



# St Joseph's Catholic High School, Workington

URN: 148703

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Lancaster

16–17 October 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

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

## Compliance statement

- 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 laid down by the Bishop of Lancaster.
- The school has responded fully to the areas for improvement from the previous Catholic school inspection.

## What the school does well

- St Joseph's is a steadily improving school. Senior staff, governors and Trust leaders are skilfully guiding change and moving the school forward.
- The strong witness to Catholic leadership provided by the headteacher is an inspiration to the whole community.
- Student achievement in religious education is strong and in lockstep with the effective teaching seen in the subject.
- Arising from the excellent support of key staff, students maintain an optimistic outlook, conduct themselves well, and cultivate positive relationships with one another in school.
- Since there is an abundance of knowledge and skill among leaders, the capacity for improvement in collective worship is strong.

## What the school needs to improve

- Because the provision for chaplaincy has limitations, opportunities for student and staff formation are restricted. Governors, Trust and school leaders should re-double efforts to increase time allocations for those with key responsibilities.
- In religious education, the quality of student feedback is inconsistent and lacking depth. Team leaders and members should consider how this can be improved and implement changes.
- Students' ability to contribute meaningfully to the preparation and evaluation of prayer and liturgy is underdeveloped. The school should make this aspect of student formation a priority.

## 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

Students readily identify with the school mission statement and can describe what the school values of *'Faith, Hope and Love'* mean to them. They know that they are loved and can express this in terms of human interaction, but also as children of God. They do this regardless of their own faith. The students take responsibility for their own moral development and feel guided by Jesus' teachings revealed in prayer and liturgy experiences and across the curriculum. All students show a positive engagement with practical aspects of Catholic social teaching, and this is particularly apparent in charitable works for local and national causes. Sometimes, however, they find difficulty in describing why the simple acts that they willingly undertake are linked to principles such as the common good and stewardship. The local community faces numerous challenges, and these affect many students. Despite this, students demonstrate notably upbeat attitudes, very good behaviour, and form positive relationships in school. At the root of this is students' understanding of Imago Dei and others' unique characteristics. Some students benefit from additional formation experiences as a result of their involvement in chaplaincy. However, this is not well-developed, and so the impact across the school has limitations.

St Joseph's confidently proclaims its mission statement *"Living, Loving and Learning through Christ"*. This is evident across the website, in key policy documents, and through display and discussion. Staff know this mission and bind themselves to the school virtues. St Joseph's is an inclusive and welcoming community where the quality of relationships is justly held as a measure of effectiveness. The head teacher is a guiding light, leading with dignity and humility. He models servant leadership in an exemplary manner. This Catholic witness provides skilled mentorship to his colleagues. Students speak positively about teachers; they

recognise the support and time freely given. The commitment shown to provide outstanding levels of pastoral care is decisive and thorough. Support services for students are broad and well-targeted. Display and iconography reinforce the school's Catholic mission. The environment is clean and welcoming with raised plant beds and soft areas. Strategic decisions to improve chaplaincy have made a difference; the team approach shows a depth of experience and yet a greater allocation of time is needed to support student formation. Relationships, sex and health education is enthusiastically lead. The course is well conceived and strengthened by Ten:Ten resources, hence credibly meeting diocese and statutory guidelines.

Governors, Trust, and school leaders understand the distinctive Catholic mission of the school and show resolve to ensure authenticity at all levels. They are strongly committed to guidance provided by the bishop and his officers. This extends to support for other schools and there is a long-standing ambition for continual improvement. Nevertheless, there is still an opportunity in policy and deed to push expectations further. Positive links to local parishes are fostered with a commitment to support outside of school. In return, the weekly school Mass, held in the chapel, brings more into contact with the Eucharist. Leaders show persistence in reaching out to parents and families and are unafraid to remind them that education at St Joseph's starts with the gospel message. The well-being of all staff is prioritised, and confidence is shown that leaders will consider individual and collective needs. Leaders understand the centrality of the distinctive mission in their education brief, and they have challenged colleagues to discover where Catholic social teaching sits in subject curriculums. Gradually, subject teachers are recognising this with appropriate training opportunities provided. This includes staff who are new to the school and who are complementary in saying that the witness provided by the head teacher provides a vocational drive to support Catholic values.

## 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

Students demonstrate a secure understanding of scripture and gospel values in religious education with many applying high level analytical skills to their work. This has been accelerated by a thorough implementation of the *Religious Education Directory*. GCSE outcomes are good, and there is clear evidence of progression across both key stages. Attainment is above other core subjects and mostly close to national averages. Religious literacy, and theological reflection are strong, with students given the opportunity for prayerful reflection in lessons. Year 11 students clearly enjoyed using rosary beads in a compelling display of prayer at the start of one lesson. A recall task at the start of lessons shows a clear emphasis on the retrieval of knowledge, although some development is needed in prompting students' curiosity in the subject. Students study independently and are able to concentrate for pieces of extended writing. The work produced is of a consistently high standard with students taking pride in the presentation. Students are quietly engaged in lessons and are able to answer questions when prompted. In a Year 7 lesson on Catholic social teaching, students enthusiastically showed their commitment to social justice and the sanctity of human life. Students are prompted to self-assess, know how well they are doing and what they need to improve.

