



Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School, a Voluntary Academy

URN: 151681

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Salford

26–27 November 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

- The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- The diocesan bishop has no additional requirements for primary schools.
- The school has fully responded to all areas of improvement from the previous inspection.

What the school does well

- The Catholic mission is deeply lived and shapes relationships, behaviour and decision-making.
- Pastoral care is exceptional, transforming the lives of vulnerable pupils and families.
- Whole-school and pupil-led prayer and liturgy is rich, reverent and theologically strong.
- As a result of their learning in religious education, pupils demonstrate excellent character, compassion, justice and service.
- Leadership of Catholic life and prayer is inspirational and grounded in deep theological understanding.

What the school needs to improve

- Secure consistently high-quality Celebration of the Word across the school, with pupils demonstrating sustained independence and clear theological understanding.
- Establish a robust whole-school system for planning, monitoring and evaluating prayer and liturgy.
- Strengthen religious education provision by ensuring pupils receive consistently high-quality feedback that supports improved progress.

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

1

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

1

Pupils at Sacred Heart demonstrate an exceptional understanding of what it means to belong to a Catholic community rooted in Gospel values. They speak confidently about acting with kindness, fairness and compassion, and they reference the mission naturally in conversation. As one older pupil explained, 'We try to be like Jesus in the way we treat people – it's just how our school works.' Pupils of all ages feel safe, valued and deeply cared for, with one child sharing, 'If something goes wrong, someone always helps – this school is like a family.' Pupils' moral development is excellent. They show maturity in discussing right and wrong, and regularly demonstrate forgiveness, empathy and responsibility. They participate willingly and joyfully in social action, fundraising and charitable outreach, explaining the reasons behind these actions with theological insight. Catholic social teaching is fully embedded; pupils can talk about stewardship, the preferential option for the poor and dignity with confidence. Pupils of other faiths say they feel fully included and respected. One parent commented, 'My child is not Catholic, but I've never seen a school where every child is treated with such dignity.' Chaplaincy roles, such as Growing in Faith Together (GIFT) and Laudato Si' ambassadors, give pupils meaningful leadership opportunities. Their contributions clearly shape the prayer, environmental and community life of the school. The impact of the school's Catholic life on pupils is exceptional.

Provision for Catholic life is rich, intentional and deeply embedded across the whole school. Sacred spaces in corridors and outdoor areas are attractive, meaningful and used regularly for prayer, reflection and quiet moments with God. The environment powerfully expresses the school's Catholic identity, with high-quality displays, artwork and symbols that consistently reference scripture, saints and Gospel values. Staff described this as 'a place where faith is lived, not just taught.' Pastoral care is outstanding and transformative. Vulnerable pupils and families receive exceptional support through the school's trauma-informed approaches, Caritas

partnerships and personalised pastoral pathways. Parents were unanimous in their praise, with one saying, 'This school saved my child – they saw who he was and never gave up.' Provision for Catholic social teaching is exemplary, with pupils engaged in meaningful social action linked directly to Gospel principles. Chaplaincy is strong, with pupils confidently supporting prayer, liturgy, charity and environmental stewardship. Relationships, sex and health education is delivered faithfully and sensitively, with clear alignment to Catholic teaching and strong parental confidence.

Staff model Gospel values consistently, creating a culture of unconditional welcome and respect. New staff receive excellent induction into the Catholic Life of the school. The quality of provision is outstanding and distinctive. Leadership of Catholic Life is inspirational and rooted in deep theological and pastoral understanding. Leaders articulate a clear vision grounded in Christ and the mission of the Church. This vision guides all decision-making, shaping the culture, policies and strategic direction of the school. As one leader explained, 'The mission isn't something we display – it's who we are.' Governors demonstrate strong understanding of their role and provide confident challenge and support. They visit regularly and are well informed through reports, monitoring activities, chaplaincy engagement and conversations with pupils. Governors spoke proudly of the school's pastoral heart, describing it as 'a beacon of hope in the community.' Partnership with the parish community and *Just Youth* is excellent. The priest from *Just Youth* stated, 'This school brings the Gospel alive – the children lead with confidence and joy.' Staff receive ongoing formation, with leaders investing heavily in diocesan training, including prayer and theological development. Self-evaluation is accurate, honest and closely aligned with inspection findings. Leaders know the school exceptionally well and have a clear and ambitious plan for continuous improvement. The leadership of Catholic life is outstanding.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

