



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for  
**Mount St Joseph Catholic School**

URN: 105263

Carried out on behalf of the **Right Rev. John Arnold, Bishop of Salford** Diocese on :

**Date: 11-12 October 2023**

Overall effectiveness The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....	<b>3</b>
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.....	3
The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	✓
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	✓
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Partially

## Summary of key findings

### What the school does well

- Mount St Joseph creates a welcoming and inclusive ethos in which committed staff provide supportive pastoral care to all pupils, particularly to those who are vulnerable.
- It provides well-structured and engaging lessons in religious education by teachers with good subject knowledge and commitment.

### What the school needs to improve:

- Increase the variety of forms of prayer and liturgy to regularly include features such as scripture, symbol, silence, meditation, reflection and music.
- Widen the opportunities for Catholic enrichment activities inside and outside the religious education curriculum.

- Prioritise future resources to ensure that the school chapel is preserved as a sacred space for prayer and liturgy.

## 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:.....

2

### Pupil outcomes

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

3

### 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



Pupils experience the Catholic foundation of the school and feel it strongest in the way they feel valued and cared for as individuals by school staff. As one pupil commented, “school is inclusive, respectful and fair.” They feel safe and happy. Pupils are encouraged to contribute to the school’s mission through charity fundraising and by joining groups such as Eco Warriors and Be Kind to Your Mind. The Growing in Faith Together (GIFT) team, drawn from all year groups, provides the best example of students inspired to lead others in the school’s mission. Whilst the work of this group in partner primary schools is recognisably good, their impact within school is underdeveloped. Most pupils were able to quote the school’s motto, “A family of believers, learners and friends” but were unclear how this related to the values of respect, responsibility and resilience which are also promoted by school. In order for outcomes to be good in this area of judgement, more pupils need to be involved in taking up opportunities to lead or participate in the distinctive Catholic mission of the school.

Staff at Mount St Joseph show a deep commitment to the care and wellbeing of all their students. Pastoral care is founded on restorative justice and forgiveness such that pupils feel they have opportunities to start again if they have made mistakes in their behaviours. The strong sense of welcome extends to all members of the community. As a religiously diverse community, (over a quarter of pupils are recorded as Muslim), the school exemplifies good practice in creating a harmonious community founded on respect for all. The first thirty minutes of each day is spent either in personal development time (PDT) or an assembly. A well-developed programme of personal and social development is shaped by Catholic social teaching which ensures that there is a strong moral framework for the teaching of contemporary issues such as protected characteristics, substance abuse and mental health. However, the school environment does not

fully reflect the Catholic mission and identity of the school. Too many corridors and spaces are more secular in their iconography and messaging creating missed opportunities to promote the Catholic charism of the school.

Leaders and governors recognise that Mount St Joseph has a particular mission for the diverse community it serves. The first section of the school's current improvement plan places developing the Catholic life and mission as the first priority of the school. Leaders are able to link this mission back to its ambition statement, "If we walk in the light, as he is the light, we have fellowship with one another." Parents are supportive of the school's mission and staff feel highly valued by leaders. They work as one body in living out their commitment to service. The recent development of two inclusion rooms ('re-set' and 'reflect') is a positive example of the school's commitment to those who might otherwise be excluded. Whilst the resources for personal development time reflect the positive impact of staff training in the *Ten:Ten* programme, there was less observed impact in the rest of the curriculum (with the exception of religious education.) Following on from the national pandemic, the school has been slow to recover the momentum needed to move things forward faster. The current structure of middle leaders within the religious education department heading up chaplaincy and Catholic life and mission respectively would benefit from re-evaluation. In order to be outstanding in this area, Catholic life and mission needs to be more evident in all teaching and in the numbers of pupils leading or participating in chaplaincy.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

2

### 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



Pupils enjoy their lessons in religious education and show confidence in using accurate religious terminology in responses to teachers’ questions. In the words of one pupil, “I love RE because I learn about God.” They also show confidence in being able to recall prior learning and to use it in new learning. In the best lessons the teacher encouraged longer spoken responses which most pupils were increasingly confident in doing. This also helped create a culture in which pupils were comfortable in naturally asking their teacher their own questions. Pupils are also developing their understanding of the key concepts and skills needed to make progress. They are engaged in their learning and behave well in lessons. Progress within lessons observed was stronger than progress seen in pupils’ books where there was greater inconsistency in feedback and in pupils acting on feedback in future work. Although attainment in GCSE religious education results dipped significantly in 2023, there are good signs that current attainment is stronger. In order to be outstanding in this area, pupils’ book should show work of consistently high quality demonstrating excellent presentation, individuality and creativity.

