



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

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



St John's RC Primary School

URN: 105546

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Salford

11 March 2026 – 12 March 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

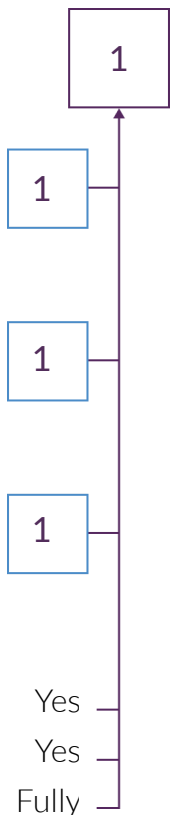
Collective worship (p.7)

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

- Scripture is used effectively, enabling pupils to deepen their understanding of the gospel message and reflect thoughtfully on the teaching of Jesus.
- Strong links between the parish and the school, enrich pupils' spiritual development and strengthen their sense of belonging to the wider Catholic community.
- Pastoral care is a strength of the school, supporting the well-being of pupils, staff and families within a caring and nurturing Catholic community.
- A wide range of enrichment opportunities linked to Catholic life supports pupils in living out the gospel values and deepening their understanding of faith in action.
- Pupils demonstrate exemplary behaviour, consistently showing respect, kindness and consideration, which contributes to a calm and purposeful learning environment.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that questioning in religious education consistently promotes deeper theological thinking, so that all pupils are challenged to explain, justify and apply their understanding.
- Establish robust external moderation of religious education to secure consistently accurate assessment across all year groups.

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



At St John's, the school ethos embodies its mission to 'Nurture hearts and inspire minds'. Pupils understand and embrace this mission, feeling valued as unique individuals created in God's image, which fosters a strong sense of belonging, identity and community. They thrive in a nurturing, inclusive environment enriched by the school's visible Catholic identity, expressed through prayer, music, art, liturgy and reflective displays. Pupils recognise and celebrate their God-given gifts, making meaningful connections between faith and learning, and actively contribute to the Catholic life and mission of the school. They see themselves as missionary disciples, confidently expressing their faith and living out Catholic social teaching in practical ways. Through leadership roles and the Mini Vinnies programme, pupils initiate projects that serve others and strengthen parish and community links, developing as thoughtful, compassionate, and responsible leaders. They take genuine pride in their contributions to this faith-filled life. St John's provides a joyful and supportive environment where pupils are nurtured, empowered and inspired to use their gifts to make a positive difference. They respond generously to the needs of others, supporting local, national and global charities, demonstrating a strong commitment to the common good and embodying the school's mission in purposeful and meaningful ways.

The provision of Catholic life at St John's is strong, with staff demonstrating unwavering commitment to the school's mission and consistently living gospel values, ensuring Christ is at the centre of daily life. Pupils flourish in a safe, nurturing, and faith-filled environment where they are valued, known, and supported, while families are warmly welcomed, respected, and actively involved. Staff provide exemplary pastoral care, guidance, and support enabling every

pupil to thrive. The school actively celebrates those from diverse cultures and belief traditions, going the extra mile to understand their needs and enabling them to live and pray in fidelity to their own commitments. The Catholic life of the school is deeply embedded and highly visible through thoughtfully designed displays, integration of scripture and Catholic social teaching, and a rich range of creative and musical opportunities that help pupils explore and develop their God-given talents. The Relationships, Sex and Health Education curriculum is carefully mapped, fully compliant with diocesan requirements, and delivered to promote respectful, informed, and spiritually grounded understanding. Together, these elements ensure the school's Catholic life is consistently lived, celebrated, and experienced, fostering a joyful, faith-filled environment where pupils grow spiritually, personally, and academically.

