



# CATHOLIC SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE INSPECTION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND ACADEMIES



## St Brendan's RC Primary School

URN: 105246

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Salford

04 February 2026 – 05 February 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 RE

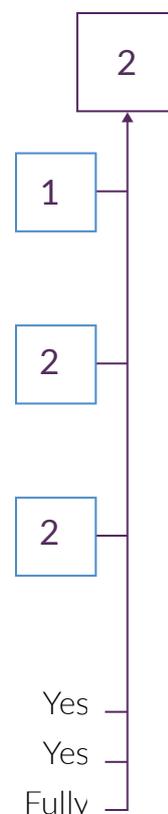
#### Collective worship (p.7)

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



## What the school does well

- The mission of the school is clearly articulated, well understood and consistently lived out by staff and pupils; staff actively bear witness to the Catholic life and mission of the school in their daily practice.
- Leaders and governors foster a culture in which staff feel valued and supported; relationships across the school community are highly positive and rooted in mutual respect.
- A strong and purposeful partnership between the school and parish enriches the Catholic life of the school and provides meaningful opportunities for shared worship and ministry.
- Effective recall strategies, including structured retrieval activities at the start of religious education lessons, support pupils in consolidating prior learning and deepening understanding.
- Pupils demonstrate consistently high levels of respect and reverence during prayer and liturgy, contributing positively to the reflective atmosphere of worship.

## What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen pupils' knowledge and understanding of other faiths so that they demonstrate informed respect and can speak confidently about different religious traditions.
- Ensure that all pupils have a clear understanding of how well they are achieving in religious education and know the specific steps required to improve and make sustained progress.
- Develop staff expertise in enabling pupils to plan and lead prayer and liturgy independently so that pupil leadership has a consistent and meaningful impact across the school.

## 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

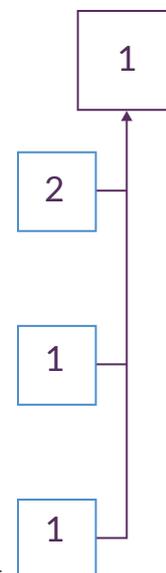
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### 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 at St Brendan's RC Primary School are proud to belong to the school community and participate enthusiastically in its Catholic life and mission. They willingly take on roles and responsibilities and are given meaningful opportunities to share and celebrate their faith through active involvement in groups such as the Growing in Faith Together (GIFT) team, the Caritas Ambassadors and Planet Protectors. All pupils belong to one of four houses, named after saints, each supporting a chosen charity. The golden leaf award, honours the children who consistently embody the school's values throughout the school community, demonstrating these principles with integrity, kindness, and respect in their daily interactions. Pupils actively support charities locally and nationally, including Cafod and Bolton's Urban Outreach, demonstrating their commitment to Catholic Social Teaching. They are happy, confident and secure, knowing they are valued and cared for. Behaviour throughout the school is excellent; pupils show respect for themselves and others and respond positively to opportunities to live out Gospel values. They understand that belonging to the community brings responsibility and seek to act with kindness and integrity. However, pupils require a deeper understanding of other faiths so that they can demonstrate informed respect and speak confidently about different religious traditions. The role of pupil leadership teams should also be further developed to enable pupils to have a more consistent and meaningful impact on the spiritual life of the whole school community.

There is a strong family ethos at St Brendan's, with a lived sense of community evident in the quality of relationships and the culture of welcome extended to all. Parents describe the school as a supportive family community, reflecting the warmth and care shown by staff. High

levels of pastoral care ensure that pupils feel safe and valued, and relationships across the school bear witness to its Catholic mission. The parish priest is a regular presence, and the partnership between school and parish is a valued and visible aspect of school life. The environment reflects the school's Catholic identity through attractive and purposeful displays that promote the Church's mission in education. The relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) curriculum is delivered from Reception to Year 6, firmly rooted in Church teaching and fully compliant with statutory requirements. Staff are committed to the mission of the school and actively participate in activities that support its Catholic life. As a result, the school provides a welcoming, inclusive and supportive environment in which Christ is at the heart of daily life.

