



# St James' Catholic Primary School, Millom

URN: 112351

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Lancaster

14–15 March 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

✓

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

✓

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

✓

## What the school does well

- Inclusive welcoming school where everyone is nurtured and loved. The needs of pupils with special educational needs are extremely well met and developed.
- Strong inspirational head teacher with a dedicated and hardworking SLT who all are committed to helping and supporting all children to be the best they can be.
- A strong, knowledgeable subject leader who is extremely passionate about Catholic education, driving standards forward and building on the new curriculum directory across all year groups.
- Strong Catholic ethos that permeates across all areas of the school; beautiful displays and areas of worship visible and accessible to all.

- The school is at the centre of the community providing valuable support to pupils and families in need.

### What the school needs to improve

- find more ways to develop and strengthen links with the families and parishioners of St James'
- develop further the marking of religious education in pupils' books to enable pupils to extend their learning through next steps, following on from the excellent practice of the subject leader.
- develop pupils' independence in planning, leading and evaluating their own 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

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

2

St James' Catholic Primary School is a welcoming, happy school where children and staff thrive. The pupils were able to talk to inspectors about the distinctive nature of St James and what makes it different, telling inspectors 'we are taught how to behave how Jesus would behave'. They were able to speak about how they deepen their knowledge about how Jesus expects us to act, learning from the bible and from their lessons. Pupils feel safe and cared about, stating that they could go to any member of staff about a concern with the security of knowing they will be listened to and helped. Pupils spoke about their responsibilities to help those in need and linked this to their faith. They were able to share examples of what they had done in and out of school, supporting global charities such as Cafod and Macmillan Cancer and more locally, 'A Skyful of Stars'. Pupils at St James are respectful to each other and were able to share the importance of respect. One pupil spoke about how being at St James' had helped her with her decision making, asking herself, 'What would Jesus do?' Pupils were able to talk about how the parish priest helped them with their faith and how they enjoyed going to church and learning about God.

The mission statement 'I have loved you with an everlasting love' has recently been reviewed and is lived out by all in school. Staff are fully committed to the school and their dedication to helping the children is very clear to see in all areas. The school has a very welcoming environment and provides a safe haven in the centre of the community. Staff are excellent role models and the respect and support they have for each other is evident. The recent recruitment of the access and inclusion practitioner has secured a valuable resource across school and to the families of St James'. This is testament to how the leaders and governors consider the pastoral support to the families and pupils a priority. The environment is well

cared for and depicts the distinct nature of a Catholic school, with artistic gifts being used to enhance the school displays. The parish priest provides spiritual support to the pupils and staff and is a regular visitor into school. He engages positively with school and is keen to work with school leaders and governors to develop the school further. The health relationships, sex and health education curriculum meet all statutory and diocesan requirements.

Governors are committed and passionate about St James'. They are regular visitors and participate in governor monitoring days, contributing, and promoting the Catholic life and mission of the school. Governors engage with the diocese and have received in-house training for governor development days provided by the diocese. Governors are involved in sacramental preparation programmes and school Masses. They support the head teacher and senior leadership team and are keen to develop further links with families and the parish. Leaders and governors are committed to Catholic social teaching and there are many examples of how the school have worked together as a team to help the most vulnerable in society. The staff feel looked after by the leaders and governors and the head teacher is very much valued by the governors. The governors are kept well informed by the school with regards to the Catholic curriculum and the school improvement plan has a clear Catholic life and mission focus. This is regularly reviewed and evaluated. The governors have a good understanding of the self-evaluation process and have all had an input into it. Professional development is identified as part of the appraisal cycle and staff have received appropriate training through in-school, cluster work and diocesan led opportunities. Induction processes are secure and effective with new staff feeling supported and valued.

## 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

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

2

Pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of their learning content, in line with the new religious education directory. Progression in knowledge and skills is evident across key stages. The school monitors progress effectively, and children's books reflect good progress. Religious vocabulary is used well and linked to the curriculum; the next step would be to have this displayed for children to refer to. Children exhibit strong recall skills, particularly regarding Holy Week events; the children in Early Years Foundation were able to re-enact Jesus' entry into Jerusalem with enthusiasm. They concentrate well, and the school aims for creative approaches to learning. Children were able to engage in lessons and could access their work independently. The school is beginning to develop ways to make this more creative as seen in a Year 1 lesson where the children were cutting out a cross and were able to make the link to Jesus dying on the cross.

Pupils take pride in their work and the presentation in their books is excellent. Children are well supported, and adaptations are made predominantly by additional adult support to allow all children to learn. Children focus well in religious education lessons, recognising the connection to Jesus. Children understand the marking scheme which is in place but would benefit from a greater understanding of their next steps. This could be done through the marking process.

The leaders have ensured that professional development has been given the highest priority to allow staff to attend training for the delivery of the new *Religious Education Directory*. The subject leader has very good subject knowledge and is supporting teachers with their planning and delivery of lessons. Teachers in Early Years Foundation Stage/Year 1 and Year 3 are using *The Vine and Branches* materials as a starting point for their planning. A training day has been planned with the diocese to give the theological background required by the new curriculum.

