



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Lancaster

URN: 148770

Carried out on behalf of the Right Rev. Paul Swarbrick, Bishop of Lancaster on:

Date: 11th and 12th October 2023

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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- Pastoral support and inclusion, particularly the support and care shown to vulnerable pupils and their families is exemplary. The school has responded well to the changing needs of the community post covid.
- St Joseph's provides a very positive, calm learning environment resulting in excellent relationships between staff and pupils.
- Links with the parish have been strengthened and are appreciated in the school and parish communities.
- Behaviour has improved with pupils taking responsibility for their own actions and showing forgiveness to others. The school has worked hard with consistency, introducing, and developing the positive behaviour strategy, providing pupils with strategies to self regulate.

This Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection was carried out under canons 804 & 806 of the code of canon law. For maintained schools and academies in England it fulfils the statutory requirements of s.48 of the Education Act 2005. For maintained schools and academies in Wales it fulfils the statutory requirements of s.50 of the Education Act 2005.

- Parents and pupils are rightly proud of their school and value the support given to them.

What the school needs to improve:

- Develop independent work in religious education so that all pupils are supported to achieve, including those requiring additional support. This should ensure challenge and opportunities for personal reflection to enhance knowledge and skills in the subject.
- Work alongside the schools within the multi academy trust (MAT) to share liturgies and enrichment experiences, as well as moderation of work and sharing best practice, so as to improve outcomes for pupils.
- Develop the role that pupils take in leading, designing and developing prayer and liturgy throughout the school in a creative manner. Pairing classes would enable pupil leadership in this area and empower pupils in this practice.

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:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

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

2

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

2



St Joseph's provides a high level of care for all pupils, which allows them to flourish and feel a valuable part of this happy school family. It reaches out to welcome all families, including those who are vulnerable or new to the area, demonstrating its Catholic character. This excellent pastoral support is well structured and enhanced by the strong leadership of the head teacher, senior leaders, and inclusion team, together with governors. Governors, with support from the parish, provided a new free uniform for all pupils in school. This ensures that all pupils feel equal, smart, and have a sense of belonging.

The culture of welcome and reaching out to all is rooted in the teachings of Christ and evident in the interactions that take place around the school. Gospel values are visible around the school and are referred to by staff and pupils. The focus during the visit was *kindness* and a Year 6 pupil, in a discussion about gospel values, stated 'Jesus wants us to live his way, to be kind and happy'. Pupils demonstrate respect for each other and for those of other faiths, cultures, and backgrounds. Staff are positive role models in all school activities, reflecting the school's motto: 'Where minds blossom and love grows'. The pupils appreciate the work of staff and the opportunities they provide. In Foundation Stage one pupil said that 'God made all of us, the trees, the grass and the animals, we need to say, "thank you God"'. In Year 6 one pupil stated that 'God doesn't give us what we want, he gives us what we need and there's nothing we can't bring to God to help us with.' Pupils understand that the school community is committed to following Jesus, and that they have personal responsibility to serve those in need. They support many charities both locally and globally, including the local hospice, *Aid to the Church in Need* and Cafod.

The provision for relationships sex and health education meets both the statutory and diocesan requirements.

Directors, governors, and leaders are deeply committed to the school ensuring Christ is at the centre of everything they do. They promote the Bishop's vision for education and respond well to diocesan and trust policies and initiatives. The school has developed strong links with the parish members and their appreciation was shown recently by raising money and sponsoring books for the new school library. Leaders support parents as first educators and staff actively welcome the children and families every morning. The parish priest is a regular visitor to school and leads the assemblies regularly. He inspires and encourages many in school.

The school environment reflects its mission and identity through good quality resources and displays that reflect the school's Catholic mission.

It provides effective opportunities for the spiritual and moral development of pupils and staff. Leaders demonstrate respect for the dignity of workers and ensure that their decisions for school reflect this. Wellbeing is a priority. When interviewed, staff stated 'we support each other as a team and Father is here for us'. Leaders know and serve their school very well. New staff are supported well in their induction and stated that they valued the input of the parish priest. Staff have attended the diocesan training for teachers new to Catholic Education that is followed up by support in school. Some have been supported in gaining their Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS).

Discussions with parents in the playground and responses to the parental questionnaire show that the work of the school is valued. On the day of inspection parents stated, 'This is a lovely school, they all care' and 'School is very friendly, like a family. We are so happy our children come to St Joseph's'.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

2

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....

2

The school has met the areas for development from the last inspection under the framework that they were set. In pupil interviews, they all said that they enjoy religious education and were able to identify their favourite pieces of work and articulate why they liked them. One pupil stated, 'I like learning about God's family'. Religious education outcomes show that religious education attainment is in line with the other core subjects. Pupils speak with confidence about what they have learned in religious education, showing an awareness of some key concepts, and using key vocabulary. One pupil in Year 2 stated 'God wants us to care for the whole world'. Religious education provision is good, lesson observations and interviews with pupils and staff show there are systems in place to check knowledge at the start of the unit and reflect on learning at the end. There is a focus sheet at the start of each new topic in every book, so pupils know what they are learning each half term with key vocabulary identified. There needs to be more consistency on teacher feedback to provide pupils with a clearer understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to improve. Time is built into lessons to reflect on their learning and answer any questions from teachers; this practice is effective in some classes but not consistent throughout the school. Pupils engage well in lessons and show a willingness to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills. They enjoy their learning; therefore behaviour is good in lessons. In a Year 2 lesson observed during inspection the teacher shared photographs of her baptism, lighting her own baptismal candle, she shared the importance of sacraments in her own life – powerful witness. Pupils are well supported by staff, to further improve, focus needs to be on developing independence in lessons and providing more challenge, encouraging reflection on what it means for them personally. There is over reliance on worksheets and closed ended activities and this limits pupils' creative responses and their ability to draw on the skills and knowledge they have in other areas of the curriculum. When

sharing their best work, pupils often chose open ended pieces of work where they could write freely.