Leaders and governors are committed to promoting the Church's mission and nurturing the faith life of pupils. There is a flourishing partnership with the parish, with pupils, staff and governors actively involved in parish life and ministry. Governors are ambitious and play an active role in monitoring the school's work, attending liturgical celebrations and engaging in diocesan and local authority training. Staff speak positively about the care and support they receive and recognise that their wellbeing and workload are prioritised. Professional development is valued, enabling staff to deepen their understanding of the school's mission. Leaders have effective strategies for engaging parents and carers, working closely with outreach agencies and targeting resources to support families most in need. Communication of the school's mission is strong, including through social media. To strengthen leadership further, pupils should be involved more consistently in self-evaluation so that they can contribute meaningfully to the ongoing development of the school's Catholic life and mission.

## Religious education

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 key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

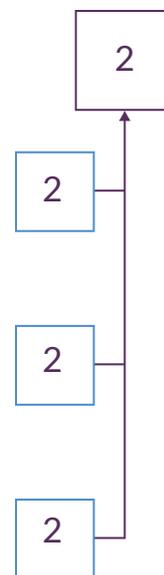
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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 are developing secure knowledge and understanding in line with the expectations of the *Religious Education Directory*. The school has begun implementing the diocesan approved schemes, including *Lighting the Path*, which are now used in the majority of classes, providing increasing consistency in curriculum delivery. Pupils at St Brendan's enjoy their religious education lessons; they listen attentively, respond thoughtfully to questions and demonstrate interest in their learning. In lessons they show respect for one another, working effectively both collaboratively and independently. This was evident in a lower Key Stage 2 class where pupils confidently shared ideas about the links between the prayer of the Our Father and the building of the Kingdom of God. Presentation in books is neat and work is completed with care, reflecting pupils' positive attitudes. Key vocabulary is displayed on religious education boards and referenced during teaching. However, pupils would benefit from greater encouragement to use subject-specific religious vocabulary when speaking about their work so that they can articulate their knowledge and understanding with clarity and confidence. While pupils understand the school's marking policy, not all can clearly explain how well they are achieving in religious education or identify the precise steps needed to improve and deepen their learning further.

The majority of teachers demonstrate confidence in their subject knowledge and a clear commitment to the teaching of religious education. Classrooms provide a positive climate for learning in which pupils are encouraged to support one another and contribute respectfully to discussion. Across Key Stage 2, the use of 'Flashback 3' at the beginning of lessons is an

effective recall strategy, enabling pupils to retrieve prior knowledge and strengthen understanding over time. Working walls and prayer areas reflect current learning and reinforce key themes, while mission floor books provide additional evidence of pupils' engagement with significant events and feast days within the Church's liturgical year. Opportunities for spiritual and moral development are evident in lessons. For example, pupils in a lower Key Stage 2 class reflected deeply on the meaning of forgiveness and the challenge of living out the words "forgive us our trespasses" in daily life. Such moments allow pupils to connect theological concepts with personal experience. Teaching would be strengthened further through more skilful use of challenging questioning to probe understanding and deepen theological reflection. Ensuring that key religious vocabulary and concepts are consistently expected in pupils' responses would support greater precision in learning and enable pupils to think more critically and theologically.

Leaders and governors have ensured that religious education has parity with other core subjects in terms of resourcing, staffing and timetabling, and that the subject receives its required allocation of time. Professional development opportunities are available to all staff, and many have attended diocesan training to support the implementation of the new scheme. The subject leader demonstrates confidence in her role and provides support for teachers new to the school. Self-evaluation of religious education is broadly accurate, and there is clear commitment to ongoing improvement. To strengthen provision further, leaders should ensure that Catholic social teaching is planned systematically within religious education and integrated across the wider curriculum so that pupils gain a deeper understanding of its theological foundations and its connection to the charitable work in which they participate. Continued development of a rigorous and regular monitoring and evaluation cycle will ensure that leaders have a precise understanding of strengths and next steps, leading to improved outcomes and sustained progress for all pupils.