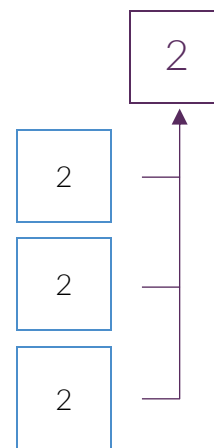
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 make good progress in religious education and show secure knowledge of scripture, doctrine and key aspects of Catholic tradition. They enjoy religious education and speak positively about the subject; one pupil commented, 'religious education helps us understand how Jesus wants us to live.' Older pupils recall and explain scripture confidently, make links between Bible narratives and daily life, and apply moral reasoning effectively. Work in books is neatly presented and generally reflects standards comparable to English. Across the school, pupils engage well with questioning and discussion, demonstrating respect and thoughtful listening. Many articulate concepts of justice, forgiveness and stewardship confidently. Lower and middle attaining pupils make good progress from their starting points, supported by appropriate scaffolding and vocabulary prompts. However, written work is not consistently deep or reflective across classes. Over-scaffolding limits opportunities for pupils to reason independently, and worksheets are used frequently, reducing extended writing and theological reflection. Challenge for the most able is limited, and pupils do not consistently receive feedback that helps them refine their thinking. Pupils know more and remember more over time and demonstrate secure understanding. Their engagement, behaviour and attitudes to learning are consistently strong.

Teaching in religious education is purposeful and rooted in strong relationships. Staff demonstrate secure subject knowledge and use the *Religious Education Directory* and *Lighting the Path* curriculum with confidence. Lessons begin with clear explanation, well-chosen scripture and prayerful atmospheres that support spiritual engagement. Pupils behave impeccably and respond positively to teacher questioning. Staff create inclusive learning environments where pupils feel able to share ideas without fear of error. However, teaching is not yet outstanding because planning often relies on scaffolded tasks which restrict deeper thinking and independence. In several classes, worksheets dominate written outcomes, limiting creativity. This reduces opportunities for pupils to express understanding in varied forms. Some staff use

probing questioning, but this is not consistent across the school. Some pupils benefit from practical and story-based approaches, although the transition to independence is uneven. Assessment practices require further development. Current marking does not consistently move learning forward or deepen understanding, and pupils are not routinely directed to refine explanations or extend responses using theological vocabulary. Leaders have begun to address this through revised assessment guidance and moderation, but the impact is not yet embedded.

Leadership of religious education is committed, reflective and accurate. Leaders demonstrate clear understanding of strengths and areas for development and articulate a vision rooted in the *Religious Education Directory*. The subject leader is knowledgeable, organised and well-respected by colleagues. Staff confirm the positive impact of training, noting, 'The religious education support helps us feel confident teaching scripture.' Leaders ensure that religious education receives the required 10% curriculum time and that planning adheres closely to diocesan expectations. Monitoring is regular and well-structured, including book looks, learning walks and discussions with pupils. These processes have identified key areas requiring improvement, such as increasing independent writing and reducing reliance on worksheets. Leaders have also been transparent about gaps in multi-year assessment data caused by technical issues and have taken steps to rebuild secure systems. Professional development is prioritised, and staff have engaged in diocesan training, cluster moderation and theological formation. These opportunities have improved subject knowledge and strengthened curriculum delivery. However, despite leaders' strong intentions, the impact of training is not yet reflected in consistent high-quality provision across classes. Some teachers continue to over-scaffold tasks, and expectations for higher-attaining pupils are not consistently embedded. Leaders have the capacity and determination to improve the subject. Priorities are well chosen, self-evaluation aligns closely with inspection findings, and leaders model high expectations for reverent and purposeful religious education lessons.

