



St Joseph's Catholic Middle School Hexham

URN: 148260

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

28–29 February 2024

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 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

2

What the school does well

- The mission statement of the 'family of St Joseph's loves, learns and grows together as followers of Jesus' is highly visible, embedded and lived out by all members of the school community.
- Pastoral care is exceptional, every pupil is loved and cared for as an individual. Pupils feel safe and are happy in this school.
- The subject knowledge of Religious Education teachers is outstanding which leads to the delivery of engaging and high quality lessons.

- Pupils demonstrate high levels of religious literacy which is leading to increased attainment.
- Sacred spaces are prioritised, with every classroom having a beautiful living prayer space that reflects the rhythm of the liturgical year. This is a school at the very heart of its parish.

What the school needs to improve

- Leaders to ensure pupils have more opportunities to encounter awe and wonder across other areas of the taught curriculum.
- Increase the frequency of assessment in religious education across the curriculum to consolidate and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding further.
- Support pupils to meaningfully evaluate their liturgies and whole school collective worship in order to develop them.

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

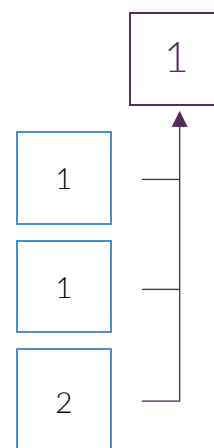
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 express how valued they feel which leads to a deep respect for themselves and others. One pupil shared, 'This school helps me to live the good life.' Behaviour is always exemplary, and pupils demonstrate great respect for their learning environment as well as the wider world. This has led to several charitable acts such as supporting the local foodbank, planting trees, fundraising for MacMillan Cancer Support, and sending cards to Tynedale Hospice. Pupils have a strong sense of the effects of their work and are grateful to be part of a school that makes a difference to the local community. Pupils recognise that they demonstrate Catholic social teaching in a variety of ways, and they recognise the teachings that underpin this work such as love of neighbour. As a result, St Joseph's is a community where all are cared for. Pupils can express the distinctive nature and purpose of the school by making references to the prayer spaces, crosses, liturgical colours which 'bring us together as a school community. We are one family.'

The mission statement expresses the school's identity and mission. It is embraced by all. This creates an exceptional sense of community where 'Every child is an individual and we help them grow.' Pastoral care is robust, and staff go above and beyond in their provision of needs, their communication with home and celebrating achievements and successes. Systems are embedded ensuring smooth transition for pupils entering the school as well as those leaving in Year 8. Strong links are established between all groups resulting in effective continuity of support. Staff are excellent role models leading to the Catholic mission of the school being visible daily. The school environment is a clear witness to its Catholic character and prayer focal points are living spaces reflecting the liturgical rhythm of the church. The refurbishment of a new chapel has ensured that there is a dedicated space for the celebration of Mass as well as opportunities

for silent reflection. Priests regularly visit the school and in turn pupils regularly visit the local church. These links show how the school serves the community.

St Joseph's is fully compliant with relationships, sex and health education, using approved TenTen resources. Bespoke professional development is provided for staff which is relevant to their needs. Leaders and governors are determined in the pursuit of the mission to ensure Christ is at the heart of the school. Policies and procedures reflect this view with leaders creating an environment where everyone is valued. Clear policies are embedded to look after the wellbeing of staff and pupils. School leaders provide excellent pastoral care for all. St Joseph's has strong links with the diocese and the Catholic Education Trust (CET) using both as sources of training to further develop and enhance systems. There is evidence of the Catholic curriculum being celebrated in some other subjects showing how awe and wonder can be discovered across subjects. This is an area to continue building upon so that pupils can make links across the breadth of the taught curriculum. Leaders seek feedback from pupils and staff which is listened to and acted upon. The school council gives a forum for pupils to share ideas and become leaders themselves. Governors are interested in all aspects of school life and are able to support effectively as they receive regular updates and therefore, can hold others to account. Professional development is well planned, and high quality support is given to new members of staff, supporting them in their role and providing opportunities to develop as an effective practitioner.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

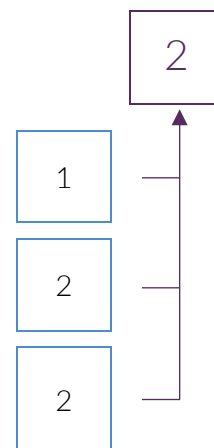
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 demonstrate strong subject knowledge. They can masterfully explain challenging theological concepts such as the trinity, heresy and the Nicene Creed with passion and accuracy. The emphasis on improving religious literacy has led to a significant improvement in attainment across all year groups. Furthermore, pupils understand how to make progress in lessons and respond effectively to the newly embedded feedback policy which is leading to significant improvement in attainment. The frequency of formal assessment in both the Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 curriculum is an area requiring greater focus, which will allow pupils to consolidate their learning. Pupils are focused, engaged and demonstrate positive behaviour in every lesson. They show respect for one another, their teachers, their clergy, and include everyone with love, support and as family. This leads to an outstanding climate for learning in every classroom. Pupils are excited to learn and benefit from an emphasis on pace, challenge and opportunities to learn creatively. Pupils describe their learning as 'entertaining and fun'. Pupils enjoy a range of activities in religious education including debate, music, art and drama. Pupils demonstrate pride in their work and reflect spiritually and ethically upon the topics they are studying. Pupils' work is prominently displayed in every classroom. This motivates them to create work that reflects their hard work, passion and dedication.

Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and teaching expertise which enthuses, motivates and inspires students to succeed. One pupil commented that they already want to study the subject at university because they were inspired by their religious education teacher. Teachers use questioning skillfully to address any misconceptions in pupil knowledge. Teachers are committed to the value of religious education and the lead teacher has a clear and powerful vision for achieving excellence in this area. Staff clearly know their pupils and have built caring relationships with them, knowing the individual learning needs of every pupil. This helps

teachers support and challenge every pupil to succeed. Times for reflection are carefully planned to allow pupils time to deepen their responses. House points are given for excellent work, effort and positive attitude in lessons. This leads to a culture of excitement and motivation amongst pupils who compete each week for their house saint to win. The department work effectively with the parish priests, who are passionate about sharing their faith with pupils, providing opportunities for them to learn about the sacraments, vocations and the Catholic Church. The co-operation between clergy and school is inspiring.

Leaders and governors ensure that religious education is a faithful expression of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. They ensure that religious education is rooted at the core of the curriculum and that it has full parity with other core subjects. Staff are given regular opportunities for professional development. This ensures that subject teachers are well trained and supported. The subject leader has energised and inspired her department. This has led to a culture of collaboration. Staff comment that the subject leader makes them feel 'well supported'. Leaders and governors work effectively to identify strategies to support boys attainment, which has led to some improvements in outcomes. Some enrichment opportunities are provided for students with the support of the parish priests such as the opportunity for all of Year 5 to visit the local church. Leaders and governors provide good support to the department and conduct learning walks, monitoring visits and regular link meetings. This has led to increasing outcomes. Governors have described the department as 'authentic, inspiring and approachable'.

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 appreciate the role of prayer in their daily routine and recognise its impact by reflecting on how it ensures a calm start to each day. They respond well to opportunities for prayer and liturgy and have taken the lead in class based pupil led liturgy on a weekly basis. Every class offers each pupil the opportunity to plan and deliver a liturgy based on the whole school theme of the week. Pupils undertake liturgical ministries willingly, and should now be supported to evaluate the quality of the prayer and liturgy they have planned. This will help them identify how to improve next time and to refine their practice. A variety of ways are used to pray following the Catholic tradition, with some wonderful creative examples such as using sign language to pray the Our Father. Pupils are respectful and engaged, reflecting in silence, joining in community prayer and singing in whole school celebration of the word with confidence. They have the opportunity to be a pastoral and liturgy leader, working with school staff and clergy, giving pupils ownership in shaping key celebrations. All pupils can articulate how their experience of prayer and liturgy has led to actions such as charitable work. Older pupils in Year 8 can link how these experiences have helped to shape their character. There are many opportunities to celebrate Mass in the year. Pupils and their families are welcomed formally on entry in Year 5 and given thanks for at the end of Year 8. They are respectful of prayer and liturgy and demonstrate exemplary behaviour.

There is a naturally embedded daily pattern of prayer, with four opportunities per day for pupils to engage in. Prayer is central to the school life and forms part of the routine for pupils and staff. The school faithfully follows the liturgical year, with seasonally appropriate scripture chosen to help pupils to participate. Key staff are skilled in helping pupils to plan prayer and liturgy, and staff use their gifts and talents to enhance spiritual opportunities such as playing the piano for whole school celebration of the word. The school is at the centre of the parish, and works

exceptionally well with St Mary's community to provide pupils with the opportunity to authentically worship. Parents are also especially grateful for the opportunities to be included as part of the worshipping community at St Joseph's. The school makes very good use of space to provide beautiful and living prayer spaces in classrooms, a prayer garden, and recently restored chapel which is at the heart of the school. Whilst the school does not have many pupils of other faiths, they are able to make provision for pupils in need of a dedicated prayer space as 'all children are afforded respect in this school.'

Leaders and governors attach great importance to prayer and liturgy and carefully set aside time for holy days of obligation and the Eucharist. Staff are regularly offered training by the CET lead for ethos which is greatly appreciated. Leaders assist others to plan prayer and liturgy and have strong relationships with all stakeholders. The school is well resourced with staffing and facilities to support pupils in developing high quality experiences of prayer and liturgy, such as a retreat to Minsteracres. This is funded by the school because leaders are keen that pupils encounter and experience God's love in a variety of ways. Evaluation of collective worship is emerging, and leaders are keen to embed this more formally to continually improve. Leaders and governors have ensured this is a school at 'the heart of its parish.'

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Joseph's Catholic Middle School, Hexham
School unique reference number (URN)	148260
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9294654
Full postal address of the school	St Joseph's Catholic Middle School, Highford Lane, Hexham, NE46 2DD
School phone number	01434605124
Headteacher	Nicholas Wood
Chair of Local Governing Body	Wendy Ross
School Website	www.hexhamstjosephs.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	N/A
Age-range of pupils	9-13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	June 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Francesca Craik
Andrew Young

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