



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

URN: 126424

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Clifton

12–12 November 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

- The school is compliant in relation to the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' conference.
- The school is compliant in relation to any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- The school is compliant in its response to the areas for improvement from the last inspection.

What the school does well

- St Joseph's is a supportive and joyful Christ-centred community where everyone is welcomed and valued. Positive relationships are nurtured, highly valued and based on care and mutual respect.
- Pupils at St Joseph's are excellent ambassadors in living out their school's mission, 'Walking in the footsteps of Jesus, loving and serving together.' Pupils of all ages take pride in following their mission and take their responsibility to put faith into action very seriously.
- Pupils enjoy their religious education lessons, demonstrating positive engagement and enthusiasm for their learning. They can recognise connections between scripture, religion and their own lives.
- School leaders, governors and staff are inspirational in their commitment to continuous improvement in the face of change specific to the school as well as new curriculum priorities.
- Strong leadership and committed governance ensure that Christ is the heart of this school and there is a shared determination in the pursuit of this mission.

What the school needs to improve

- Define a Catholic curriculum offer that interweaves St. Joseph's virtues, Catholic social teaching principles, enrichment activities and faith-in-action initiatives, with religious education and the wider curriculum, specific to the context of the school.
- Develop teachers' skills in understanding how pupils learn in religious education, using skilled questioning to understand each child's starting point, deepen understanding and assess new learning in order to ensure that each pupil can make progress.
- Develop staff confidence and skills in providing a broad range of spiritual and prayerful experiences, reflecting the rich tradition of the Church. Empower all pupils with opportunities to plan, deliver and evaluate high quality prayer and liturgy in school.

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

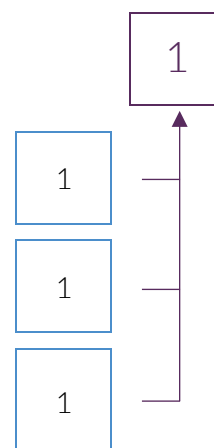
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 feel valued, safe and clearly enjoy being part of this vibrant school family characterised by a lived and joyful sense of community. They understand, and take great pride in, the school's Catholic identity. As representatives for the school's mission and virtues, pupils demonstrate a deep sense of belonging and a sincere commitment to putting their faith into action. Pupils greatly value the school's chaplaincy provision and willingly undertake leadership roles such as stewards or prayer leaders. They are keen to participate in prayerful, spiritual and charitable opportunities, and initiatives such as the Pupil Ambassadors' Awards and Footsteps Awards provide meaningful ways to celebrate the contributions of all pupils and staff. Pupils are learning to understand Catholic social teaching in practical and compassionate ways, describing their call to "follow in the footsteps of Jesus" and recognising that poverty can be emotional as well as material. Their appreciation of other faiths is respectful, acknowledging the importance of understanding what others believe and how they worship. Pupils embrace responsibility, with elected stewards planning and leading charity fundraising, including successful initiatives such as donating Harvest boxes for the local foodbank. Pupil chaplains should now devise and evaluate their own action plan to develop greater independence in their leadership roles.

There is a lived sense of community with Christ at the centre, guiding leaders' decision making and daily practice for all staff. They embrace the mission statement wholeheartedly and model it through their supportive and respectful relationships with pupils and families. They describe themselves as a strong, close-knit team who work collaboratively, supporting each other through challenging times and striving always to model "walking in Jesus' footsteps". Pupils are placed firmly at the heart of their work,

with staff knowing each child as an individual and responding sensitively to the needs of pupils and their families. Pastoral care is a strength, especially for the most vulnerable. Staff feel valued and empowered, noting their involvement in the mission review and opportunities to contribute to school development. They are proud of the school's strengthening profile in the community, describing it as "a small school that does big things," with opportunities such as musicals, sporting events, a whole-school nativity, and choir performances in the community. Opportunities for chaplaincy and faith in action are offered to all, encouraging pupils to make a difference. The headteacher's careful and creative revitalisation of the school environment, displays and resources including the school website, powerfully reflects Catholic identity.

