



St Joseph's College

URN: 136460

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Birmingham

24–25 June 2026

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

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

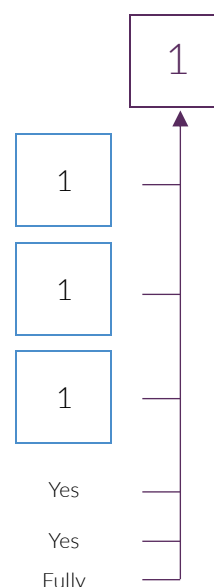
Collective worship (p.7)

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

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

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



Compliance statement

- This school fully complies with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- This school is fully compliant with the additional requirements of His Grace.
- This school has fully addressed all previous areas for improvement.

What the school does well

- The school is a loving and caring community, with a deeply embedded and genuine culture of welcome, inclusion, and mutual respect, truly living out the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice.
- Thoroughly consistent, skilled, and committed teaching in religious education leads to very good progress and excellent outcomes for all students.
- Leadership across the school at all levels is a particular strength: the thoroughly collaborative and consultative approach is greatly appreciated by all staff.
- There is considerable richness in the school's Catholic life and mission and the experiences of prayer and liturgy offered by the school, which engage all students and encourage them to engage and participate at the deepest level.
- The extensive programme of retreats, pilgrimages and immersion in international projects has a profound effect upon the moral and spiritual development of students and staff.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop the approach to teaching and learning in religious education at Key Stage 4 to match the creativity and opportunities for a variety of responses currently provided at Key Stage 3.
- Establish consistency across the school in how its Catholic life and mission are expressed and celebrated through the physical environment.

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

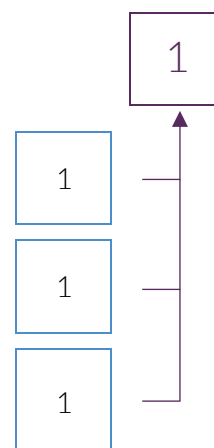
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



The school's particular charism is a powerful gift to the Church and is fully understood and thoroughly embraced by students. The sense of welcome and inclusion is very strong, with deep respect for those of other denominations, faiths and worldviews. Students place the highest value on the school's chaplaincy provision, showing remarkable commitment to it as a result. This is seen in the work of the student chaplaincy group and the mental health ambassadors, in the Encounter Retreat led by Year 13 students for Year 12, and in the continued engagement of former students in chaplaincy. From a wide variety of backgrounds, all have a profound sense of their own uniqueness, and feel valued and nurtured, understanding that Christ is at the centre of all aspects of school life. Students respond fully to the demands of Catholic social teaching, particularly through service to others, as seen in participation in the school's immersion programme in Sierra Leone and India and in support of LaSallian world projects. Students support the less privileged and vulnerable at local, national, and international level, including through work with Headway Staffordshire, Diabetes UK, and the International Rescue Committee. They also have a profound awareness of their responsibilities as stewards of God's creation, seen in their commitment to the Swap Shop, the Year 8 sustainability workshop, and the nurture garden.

The overarching principle of 'Head Hand Heart' is truly lived by all and provides inspiration and aspiration. It is linked in lessons to understanding, discussing and responding, and students are encouraged to question and challenge. Staff are fully committed to the Catholic life and mission of the school with many retreats, opportunities for charitable outreach, and the support of the most vulnerable. A loving and supportive community cares for the welfare and well-being of all, leading to all staff being exemplary role models. The pastoral care of all students is exemplary,

as seen in Pastoral Planning Day and the restorative approach to those returning to school after sanctions. Relationships, sex, and health education (RSHE) is a great strength: it is very well led, carefully planned, and delivered, and able to respond to immediate concerns; the school's practice is recognised as a beacon to other schools. The environment proudly proclaims its Catholic character, however, its prominence and sense of celebration vary throughout the school site.