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 participate reverently in experiences of prayer and liturgy and clearly value prayer as part of their daily experience. They respond respectfully during silence, gesture and scripture, demonstrating secure understanding of the structure and purpose of worship. Whole-school celebrations are a significant strength, offering pupils joyful and spiritually rich opportunities to encounter the church's traditions. One pupil explained, 'When the whole school prays together, it feels like we belong to something bigger.' Pupils are increasingly demonstrating ownership of celebrations of the word through planning, choosing scripture, and selecting music and symbols that reflect the liturgical season. When given the opportunity, they lead prayer with confidence and sincerity and act as strong role models for their peers. Their understanding of the purpose of prayer and liturgy is developing well, and their contributions enrich the spiritual life of the school community. Some pupils require further development in confidently planning and evaluating celebrations of the word, and this is an area leaders are already addressing through modelling, support and structured opportunities. While approaches vary, where practice is strongest, pupils engage with deeper theological reflection and respond meaningfully to scripture. Overall, pupils enjoy worship, show reverence, and demonstrate secure understanding of what it means to pray as a faith-filled community.

Provision for prayer and liturgy is thoughtfully planned and embedded in the rhythm of school life. The timetable ensures regular opportunities for pupils to take part in class prayer, celebration of the word, assemblies, seasonal liturgies and worship supported by the Just Youth chaplaincy priest. Staff show strong commitment to leading prayer and benefit from high-quality formation and modelling from leaders. Scripture is selected with care and aligns well with the liturgical year and diocesan expectations. Pupils experience a rich variety of prayer traditions including Taizé, silent reflection, the Rosary, Visio Divina and child-friendly Lectio Divina. These experiences deepen pupils' spirituality and foster a reflective, peaceful atmosphere throughout the school. Sacred spaces are evident across the building and offer opportunities for reflection

and prayer, with pupils demonstrating respect for these areas. Leaders recognise that consistency in the recording and evaluation of worship is developing. Floor books and examples of pupil reflection vary in depth, and greater use of shared structures would enhance progression. Some sacred spaces would benefit from increased pupil involvement to strengthen ownership and impact. Overall, the quality of provision is good, with several strong and distinctive features that support pupils' spiritual formation.

Leadership of prayer and liturgy is outstanding. Leaders articulate a clear theological vision rooted in the Church's liturgical life and model high-quality worship with confidence and authenticity. Their commitment to staff formation is particularly strong; training includes diocesan liturgical development, school-based coaching and support from the Just Youth Spiritan development team. Staff value this formation, with one noting, 'The support we receive helps us lead worship with confidence and real understanding.' The partnership with Just Youth significantly enriches the school's worship life. The chaplaincy priest engages meaningfully with pupils, supporting Masses, celebrations and class-based prayer, and commented that the school community 'prays with sincerity and joy.' Leaders ensure that prayer and liturgy is planned coherently, monitored effectively and continually strengthened. Evaluation processes, such as monitoring, pupil voice and review of worship books, inform clear priorities for improvement. Leaders have already identified the next steps for developing pupil-led worship and are proactively supporting staff to embed greater independence and theological depth. Self-evaluation is accurate and aligned with inspection evidence. Leaders' vision for worship is well understood across the school and has strong impact on practice for pupils and staff alike, shaping practice with clarity and purpose. Leadership of worship is inspirational, faith-filled and highly effective.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School, a Voluntary Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	151681
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3543505
Full postal address of the school	Kingsway, Rochdale, Lancashire, OL16 4AW
School phone number	01706649981
Executive headteacher	N/A
Headteacher	Pamela Dungworth
Chair of local governing body	Ruth Taylor
School Website	https://www.sacredheartrochdale.stoccat.org.uk/
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Teresa Of Calcutta Catholic Academy Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	8 th May 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The inspection team

Carl McIver	Lead
Jim Graves	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