



St James' Catholic Primary School

URN: 119588

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Liverpool

15–16 October 2025

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

1

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

1

Collective worship (p.7)

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

1

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

Compliance statement

- The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference for curriculum religious education, prayer and liturgy.
- The school is fully compliant with the additional requirements of the Archbishop of Liverpool.
- The school has responded fully to areas for improvement identified in the last inspection.

What the school does well

- There is expressed pride in belonging to St James' School community.
- Leaders use the light of faith to inspire and enthuse everyone they work with.
- The school's clear mission statement is owned, lived by all and used to drive everything they undertake.
- Religious education lessons are engaging, fun and encourage pupils to think deeply.
- Experiences of prayer enrich, affirm and challenge all to be faithful people of God.

What the school needs to improve

- Share the process for living Catholic life and mission with other schools across the archdiocese.
- Provide a consistent approach to using prior learning in religious education.

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

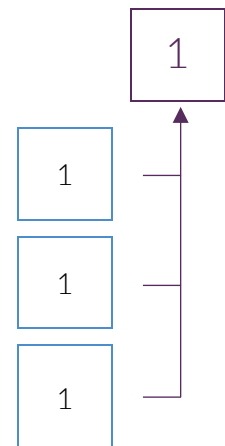
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 know they belong at St James'. They embrace and understand their mission statement which is constantly referred to and accessible to all, by using creative signs and actions. One pupil confidently shared, 'no matter if you have a disability, or come from another country or have a challenge, everyone is important and everyone is welcome; you belong.' This sense of belonging to the St James' family permeates all aspects of school life. Pupils know they are important and valued by each other and their caring staff. They expressed how they 'believe in God and themselves' so that they can be the best they can. Pupils respond to the demands of Catholic social teaching and through their pupil parliament are active in responding to the needs of others locally, nationally and internationally. One example of faith through action is their joint project to raise money and collect food for a local charity which supports homelessness. The pupils excitedly shared how they care for their common home in many ways including using public transport and litter-picking. The behaviour of pupils in class and around school is exemplary. They are happy, confident, articulate and religiously literate young people.

Members of the St James' family embrace the school mission statement and share the impact it has on their life in school. There is a strong sense of belonging and one member of staff revealed how she has flourished since coming to St James'. Many examples were shared by pupils and staff about how the school has gone the extra mile in ensuring that all are valued, loved, and given what is needed to thrive. Relationships in this school are exceptionally strong, and members of the community speak with joy and pride about their role within this unique family. Staff willingly pool their expertise with one another and are open to seeking ways to further enrich this process. Their faith-filled connectedness exemplifies God's love which impacts upon the pupils' formation. Pastoral care is driven by the mission of the school and is immensely

Catholic in nature. This care is on offer to the school community and especially embraces all those seeking help or support in prayer. As one parent noted, 'my child feels safe and loved.' The physical environment reflects the priority given to the pupils and reveals that only the very best will do in ensuring that the school's Catholic identity is reaffirmed at every turn. The provision for relationships, sex and health education meets the requirements of the archdiocese.

Leadership at all levels are guardians of the mission of this Catholic school. The headteacher is committed to her vision of 'bringing Church to the children' so they know that 'God is welcoming to all' and not just to the few practising Catholics within the school. Leaders are passionate and ambitious in continually finding new ways to move this vision forward. This is why the Catholic mission is at the authentic heart of leadership, informing all decisions. Governors too are passionate about their role and are active in supporting the leadership of the school. Some visit often so can personally attest to the positive relationships, ethos and welcome they receive. The school's compliance with the archbishop's vision and policies are undertaken with great humility and supported by high levels of expertise and innovation. It would benefit the wider family of schools within the archdiocese if this practice could be shared. Parish links are strong and local clergy visit as often as they can because they are highly appreciative of the work of the school. Consequently, this overall faith-filled leadership enriched by the knowledge and understanding of their purpose and responsibilities ensures that God's family here at St James' is founded upon its lived Catholic life and mission.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

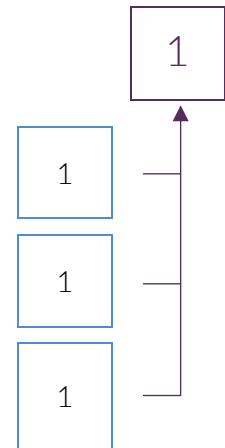
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Religious education is the core subject in this school and forms the foundation of the wider curriculum. Pupils appreciate and enjoy their lessons and shared this fact with inspectors. This is clear from the high levels of engagement and behaviour throughout the school. Pupils speak confidently about their learning and can articulate how it impacts upon their actions. During inspection pupils confidently presented their learning about cardinal virtues and gave real life examples. Pupils have high levels of religious literacy and this aids their learning in other areas of the curriculum. From the earliest years they listen and concentrate well, which enables progress from almost their first moments in school. This is because teachers engage their pupils in interesting lessons that continuously build upon prior learning and are well paced. For example, in Early Years, children can already demonstrate some sound foundational knowledge, happily sharing what they know about the Bible and in recalling a visit from their parish priest. Pupils show notable independence and produce work which reflects creativity. Pupils work is well presented and of a high quality. Attainment is at least in line with other subjects, and this has been sustained over several years.

