

# St Joseph's Catholic High School

URN: 143803

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Northampton

24–25 April 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

#### Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

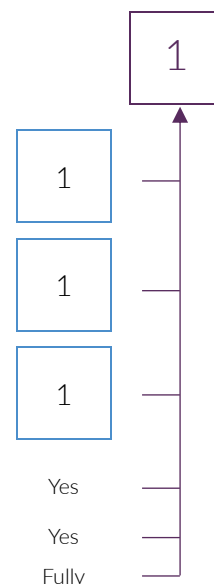
#### Collective worship (p.7)

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



## Compliance statement

- 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 fully to the areas for improvement from the last inspection.

## What the school does well

- Catholic life and mission is exemplary and permeates all aspects of the school.
- The staff are fully committed to developing the potential of all in their care, making sure that their students know they are loved.
- The leadership team have an excellent vision of what Catholic education looks like and have worked hard to realise this.
- Excellent behaviour for learning in religious education results in students making outstanding progress in their knowledge and understanding of faith.
- Prayer is a very strong feature of the school, nourishing the spiritual life of all members of the community.

## What the school needs to improve

- Further develop pedagogical strategies in extended writing tasks in religious education so that more students are stretched and challenged.
- Introduce a greater variety of prayer experiences in tutor time.

## 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



Respect and good manners are explicit as an expectation for all students at St Joseph's and are modelled by staff. This creates a school where behaviour for learning is exemplary. Love is at the heart of this school. Students of other faiths feel very welcome and quickly develop a sense of belonging. The school's motto 'unlocking belief in all', and the 16 virtues, underpin all policies and practices in living out the mission statement and are understood and lived by the staff and students. Students understand, explore and reflect upon the Catholic life and mission of the school and as a result they are nourished spiritually and have a strong sense of place and purpose in the world. The school is highly inclusive in all aspects. The house system, rewards system, paired reading, mentoring programmes and Feast Day activities are examples of students celebrating and working cohesively - sharing their gifts and talents as a community. There is a high level of engagement with extra-curricular and 'electives' programmes. Students from all year groups willingly lead and serve the school and wider community, including debating and public speaking at Eton College through to representing the school in international visits to Tanzania and India.

The provision for Catholic life and mission is outstanding; one of the priests who supports the school said, 'the school is Catholic to its fingertips'. The virtues of the school are very much part of the everyday language of staff and students. The plans for the school's feast day include the whole school going out into the community to serve, in primary schools and care homes. The school takes seriously not only the requirement to teach about Catholic social teaching but also to live it out in practical ways. Each year in Advent, every student in the school is involved in making sandwiches for homeless people. The school is engaged in supporting many charities and

projects, modelling for students, Jesus' option for the poor. The students speak passionately and proudly of their contribution to building a school in Nigeria. Parents are very supportive of the work of the school: a parent stated, 'We strongly feel that the school does a brilliant job in providing a Catholic education.' The school was chosen by the diocese to lead a new initiative, implementing the CSYMI (Catholic Schools Youth Ministry International) programme. The school has successfully launched the programme of formation through retreats, curriculum enrichment, youth ministry and adult ministry to allow for the evangelization of the Church to happen within the school community. As a result of this, other schools in the diocese will be invited to engage with this programme.

The headteacher is an inspirational leader who is passionate about the power of Catholic education to transform the lives of people. There is a strong culture of praise in the school, for example, staff and students receive 'shout-outs' that acknowledge and celebrate their achievements. The St Joseph's student profile has a very clear expectation that is focused on 16 virtues that students should put into action. Staff understand St John Bosco's guidance to teachers: 'it is not enough that you love the young, they must know that they are loved'. This quote was often repeated to inspectors in discussions. The school enjoys strong support from staff for the Catholic ethos; a member of staff stated that 'the environment at St Joseph's is one where faith is not just taught but lived, authentically and joyfully.' Students take great pride in their learning and are purposeful in their work with a strong desire to achieve well as a direct result of the supportive and inspiring interactions with teachers and staff. One student commented 'our needs are at the forefront; the teachers create our Catholic community. We are loved and supported'.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

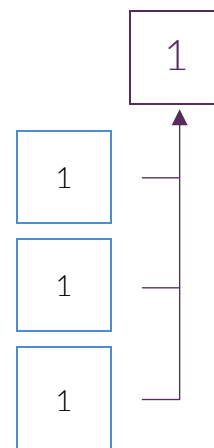
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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



It was evident in the lessons observed by inspectors as well as through monitoring evidence provided by the school that in religious lessons there are very high levels of student engagement. Students are developing excellent knowledge, understanding and skills that exemplify the learning required by the *Religious Education Directory*. In a Year 10 lesson on original sin and salvation, students made excellent progress, demonstrating a secure understanding of the concepts. Students demonstrate that they care about religious education as their work in books is presented to a high standard. They are proud of their achievements. Relationships between students and teachers and between peers are outstanding; students want to achieve well for themselves and their teachers. At A level Religious Studies, students make excellent progress and attain highly. At GCSE students make good progress, however, there is a need for more students to be stretched and challenged at the top end. Teachers should consider further strategies to support students with extended writing tasks. A range of student needs are supported through adaptive teaching methods. The religious education lessons are characterised by a purposeful atmosphere and calmness. Students are confident that they are listened to and as a result are active participants in the learning process.