## Collective worship

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

### Collective worship key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

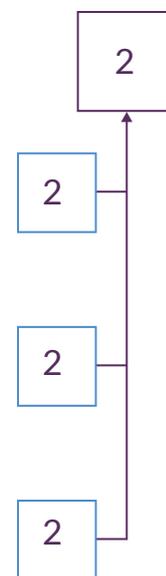
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

#### Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

#### Leadership

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



Pupils respond well to the experiences of prayer and liturgy provided by the school, including class Celebrations of the Word. During services observed, they demonstrated reverence, attentiveness and appropriate respect, participating willingly in communal prayer and reflection. Each class has a designated prayer area within the religious education display which reflects the liturgical season and the current unit of study. These areas are thoughtfully presented and support pupils' understanding of the Church's year; however, pupils indicated that they are not frequently used for private prayer, suggesting scope to develop opportunities for personal reflection. Pupils can recall a range of traditional Catholic prayers and are able to describe different forms of prayer within the Catholic tradition, including silence, spoken prayer and hymn singing. The Growing in Faith Together (GIFT) team is well established and pupils involved are enthusiastic and confident in fulfilling their roles. One said, 'belonging to this group has made me become closer to God.' They contribute to the prayer life of the school by leading key stage and whole-school assemblies and can articulate how this involvement supports their own spiritual development. To strengthen pupil participation further, members of the GIFT team would benefit from increased opportunities to collaborate with other pupils in planning and leading prayer and liturgical celebrations, ensuring that leadership is more widely shared and has a consistent impact across the school.

Prayer and liturgy are appropriately planned and form a regular part of school life. Pupils are able to describe the daily pattern of prayer and understand how this shapes the rhythm of the school week. The well-resourced chaplaincy room is used regularly by pupils and staff and provides a calm and respectful environment for worship and reflection. Scripture appropriate

to the liturgical season is selected carefully, and themes observed in class Celebrations of the Word are linked to current religious education learning. Music and hymn singing are used effectively to support participation, including the musical contribution of staff. Whole-school acts of worship involve all staff members, who model respectful engagement and provide positive examples to pupils. Families are invited to attend liturgical celebrations, strengthening links between home and school. Leaders demonstrated the range of prayer experiences offered throughout the week, showing a structured and varied approach. To ensure consistently good quality, leaders should continue to monitor class-based prayer to maintain a clear focus on worship rather than instruction. In some instances, elements of questioning risked shifting the emphasis towards teaching rather than prayerful reflection. Supporting staff to develop confidence and clarity in leading prayer will further strengthen provision.

Leaders and governors recognise the importance of prayer and liturgy in supporting the faith development of the school community and have ensured that appropriate resources and funding are allocated. A clear policy guides practice and includes a structured approach to developing pupils' skills in participation as they progress through the school. Holy Days of Obligation and significant feast days, including house saints' days and the feast of St Brendan, are marked within the school calendar. Opportunities to celebrate the Eucharist are planned across the year. Professional development has been provided to support staff in delivering prayer and liturgy; however, further development would help staff to build greater confidence in enabling pupils to plan and lead class celebrations more independently. Leaders and governors should strengthen monitoring and evaluation procedures to ensure that provision remains consistently good. Incorporating pupil reflection more formally into evaluation processes will support continued development and help to sustain effective collective worship across the school.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Brendan's RC Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	105246
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3503363
Full postal address of the school	Brookfold Lane, Harwood, Bolton, BL2 4DZ
School phone number	01204 333133
Headteacher or Head of School	Fiona Brindley
Chair of Governors	Dr Liam Hosie
School Website	<a href="http://www.st-brendan.bolton.sch.uk">www.st-brendan.bolton.sch.uk</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non Selective
Age-range of pupils	4 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	27 March 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

## The Inspection Team

Fiona Robinson Lead

Zoe Mabbott

## 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