The head of department has a high level of subject expertise. This is effectively shared with colleagues, some of whom are non-specialists. Teaching methods are secure, but some lessons would benefit from a greater variety of teaching strategies being utilised. All religious education teachers have high expectations of students and the continued focus on curriculum adaptations should lead to better progress for students of all abilities. Staff work collaboratively with questioning being a particular strength of the team. Teachers skilfully pinpoint student understanding, allowing them to give precise and developed answers. In a

Year 11 lesson on religious symbolism, students displayed rich religious vocabulary. When prompted by their teacher, they were able to use this in well-articulated responses. Students receive feedback in line with the policy of the school, using self-assessment strategies and having regular religious education vocabulary tests. The feedback lacks consistency and depth in some cases. Each lesson begins with a prayer. One student commented that the time given for spiritual reflection allows them to grow more in their faith. Regular reference to Catholic social teaching in lessons provides sound moral formation for students and the religious education department is very well resourced.

The new *Religious Education Directory* is now delivered in Year 7 and Year 8, with Year 9 included from September 2025. Religious education is always given appropriate weight and priority in the school, with ten per cent of curriculum time allocated. St Joseph's utilises local networks, including other Catholic schools, to enhance its professional development offer. Leaders have developed a programme of peer observation, coaching and sharing good practice. This provides staff with opportunities for spiritual growth and the chance to improve their own classroom skill. The department is well led by the experienced subject leader. Schemes of learning and assessments are well planned, leading to good outcomes for students. The religious education curriculum is carefully sequenced and is a faithful reflection of the new directory, with students aware of where they are heading on their curriculum journey. The curriculum is planned to meet the needs of all learners but students with additional needs would often benefit from a more scaffolded approach. Similarly, the development opportunities for students to engage in enrichment activities outside of the classroom would add breadth and depth to the curriculum. Self-evaluation is strong with senior leaders and governors regularly quality assuring the subject.

## 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

3

#### 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

The approach to prayer and liturgy is fundamentally sound. There is a use of scripture, a focus on mission and values, and a commitment from students to ministries. In observed prayer and liturgy, however, student engagement and participation were inconsistent in quality, even though the testimony of staff and clergy indicate that improvement has been seen.

Opportunities are provided for students to experience prayer in different forms. Many demonstrate an understanding and active participation, including for traditional Catholic prayers. This includes silent reflection by engaging with 'Ausculta' - also the school motto. In this way, students recognise that silent reflection and prayer is supportive to feelings of stability in their lives, and they show an openness to such experiences. Leaders' planning ensures that students understand the liturgical seasons and great feasts. However, only a small number of students benefit from opportunities to design, prepare and evaluate prayer and liturgy. Liturgical music, and opportunities for students to participate in joyful singing, are not yet a regular part of daily provision. Even with the growth in opportunities for student participation in prayer and liturgy, further improvements are possible.

Prayer and liturgy is well planned and incorporated into pastoral routines including for form time and assemblies. The source of this planning is *The Way* programme. This is a well-thought-out scheme following a recognisably Catholic pattern of study and prayer. These resources create opportunities for staff to adapt and develop. When these are taken, staff deliver engaging and creative experiences for students, but sometimes preparation lacks inspiration. At present only small number of staff have developed skills in the delivery of prayer and liturgy. This can lead to over reliance on these individuals. Passages of scripture are central to prayer and liturgy, always providing a starting point for reflections and celebration. Collectively, staff show a strong commitment to prayer and liturgy and there is a

deep respect for the exceptional skills of some leaders. The provision of a Mass each Friday in school allows staff, students, and members of the community the opportunity to regularly celebrate in unison. The school has thought hard about improving access to prayer spaces and the rededication of the chapel to a central area has made the notion of '*Christ at the Centre*' real. Off-site provision such as at Our Lady and St Michael's church is also well used and progress has been made in working more closely with parishes.

The school is in the process of creating and adopting a new prayer and liturgy policy guided by advice from the new directory. The previous policy illustrates a breadth of provision with consideration given to the way experiences are delivered to students and staff. Leaders and governors show foresight incorporating the development of a "prayer progression" strategy, and there is an opportunity to produce new guidance to increase impact. Leaders and governors fully understand the significance of prayer and liturgy in fostering the faith development of the community. The school calendar is designed to incorporate key stage assemblies, class prayer, and liturgy services, as well as whole school Masses that celebrate important feasts. The chaplaincy team, consisting of six members including the headteacher, brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the provision. This means that the authenticity of materials is secure, that responsibilities are shared, and that further progress can be anticipated. However, there is still a deficit of time allocated to practical aspects of chaplaincy meaning that progress is slower than it could be. Governors, Trust and school leaders understand this is a development need and show a willingness to support resources assisting change.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Joseph's Catholic High School
School unique reference number (URN)	148703
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9424810
Full postal address of the school	Harrington Road, Workington, CA14 3EE
School phone number	01900 873290
Headteacher	Ian Nevitt
Chair of Local Governing Body	Josephine McCrea
School Website	<a href="http://www.sjchs.uk">http://www.sjchs.uk</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Mater Christi Multi-Academy Trust
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	October 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	2 – Good

## The inspection team

Philip Mooney

Lead

Philip Allan

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