Teachers are confident and have good subject knowledge and they are committed to the value of religious education. Planning is linked to ongoing assessment so that most pupils learn well. Questioning during lessons is developing, aiding teachers to identify where pupils are in their understanding, thus improving learning for most pupils. The head teacher, who is also the subject leader for religious education, has a clear vision for teaching and learning and a good level of expertise in securing this vision. She ensures that the school curriculum is a faithful expression of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD)* with some classes working on the new *Religious Education Directory (RED)* in preparation for being compliant in 2025.

Directors, leaders, and governors ensure that religious education is comparable to other core curriculum subjects, in terms of professional development, resourcing, timetabling and staffing. The subject is scrutinised through regular monitoring at senior leadership and governor level. Self evaluation is modest although staff, governors and directors are ambitious for the pupils in St Joseph's.

Professional development activities have been made available for all staff, with governors recently investing in three staff completing the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies to improve subject knowledge and confidence. Pupils achieve well in religious education when compared to other core curriculum subjects. Progress is accelerated from very low baselines on entry and outcomes would be further improved by enrichment opportunities across trust schools. For example, before the pandemic pupils would join partner local Catholic schools for shared liturgies in Advent and Lent.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

2

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

Appropriately planned prayer and liturgies are central to the life of St Joseph's and valued by all. From a young age, pupils respond well to experience of prayer and liturgy; they participate through respectful reflection, joining in prayer and singing enthusiastically, as witnessed throughout the inspection. Prayer and liturgy is appropriate to pupil age and stage of learning. Pupils understand a rich variety of ways of praying that are part of the Catholic tradition, including opportunities for pupils to meditate at various stations around school. In the early years, children know that they light a candle to show that Jesus is the light of the world and enjoy the structure of worship with the recently introduced prayer dice. Respect was shown by children being prayerful and engaged, listening carefully, and responding appropriately. In response to a question, 'what would Jesus do?' Pupils in Key Stage 1 replied 'he would love one another; he would give people another chance and forgive them.'

Pupils are able to recognise and talk about the ways in which prayer and liturgy influence the wider life of the school. For example, they held a liturgy in response to the death of Queen Elizabeth II and another in response to a bereavement in the school family. Prayer is routinely planned and is a central part of every school day, ensuring prayer life of pupils, staff, and leaders. Pupils knew the prayers well, with pupils in Key Stage 1 joining in with the Hail Mary. Interviews with pupils and observations show that this daily pattern of prayer reflects the liturgical life of the church. Pupils were able to identify 'ordinary time' and discuss other seasons and their corresponding liturgical colours. Seasonally appropriate scripture is shared across liturgical year with the Sunday gospel shared and reflected on each Wednesday in Key Stage 2 assembly with the parish priest. Older pupils need to develop their role in leading, designing and developing prayer and liturgy throughout the school in a creative manner. All prayer and liturgy

observed started in a calm manner with music to gather and time was given to reflect.

Pupils interviewed said they enjoy prayer and liturgy and are able to discuss what they have learned. Parents, parishioners, and governors are welcome to share in the spiritual life of the school through invitation to prayer and liturgy. For example, the Nativity and Easter liturgical activities and class Masses are shared in the parish and school community. Leaders celebrate the uniqueness of St Joseph's family community, with support given to the most vulnerable, enabling all in the community to access liturgies, and this was witnessed during the inspection. They understand the importance of celebrating the liturgical year and are role models to both staff and pupils. Pupils talked about celebrating the patronal feast of the multi academy trust in May and joining in prayer to give thanks to Our Lady. Priority is given to high quality professional development for staff and pupils and this needs to be embedded to have further impact.

Relevant staff work well with families to include them in the prayer life of the school and to support the developing prayer life of pupils. The school works very well with the local parish to help pupils participate more fully in the liturgy, especially after the recent pandemic. This partnership is a strength of the school with newsletters shared, enabling effective communication between home, school, and parish. The school makes good use of spaces available for prayer and all classes have dedicated prayer tables. The school provides regular opportunities for pupils to visit the parish church for the celebration of Mass. The parish priest has recognised the pupils' improved participation in the liturgy and resulting wider engagement at parish Masses. He is very inclusive and explains parts of the Mass to ensure everyone understands, as well as explaining what he's doing when putting on his vestments for Mass, as witnessed during the inspection.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	148770
Full postal address of the school	Aldrens Lane, Lancaster, LA1 2DU
School phone number	01524 65576
Name of head teacher or principal	Miss Rachael Griffiths
Chair of governing board	Rev John-Paul Evans
School Website	https://www.stjosephslancaster.co.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Mater Christi Multi-Academy Trust
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	4 to 11
Trustees	Lancaster Roman Catholic Diocesan Trustees Registered
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	February 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	3 – requires improvement

The inspection team

Fran Wygladala	Lead inspector
Alan Parry	Team inspector

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