

St Gabriel's Roman Catholic Primary School

URN: 105825

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Salford

11–12 June 2025

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

1

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 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

2

Compliance statement

- St Gabriel's is fully compliant with the general norms laid down by the Bishops' Conference by allocating the required 10% curriculum time to Religious Education.
- There are no additional primary school requirements set out by the diocesan bishop.
- The school has responded to the relevant areas for improvement from the last inspection.

What the school does well

- St Gabriel's is an inclusive school that fosters a strong culture of welcome underpinned by its Catholic mission.
- Exemplary relationships between pupils, staff, parents, leaders and governors enable the school to flourish and ensure that Christ is central to words and actions.
- Effective partnerships between school and home ensure that families also benefit from the love and care that pupils receive.
- Inspirational leadership and tireless commitment have enabled the school to make significant progress in Catholic life and mission, religious education and collective worship.
- The developing use of impactful, relevant and inspiring scripture is supporting the pupils of St Gabriel's to know God more deeply.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop pedagogy to ensure all learning is deeply embedded and understood resulting in pupils who can confidently and concisely articulate their learning and progress.
- At the point of learning staff adapt and respond to the pupils' precise needs to ensure that all groups, including the most able, are consistently challenged to achieve the best possible outcomes.
- Deepen pupils' ownership and reflection in prayer and liturgy by further developing opportunities for them to plan and lead worship in ways that help them express how it inspires their daily lives.

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

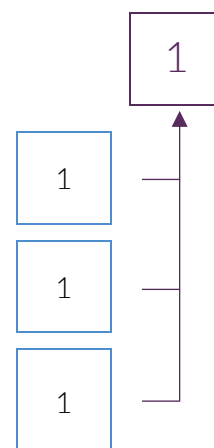
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 Gabriel's clearly understand and live out the school's mission and values. They articulate their faith with confidence, recognising the relevance of Gospel values to their daily lives, with one pupil declaring, 'We try to welcome everybody and grow together as a community'. A tangible sense of respect, compassion and service permeates pupil relationships. Pupils feel safe, valued, and take pride in their identity as part of a Catholic community. They contribute to the school's mission through charitable works and voluntary service, such as support for food banks, Caritas, Macmillan, Springhill Hospice and St Joseph's Penny. Through leadership roles in the Caritas Ambassadors, Ministry of the Word, Laudato Si, School Council and wellbeing groups. Pupils understand their responsibility to serve others. These pupils speak with pride about their recently planted apple and pear trees, undertaken as a response to Pope Francis' call to care for our common home. This reflects their growing understanding of stewardship and their commitment to living out Catholic social teaching. Their spiritual development is nurtured through meaningful opportunities for reflection and dialogue. Behaviour is exemplary, underpinned by a shared commitment to Gospel teachings.

The provision for Catholic life and mission is excellent. The school is a joyful, welcoming community where each person is known and loved. Catholic identity is visible and tangible in displays, prayer spaces and daily routines. Staff model Gospel values in their relationships with pupils and one another, creating a deeply nurturing ethos. Parents consistently praise the pastoral care and ethos, describing the school as a 'wonderful' environment in which their children flourish. Relationships and Health Education (RHE) is embedded and meets both statutory and diocesan requirements. Provision for the most vulnerable is a clear strength; support is offered well before children join the St Gabriel's school family. Families are supported in many ways to ease transition and support good attendance. In addition to this in-school support, they engage with many outside agencies to facilitate food bank vouchers, signposting

to Housing Support and Citizens advice, to demonstrate clear commitment to the most vulnerable. Pupils' dignity and welfare are prioritised in all school decisions. Catholic social teaching underpins curriculum and charitable outreach. The learning environment affirms the spiritual formation of every child, supporting them to understand their role in the Church and wider world, providing a place of spiritual nourishment for all.

Leadership of Catholic life and mission is outstanding. The headteacher is a passionate and visible role model who places Christ at the centre of all school life, ensuring all pupils are supported, 'To always be the best version of yourself.' Her clear vision is shared and understood by staff, governors, and parents. Leaders and governors ensure Catholic mission informs all policies and strategic decisions. Partnership with the parish is strong and growing, with the parish priest offering regular pastoral and liturgical support. Leaders model Gospel values in their care for staff wellbeing and pupils' spiritual formation. Governors are active in their role, providing support and challenge. Pupils contribute to self-evaluation and strategic planning through feedback and leadership roles. Staff are well supported through regular professional development and robust induction. Catholic life and mission is not only articulated but embodied throughout the community, making it a lived experience at St Gabriel's.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

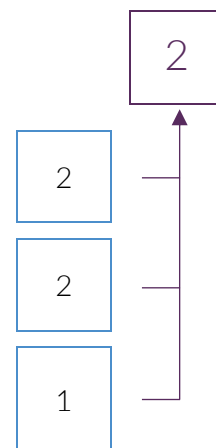
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Pupils at St Gabriel's enjoy religious education and approach lessons with enthusiasm. They make good progress over time, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and disadvantaged pupils. In observations across a range of year groups, pupils demonstrated a growing ability to apply theological understanding to moral and ethical scenarios. Most pupils are religiously literate and able to discuss scripture meaningfully. In one class, pupils explored themes from Pentecost with maturity, applying personal insights to wider society. When discussing their recent learning, one child said, 'In the story of Stephen we learn that we should stand up for what is right, like Stephen. Even today, in the playground, we see this happening, and it makes our school better.' Younger pupils are developing foundational knowledge. While pupils respond well to visual media, care should be taken to ensure it supports rather than creates misconceptions. Pupils produce work of good quality and regularly express their learning creatively through art, drama and extended writing. Work scrutiny and assessment data confirms that progress is at least in line with other core subjects. Pupils can recall some prior learning and make links across topics, though more able pupils would benefit from deeper challenge.