Teaching in religious education is consistently good. Teachers foster excellent relationships with their pupils which creates a good climate for learning. Learning is consistently well-planned with careful attention given to what should be taught, when it should be taught and how. In lessons observed, teachers were tenacious in ensuring prior learning was secure before moving on to new learning. Teachers, who have good subject knowledge, were skilled in using questions to identify gaps in learning and to encourage accurate terminology in describing complex concepts. Teachers draw on a wide variety of teaching techniques to motivate their pupils and to consolidate learning. For example, in one lesson observed, students had to work collaboratively in groups with tight time constraints and elements of competition. This really motivated the pupils and they were able to further their knowledge. The impact of *Philosophy for Children* (P4C) techniques used by their

teachers was particularly evident in Key Stage 3 lessons. Pupils are encouraged to pause and think before giving their first answers and are regularly praised for their efforts. The frequency and quality of feedback in pupils' books was varied. In the religious education department's journey to be outstanding, feedback should be timely and of sufficient quality to accelerate pupils' learning.

The acting subject leader of religious education, in post for one year, has worked hard to ensure the consistency of planning, resourcing and teaching across her team. Through careful monitoring of teaching standards, there is a consistency of approach to teaching across the team without stifling individual creativity. The current curriculum is faithful to the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* (RECD). Plans are well under way to transition to the new *Religious Education Directory* for religious education. The time allocated to religious education in the curriculum fulfills the requirement to be a minimum of ten percent of the taught school curriculum. Whilst it is clear that teachers of religious education access whole-school in-house training and professional development, leaders and governors should ensure diocesan support is also fully accessible to the team. An evaluation of the current leadership responsibilities in the department might help leaders and governors identify a better structure to accelerate improvement. In order to be outstanding in the leadership of religious education, an increased offer of enrichment opportunities inside and outside school, should be available for all pupils.

## Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

3

### 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 .....

3

### Leadership

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

3



The outcomes for collective worship require improvement. Participation in observed prayer during the inspection was generally passive and compliant. They show respect towards prayer and behave well in assemblies and in personal development time (PDT). Their experience and understanding of a wider diet of prayer such as meditation and reflection is therefore limited. The exception to this are the outcomes evident in the GIFT team who were enthusiastic in their approach to prayer and liturgy. Their talents, however, are under-used across the school in relation to prayer and liturgy. Whilst future plans for this group were noted, current practice falls short of what could be achieved if more time and resources were dedicated to it. Leaders, therefore, have an inaccurate evaluation of how well pupils engage with the limited variety of opportunities they experience in this area.

Opportunities for pupils to routinely experience a wider variety of prayer styles were not observed during the inspection with the exception of the GIFT team. At the start of the day pupils experience either an assembly or PDT which is a 30-minute session with their tutor. Both in the assemblies and PDT, this time is primarily used to deliver the school's personal, social and health education programme. It does this well. However, as a consequence, time for meaningful prayer is reduced. With school operating an open-door policy, corridor noise in PDT prevented any possibility of creating a sense of awe or wonder in the time given. There were no sacred spaces observed in classrooms, the lighting of a candle or attempts to mark prayer out as a significant moment at the start of the day. Prayer takes place at the starts of all meetings and whilst staff feel supported in developing their skills in leading prayer, this has not yet translated into providing a richer experience for pupils. Whole school masses take place for the new Year 7 and their families and for Year 11 leavers. In Remembrance week in November, pupils light votive candles and prayer petitions in the chapel as part of a twice yearly 'light fever' event.

Leaders recognize in their self-evaluation that: "...the policy for collective worship needs to be re-established and updated". A new policy would give leaders an opportunity to re-think their offer and to identify the best models to improve practice in school. Leaders have supported staff in building confidence in leading prayer including modelling good practice. Whilst this has improved staff's compliance with delivering prayer, it has not yet led to an improvement in quality. In its journey to be good in this area, leaders need to deploy more effective systems of monitoring and evaluation based on the expectations of a renewed policy. It was noted that, since the last inspection, a small room was created for prayer and reflection accessible to all pupils. This has been of particular benefit to Muslim pupils who wish to take part in Friday prayers. However, the use of the school chapel as a classroom is a cause for concern. Governors should exercise strategic responsibility to ensure that future resources are dedicated to improving the physical environment for prayer and liturgy.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	Mount St Joseph Catholic School
School unique reference number (URN)	105263
Full postal address of the school	Greenland Road, Farnworth, Bolton BL4 0HU
School phone number	01204 391800
Name of head teacher or principal	Mrs Alexandra Devany
Chair of governing board	Mrs Marie Mannion
School Website	<a href="https://www.msj.bolton.sch.uk">https://www.msj.bolton.sch.uk</a>
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	11-16
Trustees	Diocese of Salford
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	21 April 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

## The inspection team

Martin Reynolds	Lead inspector
Claire Wallace	Team inspector
Name of inspector	Lead/team
Name of inspector	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