The school has faced significant challenges and changes in leadership in recent years. The current headteachers have worked with commitment and passion to re-establish the Catholic identity of the school, exemplified when leaders conducted a mission review with parents, governors, staff, and pupils, to develop a new set of school virtues. This process reflected on what was important to the community, rooted in the well-established school mission, with Christ's love and kindness at the centre of all values. Leaders have focused on building flourishing partnerships with parents, the parish priest, the parish and wider community. Leaders maintain a positive relationship with the diocese, attending training, seeking bespoke support, and making effective use of resources. They identify key areas for improvement and professional development informed by monitoring and careful evaluation. Governors demonstrate a clear and sustained commitment to enhancing the school's Catholic life and mission. Staff recognise their regular involvement and support for staff wellbeing. Governors are proud of the school community, are well informed by leaders and diocesan adviser reports, and attend training to support their governance responsibilities. They recognise the need to monitor Catholic life and mission, and its impact, more routinely.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

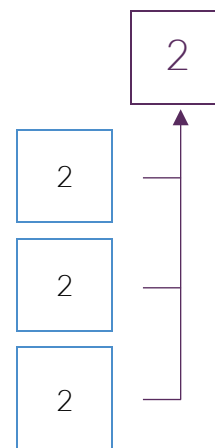
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 enjoy their learning in religious education and approach lessons with interest and enthusiasm. Behaviour is consistently good in lessons and around the school, and pupils are usually highly engaged in classroom activities. They confidently demonstrate the ability to make links with prior learning and with their growing knowledge of scripture. When provided with opportunities to explore 'I Wonder' questions, pupils can respond with curiosity and thoughtful insight. From the earliest stages, pupils recall previous learning, scripture stories and developing religious vocabulary. They particularly enjoy exploring the Bible through creative activities such as role play, drama, art and the production of posters, powerpoints and newspaper-style reports. These activities enhance pupils' understanding, deepen empathy and help them to begin to reflect on how key concepts have implications for their own lives. Support for pupils with English as an additional language and those with additional learning needs is evident, enabling them to access new learning. Work in books demonstrates a good quantity and variety of tasks, and pupils are proud of their achievements. However, while some extension questions successfully deepen learning, this practice is not yet consistent. Presentation, although often of good quality, varies across classes. Pupils understand the marking policy but are not always clear about next steps, and self-evaluation is not yet routinely embedded.

Teachers demonstrate clear commitment to delivering high-quality religious education and show enthusiasm as they embrace the new curriculum. Staff are well prepared and supported through ongoing training from school leaders and the diocese, which is strengthening their subject knowledge and confidence. Provision increasingly enables pupils to extract meaning from scripture and Church teaching, recognising the relevance

of these messages to their daily lives. Explicit links with Catholic social teaching are becoming more embedded, supporting the development of pupils' moral and spiritual awareness. In the strongest practice, teaching is creative and engaging, and staff adapt planning to meet the mixed ages and needs of their classes. There is further scope to refine this by selecting resources or tasks more suited to pupils' developmental stages. Teachers in younger classes use 'I wonder' and empathy-based questioning well, and this approach should be extended with deeper implication questions as pupils progress through the school. Teaching assistants contribute positively, though overall questioning and challenge—especially for more able pupils—require greater consistency. Assessment systems, marking and feedback need further development to ensure they are purposeful and move learning forward. Floor books show promising practice in younger years and should be refined in older classes to capture deeper thinking.