All teachers, supported by skilful and experienced teaching assistants, have high levels of knowledge and expertise. This results in lessons that are interesting, highly engaging and effective. A document shared with inspectors demonstrated how careful thought has been given to progression from early years through to the end of Year 6. Teachers and teaching assistants work in close partnership. This synergy ensures that pupils are very well supported, including those with additional needs. Pastoral intervention and whole school policies play an important part in ensuring pupils are ready to learn. For example, zones of regulation are used as tools for the pupils to reflect on their well-being. This focus upon well-being aids the education of the whole child and promotes their spiritual and moral development. Questioning of pupils is a

particular strength and used to ensure that answers are not merely accepted but valued and used to encourage in-depth development. An emphasis on verbal feedback in lessons ensures that pupils recognise achievement and know how to continually improve. The school has invested in high quality resources and opportunities that bring learning to life. For example, by discussing their artwork, pupils in Year 6 demonstrated how they fully understood the religious message they were sharing.

Leaders and governors ensure that religious education is the core subject of the curriculum in this school and is a faithful reflection of the Religious Education Directory. This focus is at the forefront of plans for development and evaluation. Leaders ensure that religious education has parity with other core subjects. Leaders, governors and members of staff are involved in the self-evaluation process and its regular review, which is entirely fit for purpose because of its identification of key strengths and areas for development. The inspiring religious education leaders have been empowered by the wider leadership of the school to provide a highly effective, sequential and progressive curriculum. They are passionate about their role and have an inspiring vision for their subject. They are proactive in seeking ways to continually evolve and so maintain the high levels of support for their colleagues. Teachers and teaching assistants spoke about the support they had received and how this had impacted upon their confidence in teaching religious education. Staff training is of the best standard, utilising both archdiocesan support and internal expertise. Enrichment opportunities are bespoke to the needs of their pupils and their families which is gratefully appreciated.

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

1

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

1

1

Prayer and liturgy is an integral part of daily school life. Pupils are highly immersed in thoughtful and well-planned acts of worship. There is a deep sense of prayerful peace, reflective silence and opportunities for personal responses in acts of worship. For example, in Early Years, children are supported in developing prayerful silence only a few weeks into their life in school. They can use a simple breathing strategy to be calm and ready for prayer. Pupils could explain the importance of prayer in their lives with one sharing that prayer helped to, 'express her emotions to God and He can help to fix it and show His love.' Pupils have appropriate knowledge and understanding of the rhythm of the liturgical year. They can minister with confidence and grace, and this reflects that they have been carefully formed and developed over time. Pupils work collaboratively with their teachers to plan and lead meaningful celebrations of the word. The influence of prayer on school life is profound. One pupil shared that St James would be proud of them. Pupils are supported to navigate life's ups and downs and respond with shared prayer.

Prayer and liturgy is central to life at St James' and this importance is shared not only by the pupils but by staff in a personal and heartfelt way. Daily prayer is imprinted in the life of St James' School and there is a creative balance between traditional and innovative acts of worship. Scripture is selected with loving care and reflects the needs of the community and the liturgical year. Both are celebrated in meaningful ways which engage the whole school community and reaches out to all whom they support. Staff are fully committed and are inspiring role models of practice. They are skilled and well supported by their leaders to strive for pupil leadership over time. Creative flair is utilised in planning experiences of prayer. For example, the Easter trail was well attended and brought to life the Easter story with reflective prayer stations and the *giving tree* which enabled pupils to develop a deep sense of gratitude. Every area of the school provides

opportunities for prayer and reflection. These are all high quality and designed to be accessible to all. The many prayer spaces both inside and outside reflect pupils' creativity.

Leaders including governors have a shared vision for prayer ministry and this reflects the ongoing development of pupils. Leaders ensure that the skill strategy is utilised well so that all pupils are enabled to contribute comfortably according to their stages of development. As a result, by Year 6, pupils can lead with confidence, clarity and reverence. Leaders ensure that the annual planning of the liturgical year includes innovative strategies that further enrich the provision already in place. Prayer and worship leaders understand the importance that regular prayer can have on pupils' mental health and well-being. One pupil noted, 'It is our special time to be quiet.' The trust that staff have in the prayer and liturgy leaders means there is an openness to growth and to continually support each other. This means that staff are reflective of their practice and seek ways to improve and share it with each other. Prayer and liturgy is prioritised when setting budgets. This is evident from the range of quality resources. Prayer, liturgy, and worship are integral to the life of the school through faith in action that ranges from visits to Barcelona to an informal conversation with the pastoral lead about planning.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St James' Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	119588
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8883614
Full postal address of the school	Ashurst Road, Ashurst, Skelmersdale, Lancashire, WN8 6TN
School phone number	01695 728989
Executive headteacher	Not applicable
Headteacher	Mrs Angela Blacoe
Chair of governors	Dr David Allan
School Website	www.st-james-pri.lancs.sch.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Not applicable
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	2-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	November 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Louise Byrne

Lead

Julia Ashton

Lead

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