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is good. Lessons are well-planned and underpinned by a secure knowledge of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. Lessons begin with structured opportunities to revisit prior learning. This developing approach is helping pupils to know and remember more over time. Teachers model theological vocabulary and support pupils to develop confidence in expressing their beliefs. Older pupils confidently explore words, such as courage, fortitude and wisdom, when discussing the gifts of the Holy Spirit. SEND provision is thoughtfully adapted, with evidence of scaffolded support and some targeted questioning with good use of other supporting adults. The learning environment reflects Catholic

values. Teachers provide feedback that helps pupils improve, although in some instances the pupils were unable to clearly articulate what they need to do to make progress. Opportunities for reflection and moral reasoning are evident, contributing to spiritual development. However, in some lessons, rigid structures can limit pupil independence and restrict deeper theological exploration. Teachers are responsive, but occasionally miss opportunities to fully extend pupils' thinking.

Leadership of religious education is a clear strength of the school with continuing plans for development. The subject leader is deeply knowledgeable, reflective, and committed to continuous improvement. He supports colleagues through coaching and monitoring, resulting in improved confidence and subject knowledge across the staff. Recent continuous professional development has included training on hermeneutics and creativity in religious education, enabling staff to plan engaging and theologically sound lessons. The curriculum is mapped with progression and intent, ensuring consistency and coverage across year groups. Leaders ensure religious education has full parity with other core subjects in terms of teaching time, resourcing and policy. Governors are well informed and offer robust support. There is a strong focus on inclusion, Catholic social teaching, and enrichment. Pupils speak positively about visits to places of worship and interfaith learning opportunities. Internal monitoring and local cluster groups moderation are used to refine practice. The leadership's vision ensures that religious education is respected, relevant, and responsive to pupils' needs.

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

2

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

1

2

Pupils at St Gabriel's respond to opportunities for prayer and liturgy with reverence and attentiveness. Prayer is embedded into daily routines and valued by pupils as a source of strength, calm, and reflection. Across year groups, pupils spoke confidently about different forms of prayer. In one celebration, pupils reflected on the Holy Spirit's guidance, expressing thoughtful intentions such as, 'gives me strength to do the things that frighten me' and, 'helps me be a disciple of Christ'. Older pupils take increasing responsibility for leading worship, planning prayer focuses, choosing scripture, and guiding reflections. Ministry groups such as the Ministry of the Word and Prayer and Liturgy Leaders support pupil voice and are beginning to shape worship across the school. Children are familiar with the Church's liturgical calendar and can explain the significance of seasons and feasts. Pupils show enthusiasm for prayer and continue to benefit from additional adult guidance to deepen their engagement. While participation is strong and sincere, pupils are still developing the confidence to lead independently and with increased ownership.

Prayer and liturgy is given a high profile and planned with care to reflect the richness of Catholic tradition. Pupils experience a range of prayer styles across the week, including teacher-led, pupil-led, and whole-school celebrations. There is a clear policy for prayer progression, however, this is not yet embedded consistently as many pupils were unable to recall the appropriate prayers for their year group. Worship is inclusive and tailored to the needs of different groups. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to evaluate, but these are often linked to practice and not the impact of the spiritual encounter during the worship. Classrooms feature dedicated prayer areas with relevant liturgical colours, artefacts, and scripture. While most spaces are well-curated and spiritually engaging, some could be further enhanced to deepen their impact. The school ensures that significant feasts, liturgical seasons, and

sacramental milestones are celebrated with reverence. Music, silence, scripture, and symbolic action are used appropriately to engage pupils in meaningful experience. Staff model prayer confidently and support pupils to plan and lead services. Opportunities for quiet reflection and stillness are built into routines. Families and parish members are invited to participate in key celebrations, reinforcing the school's community ethos. The prayer room and designated reflective spaces provide further spiritual opportunities. Opportunities to develop the outside spaces available are planned, intended to provide pupils with more varied and meaningful opportunities for encounter with God.

Leadership of prayer and liturgy is outstanding. The Headteacher and senior leaders articulate a clear vision for this as a central expression of Catholic identity. Leaders have developed a coherent strategy to embed and evaluate worship across the school. The recently updated prayer and liturgy policy offers clear guidance and expectations for all staff. Ongoing training has significantly improved confidence in leading and planning worship, particularly in using scripture effectively. The school calendar reflects the Church's liturgical cycle and ensures every pupil has regular opportunities to participate and lead. Leadership ensures worship is inclusive, creative, and well-resourced. Pupil voice informs planning through regular feedback. Governors understand their role in supporting the spiritual life of the school and are engaged in monitoring. Parish links, especially with the parish priest, enrich the worshipping life of the school community. Prayer and liturgy at St Gabriel's is deeply valued and a visible expression of faith.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Gabriel's Roman Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	105825
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3543500
Full postal address of the school	St Gabriel's Roman Catholic Primary School, Vicarage Road South, Castleton, Rochdale, OL11 2TN
School phone number	01706650280
Headteacher	Laura Bolton
Chair of governors	Mary Chadwick
School Website	www.stgabrielsrc.com/
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
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	7 December 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The inspection team

Helen McGrath
Zoe Mabbott

Lead
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