Attainment is rigorously tracked against the expected outcomes and children are making good progress. The children have clear overviews of learning at the start of each new branch, detailing the expected outcomes. Effective questioning was observed in all classes, and this was mainly used for recall of key events. Pupils would benefit from additional questions to deepen their thinking. Teachers fully recognise the importance that religious education plays in the school, and they make it central to the life of St James'.

Leaders have made the decision to implement the Directory across all year groups and there is a clear overview that details the coverage and content across the school. The school is working together with the local cluster to collaborate and support one another to ensure effective implementation. Standards in religious education are slightly above those in other core subjects and termly pupil progress meetings ensure that children are continuing to make good progress within the scheme.

The governors understand the importance of staff training and have placed priority on all diocesan training including the Directory training, induction of early career teachers and subject leader training. The religious education leader's vision is to ensure that all teachers feel supported through the implementation of the new curriculum and her strong subject knowledge and dedication to the subject should provide firm foundations for this to happen. Early career teachers are well supported by all leaders and governors and strong relationships between staff are evident throughout the school.

Leaders are aware of the varying needs of the pupils within school and effective monitoring happens to ensure that relevant adaptations are made allowing all children to make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs are nurtured and supported at this fully inclusive school. The leaders of the school have accurately self-evaluated the school and have been well supported by governors in this process. The governors regularly visit school and have recently undertaken monitoring of religious education alongside leaders.

## 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 respond respectfully and reverently to prayer and liturgy experiences and are attentive and engaged throughout. Pupils were able to share with inspectors the different ways of praying and spoke proudly about how they love to sing. This is a strength of St James'. Pupils work well with staff to prepare meaningful experiences of prayer and liturgy and the older pupils are confident to take part and lead. However, this now needs to be developed further, giving them the responsibility to plan, lead and evaluate independently, with teachers facilitating this but stepping back slightly. Pupils were able to talk about the Church's seasons and they shared their knowledge of the liturgical colours for each season. Pupils enjoy praying and could say how prayer has helped them out of school through turning to God at home in difficult situations. This understanding can be developed further by helping the pupils understand how prayer can lead to action in the wider world. Pupils are keen to take part and described how they have liturgical ministries in Mass, both in school and in church. They are also involved in whole school services, assisting with liturgical responsibilities.

Prayer is central to life at St James' and there is a daily pattern of prayer that staff and pupils can describe. Prayer and liturgy sessions observed demonstrated a wide variety of ways of praying, including scripture readings, singing, traditional and spontaneous prayer and opportunities for deep reflection. Staff model good prayer and liturgy and inspectors witnessed calm and purposeful environments, with seasonally appropriate scripture being used in every year group. Younger pupils were encouraged to select objects as a focus for their prayer sessions. Older pupils are encouraged to lead, with foundations being laid to move to this practice to be carried out independently. All the classrooms have dedicated prayer spaces which are well cared for and contain seasonally appropriate content and themes. School displays reflect the meaningful work carried out by the Laudato Si group, raising awareness for God's creation. The school have created a communal prayer area which is conducive to prayer and reflection. There is a wide variety of resources which pupils can access in classrooms and

around school. School is taking further steps to involve families and parishioners in the prayer & liturgy of the school.

The school has an up-to-date prayer and liturgy policy, and staff are aware of how this is used across school. A whole school calendar is in place with opportunities for Mass, Holy days of Obligation and important saint days. All members of the school community are welcomed at Mass and given access regularly to the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Leaders offer regular opportunities for professional development in prayer and liturgy and the subject leader attends diocesan training when required. The subject leader has a secure knowledge about Catholic traditions, and this is being passed on to all staff to help develop Catholic knowledge. As a result, staff feel confident in delivering effective prayer and liturgy and recognise the central role that prayer has at St James'. Leaders demonstrate a good understanding of the variety of ways of praying and this is reflected in the different opportunities that pupils are exposed to during prayer and liturgy experiences. School has subscribed to *Ten: Ten* resources for prayer and liturgy and this supports staff with appropriate and seasonal scripture. Prayer and liturgy is monitored by the subject leader and constructive feedback is given, enabling all staff to develop their knowledge and skills further. Information about the quality of prayer and liturgy is shared with governors at meetings and observed by governors during visit days.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	St James' Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	112351
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9423514
Full postal address of the school	St James' Catholic Primary School, Lonsdale Road, Lonsdale Road, Millom, Millom, LA18 4AS
School phone number	01229772731
Headteacher	Nerissa Nicholas
Chair of Governors	Susan Lloyd
School Website	<a href="http://www.stjamesrc.cumbria.sch.uk">www.stjamesrc.cumbria.sch.uk</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	N/A
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	November 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	2 - Good

## The inspection team

Michelle Holden  
Clare Evans

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