Leadership of Catholic life and mission is committed, energetic, and inspirational, supporting all to play their part, thereby reflecting the school's charism and the teachings of the Church. Leaders and governors are unequivocal about the school's Catholic nature but also promote a profound culture of welcome and inclusion, with very thorough, personalised and supportive transition at Years 7, 12, and 13. Leaders and governors offer truly inspirational witness to the Gospel and the principles of Catholic social teaching, and the school has a truly Catholic curriculum that makes connections across every aspect of school life: for example, a focus on Catholic social teaching enhances the physical education, science, and geography curricula. Governors are frequently present in school, are highly ambitious for the school's Catholic life and mission, and offer considerable experience and expertise in monitoring, challenge, analysis, and development planning. Staff training and development are priorities, including the induction and formation of staff through the Edmund Rice Network, which is greatly appreciated, as well as opportunities for vocations days, retreats, pilgrimages, and immersion, all of which have a profound impact upon staff and students. Parents typically comment that 'the retreats are valued by all,' and students describe immersion as 'the best experience of my life.'

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

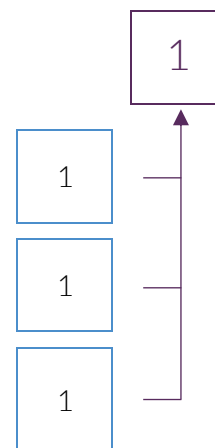
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Students' knowledge, understanding, and skills are very strong; all make sustained progress and achieve excellent outcomes. They are engaged in lessons, questioning and seeking clarification, concentrate very well, and readily make connections with prior knowledge. They apply their understanding to their own lives, reflecting with mature spiritual understanding, and speaking with confidence about their learning. Because of the staff's high expectations, and students' engagement, behaviour is exemplary in all lessons and students demonstrate excellent independence. At Key Stage 3, they show real joy and excitement in the subject, enjoying the many opportunities to reflect. Students' written work shows thoroughness and pride, and in Key Stages 3 and 5 there is evidence of real creativity and imagination. Sixth Form students greatly enjoy and value core religious education lessons at Key Stage 5. All students understand the feedback they receive, have a very clear sense of what they need to do to improve their work, and a strong desire to do so. As a result, their achievement is above average when compared with other core curriculum subjects and with the subject's achievements throughout the diocese.

All teachers have excellent subject and pedagogical knowledge and deliver their lessons with confidence, pace and enthusiasm, in an atmosphere of calm commitment. There is exemplary consistency of classroom practice and feedback, which ensures excellent understanding and results in rapid and sustained progress by all students. Parents comment, 'The teaching for this subject is exemplary. The support, guidance, enthusiasm, and care that goes into the teaching could not be better.' Core religious education is a particular strength, focussing on contemporary issues through a Catholic lens and delivered in the style of higher education, which encourages independence of approach in students. Staff are very supportive of all students, using questioning expertly and offering individual support. They know their students very well and address their individual needs most effectively, always with great sensitivity. Praise and

celebration of work is a constant feature of lessons, and written feedback encourages the students to develop their oracy, build on prior learning, and make excellent progress. All relationships in the classroom are generous and genuine, valuing the students' commitment, and staff have high aspirations for students' success. At Key Stages 3 and 5 an engaging variety of resources is used to enhance the learning.

The curriculum is an accurate expression of the *Religious Education Directory*, enhanced by an intricate interweaving of the eight essentials of education from the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice. This promotes holistic growth, social responsibility, and an inclusive, faith-driven environment. The pace and consistency of provision mean the curriculum is covered fully and serves as an excellent preparation for GCSE studies. The subject has more than parity with other core subjects, and the highest quality staff training is a priority. The subject leader is inspirational: in response to the inspectorate's survey all staff strongly agree that there is a clear vision for teaching and learning in religious education in the school, and a good level of expertise in securing this, and they agree or strongly agree that students have space and time for reflection in religious education lessons. Initiatives and developments are embraced wholeheartedly: the department serves as a beacon to others in its teaching, consistency, monitoring, and analysis. All aspects of curriculum design are exemplary: in particular, the enhanced Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 5 core religious education programmes offer many opportunities for individual development. The needs of all students are addressed through detailed planning, delivery, monitoring, evaluation, analysis, and planning for further developments, all of which are rigorous and forensic in approach.