Teachers inspire confidence in their students as they have a strong grasp of pedagogy as well as excellent subject knowledge. A well embedded technique in the department is modelling; in a Year 9 lesson on the moral principles in Judaism, the teacher skillfully marked a student's work using a visualizer (the student work was projected onto the board for everyone to see). This modelled the expected knowledge as well as critiquing and helping students to see how they could improve their work. Teachers use booklets to support the learning of students; this ensures that the learning is structured and consistent across all classes. Teachers demonstrated that they are skilled in questioning; in a Year 11 lesson that explored the story of Cain and Abel,

the teacher used questioning effectively to challenge students' thinking. In a Year 10 lesson on the importance of conscience, highly effective questioning was evident that fostered peer discussion and higher order thinking. Adaptive teaching and responsive assessment for learning within lessons ensure no one is left behind. Teachers know their classes well and adapt and respond to individual needs to ensure progress for all learners and student groups. Targeted challenge for individual students will ensure students at the higher end make as much progress as others.

The head of religious education has a very strong vision for the department that is drawn from a Catholic understanding of the importance of religious education for all students. The department has fully engaged with the demands of the *Directory*. The Key Stage 3 curriculum has been reviewed and enhanced as a result. The curriculum is supported using in-house produced student booklets for each unit; this ensures that students receive a consistent experience. The online monitoring system, 'Steplab', a key part of the school's coaching strategy, is used to good effect in helping leaders to support teachers in both identifying areas of good practice as well as addressing areas for improvement. Effective moderation at the multi-academy trust level ensures good practice is shared, which develops teachers' expertise and skillset. The self-evaluation of religious education by leaders and governors is very good and has resulted in the department continuing to improve.

## 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

1

#### Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

1

#### Leadership

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

1

1

A significant strength of the school is student engagement with prayer and liturgy. In the whole school Mass to mark the death the Pope Francis, students' participation was attentive, dignified and deeply respectful. There was a profound atmosphere of prayer. In tutor time prayer, students demonstrated their engagement in reflecting on the Gospel passage. The student chaplaincy team, made up of representatives from each year, contribute to the prayer life of the school. Students work collaboratively with others to contribute to prayer and liturgy and have developed the capacity to evaluate their experiences of prayer and liturgy. Students value highly the liturgical provision that is provided for them. They take part in liturgical ministries in Mass, such as being readers and musicians. Students are confidently able to make links between their experience of prayer and liturgy and Catholic social teaching. Students make use of the 16 virtues in speaking about how they are called to action in transforming the world.

Prayer and liturgy are central parts of school life. Each day students have four times for prayer: during the line up, tutor time, grace before lunch and at the end of the day. The range of prayer and liturgy provided by the school is very full, however the well-structured prayer in tutor time could be further extended by drawing more widely on the breath and richness of the Catholic tradition. The use of scripture is embedded in the liturgical life of the school. Students are routinely given opportunities to engage with scripture in tutor time prayer and assemblies. There are six whole school Masses a year as well as house Masses. The school provides the opportunity for students to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Lent; however, this could be offered in Advent as well. Assemblies are well planned and are excellent examples of how the school follows the Church's liturgical cycle. Prayer and liturgy are well order and planned; there is a dignity and respect given to this part of the school's life. Staff are highly skilled in modelling prayer to students. The Chapel is an excellent space for prayer is well used by staff and students.

Each classroom has a prayer table or space that has fitting aids to prayer. Through communication with parents the school is able to draw parents and carers into the prayer life of the school.

The leadership of prayer and liturgy is outstanding. Leaders are passionate about the importance of prayer and liturgy as a way of meeting the demands of being a Catholic school as well as a way in which the school strengthens the sense of belonging. The policies on prayer and liturgy serve the school well. The training and formation for staff is very good and there is a wealth of resources to support teachers in leading prayer. The programme of prayer and liturgy is very well planned and is strongly embedded into the school's calendar. Leaders have developed opportunities for students to prepare and plan liturgies such as the remembrance liturgies during November. There is scope for the school to further develop the opportunities for students to take a more prominent role in leading assemblies. The school is currently without a lay chaplain and the school is planning to secure the right person who can continue to support the prayer life of the school. Through the CSYMI programme, the school is further developing the opportunities for students to participate in prayer. This programme is helping leaders to identify the type of spiritual journey that the school wants to promote for its students. Leader's self-evaluation of prayer and liturgy is well developed, and use of student feedback is very strong.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Joseph's Catholic High School
School unique reference number (URN)	143803
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8714800
Full postal address of the school	St Joseph's Catholic High School, Shaggy Calf Lane, Slough, SL2 5HW
School phone number	01753524713
Headteacher	Ciran Stapleton
Chair of local governing body	James Hayes
School Website	<a href="http://www.st-josephs.slough.sch.uk">www.st-josephs.slough.sch.uk</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	26 November 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

## The inspection team

Matthew Dell	Lead
Deirdre McHugh	Team
Mary Coyle	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