The headteacher provides visionary, Christ-centred leadership, inspiring staff and pupils to live out the school's mission with conviction and enthusiasm. Governors and senior leaders demonstrate exceptional ambition, acting as vigilant guardians of the school's Catholic identity. They ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils and provide strong support for staff, enabling them to flourish professionally and spiritually. The religious education subject leader offers highly effective leadership, ensuring the Catholic life and mission of the school permeate the curriculum and the wider life of the community. Leaders and governors monitor and evaluate provision for Catholic life, using clear evidence to inform strategic decision-making and drive continuous improvement. Leaders actively promote the principle that Catholic schools serve the local Church. The school enjoys a strong and flourishing partnership with the parish of St John's, which plays a central role in school life. Many pupils attend Mass regularly, and a significant number serve faithfully as altar servers. Parents recognise and value the school's mission and are fully engaged in its life. As one parent commented, 'The Catholic ethos is clearly embedded in all aspects of school life'. Staff feel genuinely valued and supported within a Christ-centred culture, benefitting from high-quality diocesan training and personalised mentoring.

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

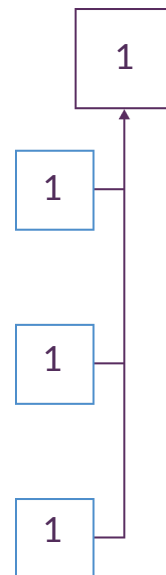
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Pupil achievement in religious education at St John's is exceptional across all year groups. Pupils make sustained progress, developing deep understanding and retaining knowledge over time. Their knowledge and understanding of scripture is a particular strength, and they make meaningful connections between scripture and their own experiences, applying learning thoughtfully to real-life contexts. One pupil described the Our Father as 'like a letter being written to God,' showing a personal and mature understanding of prayer as communication with God. Lessons build on prior knowledge, helping pupils make links across topics, resulting in progress that often exceeds other curriculum areas. Pupils speak confidently about their learning, demonstrating insight into how it shapes their thinking, behaviour, and choices. Their work reflects care and thoughtfulness, particularly in upper Key Stage 2, where pupils' work illustrates the use of precise religious vocabulary to explore complex theological and ethical ideas. Children in the early years benefit from a purposeful introduction to religious education. They listen attentively, respond thoughtfully, and show emerging religious literacy, to describe key events such as those in the season of Lent. Across all phases, pupils reflect on learning and next steps, exemplifying the school's high expectations and provision for spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development.

At St John's, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in religious education is strong and reflects the school's commitment to ensuring that religious education remains the 'core of the core'. Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge and as a result, pupils show enthusiasm for their learning, participate thoughtfully in discussion and are able to articulate

their understanding of the Catholic faith with confidence. Learning is carefully planned to build knowledge and understanding progressively across the key stages. Most teachers use a range of effective strategies to deepen pupils' thinking and encourage reflection, enabling them to make strong progress. Pupils respond positively to opportunities to question, discuss and apply their learning to their own lives. Assessment in religious education is purposeful and teachers use both formative and summative assessment effectively to identify pupils' understanding and next steps in learning. This information is used to adapt teaching and provide appropriate support and challenge so that all pupils achieve well. The subject leader provides clear guidance and monitors teaching and assessment regularly to ensure consistency and high standards. Moderation within school supports accurate assessment. Consequently, pupils achieve well in religious education and develop a secure understanding of their faith.

Leaders and governors at St John's ensure that religious education is the 'core of the core', prioritising it within the curriculum through planning, strategic resourcing, and quality professional development. The *Religious Education Directory* is implemented and underpins teaching, learning, and assessment, ensuring a well-sequenced curriculum that enables pupils to develop secure knowledge, understanding, and engagement with the Catholic faith. Leaders monitor and evaluate provision through lesson observations, work scrutiny, analysis of assessment data, and pupil voice. This systematic approach gives them an accurate and detailed understanding of strengths and areas for development. Findings from monitoring inform clear and decisive strategic actions, which continually improve teaching, learning, and pupil outcomes. Staff benefit from a well-structured programme of continuing professional development, deepening both their subject knowledge and pedagogical expertise. As a result, teachers deliver religious education with confidence and high levels of engagement. Governors actively support and challenge leaders, demonstrating a thorough understanding of curriculum expectations and standards in religious education. They celebrate the subject's impact on pupils' thinking and moral development and ensure that enrichment opportunities, such as reflection in the peace garden, further enhance pupils' spiritual growth. Consequently, religious education is effectively promoted, carefully monitored, and continually improving across the school.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

