvement in the quality of work in pupils' books, both in presentation and quantity, because of school support. Pupils' work is displayed in classes and around the school, celebrating what they are learning.

Staff have worked hard to ensure that religious education is now seen as the core of the curriculum. In the best lessons, teachers can address the questions raised by the pupils and pull together threads of learning even if they are not planned for that particular lesson. For example, the answer to one pupil's question, 'Did St Peter live in the Vatican?' led to a good discussion about the foundations of the Church. All lessons allow pupils to reflect on what they have learnt, contributing to their spiritual and moral development. Although there is some evidence that teachers' planning is adapted to different needs, teachers do not yet routinely plan to deepen and extend pupils' understanding. Some use questioning to do this, but it is not consistently used throughout the school. Additional adults in the classrooms provide quiet support to those who need it. Assessment is now being used and analysed. This should make it easier for staff to fully adapt their teaching to the needs of their class, further ensuring pupil progress is always at the forefront of teachers' planning. Training has taken place to support staff in delivering religious education, and more is being planned to be done regularly. Effective progress

monitoring is now taking place, and leaders have begun to analyse this to ensure that all pupils and groups make as much progress as possible.

Leaders at all levels have worked hard to raise standards in religious education. The subject leader has a clear vision of what needs to be done and has worked with the interim executive board to develop a comprehensive document to achieve this. This has already had a notable impact on standards in the school. Leaders have engaged with the MAC, the diocese, and other agencies to provide staff with the tools they need to drive this improvement further, and they have shown they can do this. Rigorous monitoring has occurred more recently, and a programme has been planned for how this will continue. Leaders clearly understand where pupils are in their learning and where they want them to be. The scheme of work ensures that the requirements of the *Religious Education Directory* are met and that learning is planned sequentially. Leaders provide the correct amount of curriculum time allocated to religious education so that St Joseph's meets the bishops' requirements. The curriculum uses various approaches, including drama, art, and music, to enhance pupils' learning experiences. The clear, well-structured, strategic plan of improvement already in place further supports leaders' vision for the future of religious education at St Joseph's.

## 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 participate enthusiastically in the experiences of prayer and liturgy given to them; they sing with great volume and enthusiasm. From Reception Class onwards, they learn to sit quietly, reflect on the messages of scripture and produce their own prayers, many of which are displayed around the school. They can talk about how prayer helps them; for example, a pupil said, 'I like the fact that you can praise God in your writing because you don't always want to say it out loud', and one class asked to theme their prayer around forgiveness because they had been having social issues in the playground. Recent developments have seen pupils, especially the prayer leaders, begin to take a more active role in planning and leading prayer and liturgy sessions for the whole school and their classes; there is a clear development plan to continue this work. They have begun to evaluate their work and explain why they choose specific scripture readings or hymns. Improved links with the parish mean that members of the school choir now sing at the parish mass on a Sunday, and more pupils are now interested in becoming altar servers.

Prayer and liturgy are at the heart of the school, with a straightforward programme of daily and weekly routines. The liturgical year is followed with significant feasts, and more school-focused feasts, such as the feast day of St Joseph, being celebrated. A large interactive display in the school hall helps the pupils visualise where they are in the liturgical year. Once held in the parish church, the school carol service was so well attended that there was standing room only, a testament to the relationship between the school and the parish. Skilled staff support pupils and other staff in planning and leading events, and the pupils are eager to take on more responsibility for this. The school uses music well, and it is led by experienced staff and the parish sister. Spaces around the school are used well to house focal points, such as the statues of St Joseph and the Marian grotto in the grounds. Parents are invited to many events in the school

and school events in the church, and the school is working hard to ensure that these are communicated to them in good time.

The school's new policy on prayer and liturgy maps out a clear vision of what will be done to develop this area, and there are clear signs that this work has already begun. Recent staff training has taken place to help develop pupil-led worship, and pupils have enthusiastically taken on related roles. Leaders ensure that the development of prayer and liturgy is part of the school's strategic development. Through the MAC, staff are offered training and development opportunities to deepen their faith through events like the MAC's 'Catholic Life Day'. Leaders are aware that staff want more training and support in this area. Full use is made of expertise across the school and the MAC to help model good practice for those who need more support, and staff have shown that they are ready to embrace the changes being introduced. One staff member said, 'We are certainly moving forward in the right direction. I truly believe we can be a phenomenal Catholic school.' Another said, "The school is actively developing prayer for all pupils and staff to be a more spiritual and meaningful experience for the whole person rather than just something that is done.'



## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	139529
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	931 3826
Full postal address of the school	Brook Lane, Thame, OX9 2AB
School phone number	01844 214278
Headteacher	Elizabeth Sienkiewicz
Chair of governing board	Paul Concannon
School Website	<a href="http://www.st-josephs.oxon.sch.uk">www.st-josephs.oxon.sch.uk</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	The Pope Francis Catholic Multi Academy Company
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	June 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

## The inspection team

Catherine McMahon  
Maggie Gourlay

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