Leaders and governors place religious education securely at the heart of the curriculum, ensuring it maintains parity with other core subjects and meets the expectations of the new directory. The co-headteachers are effectively developing the leadership capacity of a less experienced colleague, and together they communicate a clear and ambitious vision for religious education. Their focus on virtues, values and Catholic social teaching is beginning to shape provision meaningfully across the school. A strong commitment to ongoing professional development underpins this work. Leaders ensure that all staff have access to diocesan and in-house training, complemented by regular guidance from the diocesan adviser. Robust monitoring and evaluation, undertaken in partnership with the diocesan adviser, includes lesson observations, work scrutiny, pupil voice and careful analysis of emerging data. These processes provide governors with clear, timely information and enable leaders to identify accurate next steps for improvement. Staff report feeling well supported as they implement the new curriculum, with ongoing monitoring of books and lessons helping to build consistency. Many positive developments are in their early stages and now require time to embed fully.

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 enjoy opportunities for prayer and liturgy and can be reverent and engaged from the earliest stages. This is a community who love to sing and some pupils express how much they value the chance to be still. Pupils' behaviour during collective worship is excellent. New pupil prayer leaders plan and deliver class worship enthusiastically, using the four-part structure, and in some cases evaluate their peers' worship sessions, offering constructive feedback. Leaders aim to extend opportunities for planning and leading worship to all pupils in an age-appropriate way. Pupil prayer leaders would benefit from further guidance on making each element of worship more personal. Pupils participate well in communal and traditional prayers, hymns and prayerful actions, such as greeting the Gospel, however opportunities for spontaneous or creative prayer remain limited. They value celebrating holy days with Mass in church and appreciate calm music, stillness and reflective activities that help them focus on God's presence. They understand that prayer helps them build a relationship with God. As practice develops, pupils now need more regular opportunities to reflect on how worship influences their lives, with floor books offering a useful way to capture this growing spiritual awareness.

Collective worship is integral to the life of the school and is part of the daily experience for all. There is an effective weekly schedule of worship rooted in the Sunday Gospel, the liturgical year, school values and Catholic social teaching. Seasonal scripture passages and traditional prayers provide structure, and the thoughtful use of music, light and visual symbols helps to create an atmosphere of awe and reverence. However, pupils' access to the full richness and variety of Catholic prayer remains limited. The school continues to strengthen its partnership with the local parish; sharing celebrations such

as the church's 150th jubilee, which enhanced pupils' sense of belonging. Parents speak positively about the impact of daily worship on their children's confidence and spiritual growth. A Lenten Stations of the Cross retreat day, led by pupil prayer leaders, provided a particularly moving experience that pupils recall with great respect. Leaders and the parish priest provide positive role models, and staff are committed to prayer life, but some lack confidence in leading worship. Leaders recognise the need for further training and formation in order to develop staff confidence and skill. Leaders are fully committed to including parents and parishioners in the prayer life of the school.

Leaders and governors understand the importance of the centrality of prayer in the school, adopting the diocesan approved policy for prayer and liturgy. Prayer holds a high profile across the school's physical environment, in newsletters and on the website, reinforcing its significance within the community. Leaders, governors and the parish priest work together to plan key moments in the school year that reflect the liturgical calendar, including Holy Day Masses, opportunities for reconciliation and devotional experiences such as the Stations of the Cross. The next step is to develop a comprehensive annual plan that maps prayer and liturgy opportunities across the whole school year to ensure coherence and progression. Leaders have a good awareness of staff development needs and have invested in high-quality online resources to strengthen the prayer life of the school. However, opportunities for staff spiritual formation remain underdeveloped. The governing body is active and supportive, with governors frequently attending worship and one foundation governor playing a significant role in strengthening parish links and supporting the development of pupil chaplaincy. While collective worship is reviewed informally, evaluation is not yet systematic or rigorous enough to fully assess impact. Leaders remain committed to ensuring parents and parishioners play a valued and active role in the school's prayer life.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	126424
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8653418
Full postal address of the school	Holloway Hill, Holloway, Malmesbury, Wiltshire, SN16 9BB
School phone number	01666822331
Headteacher	Paul Bacon / Sharon Carpenter
Chair of governors	Kirsty Martin
School Website	www.st-josephs-malmesbury.wilts.sch.uk/
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	5 th – 6 th July 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The inspection team

Rita E. McLoughlin
Christina Hall

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