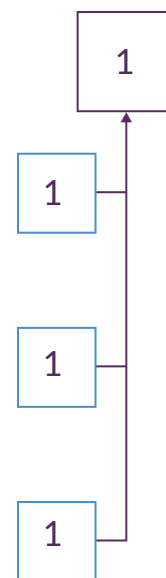
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

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 at St John's demonstrate exceptionally positive engagement in prayer and liturgy, which is a significant strength of the school. They participate with joy, reverence and confidence, contributing thoughtfully and respectfully to each act of worship. Pupils draw meaningfully on scripture and liturgical themes, deepening moments of prayer and reflection, and demonstrate a secure understanding of how these shape the life of the Church. Children in the early years show an instinctive sense of reverence, responding with stillness, reflection and awareness of sacred space. Across the school, pupils embrace opportunities for prayer, responding confidently through gesture, song and spoken prayer. They speak with clarity and understanding about the liturgical year, its seasons, symbols and significance, showing that knowledge of Catholic tradition is embedded in their daily experience. Pupils take pride in serving as liturgical ministers, carrying out roles with enthusiasm, skill and maturity. Pupil prayer leaders support the spiritual life of the school, planning and leading prayer and liturgy for younger pupils and their peers. Older pupils guide and nurture the spiritual development of others, modelling confidence and respect. Their consistent, active engagement ensures that prayer and liturgy is not only meaningful and participatory but also central to the spiritual life of the school

Prayer and liturgy is central to life at St John's and forms the heartbeat of the school day. Pupils experience regular opportunities for spiritual development through assemblies and both adult-led and pupil-led prayer. Planning is structured around the liturgical year and rooted in the gospel, ensuring scripture remains at the heart of every act of worship. Pupils respond with reverence, and confidence, reflecting thoughtfully on scripture, while staff

model deep respect for the word of God. As a result, prayer and liturgy are inclusive and spiritually enriching for all members of the community. Leaders have invested care in developing high-quality prayer spaces to support pupils' spiritual formation. A centrally located chapel provides a sacred space for communal prayer and quiet reflection, while outdoor areas encourage reflection and an appreciation of God's creation. Pupils value these spaces and treat them with respect. The school benefits from a strong partnership with the parish through the regular presence and support of the parish priest. Shared celebrations, charitable initiatives, and sacramental preparation strengthen relationships between school, parish, and families. Leaders regularly monitor and evaluate the quality of collective worship, ensuring it meets the spiritual needs of all pupils and supports their moral and faith development.

Leaders and governors at St John's demonstrate a deep and accurate understanding of the school. They articulate clearly the priorities for the continued development of prayer and liturgy. They have established a well-structured and effective policy for prayer and liturgy, reviewed regularly as part of the school's self-evaluation. This policy provides clear guidance for staff and ensures that pupils progressively develop the knowledge, understanding, and skills to plan and lead their own acts of worship with confidence, reverence, and reflection. Leaders and governors prioritise prayer and liturgy when allocating budgets and resources, ensuring this central aspect of Catholic life is consistently supported. A carefully planned calendar reflects the rhythm of the Church's seasons bringing the whole school together as a prayerful, and reflective community. Monitoring and evaluation of prayer and liturgy are rigorous and purposeful. Leaders provide coaching and guidance to ensure every act of worship is aligned with the school's mission. Staff benefit from professional development, while governors actively engage in monitoring, evaluation, and planning next steps. Through their strategic leadership, prayer and liturgy at St John's are highly effective, deeply embedded in school life, and continually nurture pupils' spiritual growth, confidence, and active participation in the Catholic life of the school.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St John's RC Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	105546
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3523489
Full postal address of the school	Chepstow Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester, M21 9SN
School phone number	0161 881 1040
Headteacher or Head of School	Mrs B O'Donoghue
Chair of Governors	Mrs Mary Metcalf
School Website	www.stjohnsrc.net
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non Selective
Age-range of pupils	3 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	02 May 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The Inspection Team

Karl Landrum Lead

Stephen Gallagher

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