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

Students enjoy a rich range of experiences of prayer and liturgy and are always fully immersed; their behaviour, engagement, and participation are always reverend and sincere. They have a detailed understanding of a wide variety of ways of praying and are skilful in using these, with an excellent understanding of the Church's liturgical year. Students work most effectively in collaboration to plan, prepare, minister, evaluate, and develop highly engaging experiences of prayer and liturgy, as can be seen in the offering of bidding prayers at Mass in a variety of languages, as well as serving as extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist, proclaimers of the word, and altar servers. They also prepare and minister at events such as the deanery Eucharistic Congress. They understand and can articulate clearly and powerfully the influence of prayer on themselves, the life of the school, and the wider community, with a strong sense of how they are inspired to lead action, particularly in the context of Catholic social teaching.

Prayer is truly central to the life of the school, with a well-established daily rhythm, and the customary introduction and conclusion to meetings; this is seen in the spontaneous prayer of Year 12 students at end of a planning meeting, as well as the willingness of staff to offer their own prayers as part of the prayer rota, for example. There is a wide range of opportunities for engaging and creative experiences of prayer and liturgy, including retreats, annual pilgrimages, and the school's immersion programme, which have a profound impact on the lives of students and staff involved. Scripture always plays a prominent part in prayer, including in celebrations of the word, such as the use of Sunday's Gospel in the school's 'Word of the Week'. Staff, particularly the lay chaplain and senior leaders, are inspirational role models, and relevant staff have the highest level of skill in supporting the students in their preparation, engagement and participation in prayer and liturgy: the creative skills of staff and students, particularly in music and art, are used most creatively and imaginatively to enhance this. Every effort is made to

include everyone; parents feel incredibly welcomed and included in the school's prayer life. Imaginative use of space enhances the experiences of prayer and liturgy. The Chapel is an attractive space for prayer and reflection, and is used appropriately for chaplaincy activities; though it is also used as the lay chaplain's working space. Parents are fully engaged in the prayer life of the school, and the school rises above many challenges to engage with the parish.

The policy for prayer and liturgy is clear and accessible. Leaders and governors have excellent understanding of the range of skills to be developed in students and a clear, effective strategy to develop these. The school calendar is thoroughly and imaginatively planned to include all holy days of obligation and other significant days, as well as the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist: the school's efforts to maintain a full calendar are demonstrated by the fact that 12 out of 13 planned Masses are celebrated this year, and non-sacramental reconciliation is provided, also positively contributing towards the school's inclusive nature. Staff training and the ongoing formation of students and staff are real strengths, including the use of in-house liturgical videos and the inspiring example of the lay chaplain, who has excellent knowledge and skill to facilitate, develop, and enhance prayer and liturgy with flexibility and imagination. Very thorough and effective monitoring and evaluation, each half term by students and in the termly meetings of the governors' Catholic life committee, as well as after retreats and other special events, leads to excellent development planning.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Joseph's College
School unique reference number (URN)	136460
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	861 5901
Full postal address of the school	London Road, Trent Vale, Stoke-On-Trent, ST4 5NT
School phone number	01782 848008
Executive headteacher	N/A
Headteacher	Charlotte Slattery
Chair of governing board	Ross Selby
School Website	stjosephstrentvale.com
Trusteeship	The Gaudete Trust
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Laetare Catholic Multi Academy Trust
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Selective
Age-range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	February 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Andrew Maund
David Legrand
Sarah Boyle

Lead
Team
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