



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Joseph's Preparatory School

URN: 124484

Carried out on behalf of the **Most Rev. Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham** on:

Date: 25 May 2023

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| Overall effectiveness The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school..... | 3 |
| 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..... | 3 |
| Collective worship (p.7) The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school..... | 2 |
| 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

- The school's mission is evident across all aspects of its life and is deeply rooted in Blessed Edmund Rice's charism.
- Relationships across the school demonstrate high levels of care for every pupil.
- An embedded culture of inclusivity ensures all pupils know they are welcomed and valued as a creation of God.
- A daily pattern of prayer is embedded across all year groups.
- Strong links with the parish during the preparation for and celebration of the sacraments are a strength within the wider community and often bring new people to the church.

What the school needs to improve:

- Embed rigorous monitoring of Catholic life and mission, religious education, and collective worship, leading to targeted, planned improvements.
- Support staff to enable consistent, good progress in religious education lessons through effective planning strategies.
- Provide feedback in religious education that challenges all pupils to improve their achievements in the subject.

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:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

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

1

Provision

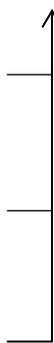
The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

Leadership

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

2



The mission is central to the life of St Joseph's Preparatory School. The mission statement has been recently re-written; consequently, pupils can clearly articulate their understanding of it and embrace it. Pupils have a strong, clear sense of their own worth nurtured at all levels, so they feel safe, happy, and secure. They talk passionately about their school because they understand and value the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice and the opportunities for moral development this gives them. Respectful relationships are evident throughout all age phases, with behaviour across the school consistently excellent. Pupils are given many opportunities to undertake leadership roles and do so with confidence and enthusiasm. There are lots of activities planned which fulfil the demands of Catholic Social Teaching, to which pupils respond proactively. However, pupils do not yet understand the theology underlying its main principles, meaning they cannot articulate why they undertake specific tasks or support the charities they raise money for. Charitable work across the school is aimed at helping those on the periphery of society, both locally and internationally, and pupils have some leadership in this.

The strong links to Edmund Rice Network England ensure opportunities within the charism are maximised; for example, introducing a pupil award for walking in the footsteps of Edmund Rice. The school's mission inspires all members of the community and, modelled by the head teacher, has a significant impact on the life of the school. There is a conscious, tangible, and lived sense of community at St Joseph's Preparatory School, with an embedded culture of inclusivity throughout the school experience. Pupils recognise the value of all individuals, understanding the presence of Christ in each other, including those from different backgrounds and those with disabilities. Staff consistently show the highest levels of care to pupils, which subsequently influences pupils' care of each other. The children know they are

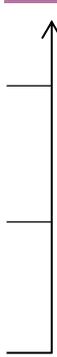
loved and describe the school as a family. The school environment effectively reflects its Catholic character.

Leaders prioritise the school's Catholic life and mission, ensuring strong and active links with the foundation, its schools, and the local parish. The parish priest values the school's contribution to the parish; for example, during Advent, the school raised funds to assist the parish in purchasing a new crib set. Although links with the diocesan education service have been utilised historically, due to a recent change in leadership and staff turnover, the school's knowledge of diocesan expectations and standards is only just genuinely developing. New leadership appointments are making a rapid and positive difference to the school. Leaders genuinely care for the staff's well-being because they provide support structures that enable them to embrace the school's ethos. Parents comment on strong links between themselves and the school; they particularly appreciate the school's Catholic identity and mission, and all are warmly welcomed into the school. Leaders are at the start of creating a fully Catholic curriculum. Governors are enthusiastic about the school and value its strengths. Still, they haven't been actively involved in robust monitoring, which leads to improvements, and do not clearly articulate the school's current improvement foci. Leaders have recently undergone a process of self-evaluation which has accurately identified some areas for improvement, but it is too soon to determine their impact. For example, leaders have planned to use new inspiring Christian faith-based resources in the school's delivery of relationships, sex, and health education (RSHE) from next term. Staff have access to a planned induction, though training opportunities have generally been limited, which has impacted the speed with which improvements have been made.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

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| Religious education key judgement grade:..... | 3 |
| Pupil outcomes How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education..... | 3 |
| Provision The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education..... | 3 |
| Leadership How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education..... | 3 |



Pupils' knowledge of religious education is secure, and most pupils make good progress. They can talk about their understanding of the topics taught; some can reflect spiritually on these issues. Key vocabulary is evident at the start of topics, and some is taught within lessons; however, pupils use it inconsistently. Pupils show an excellent ability to concentrate and work independently and collaboratively. However, the quality of learning in pupils' work varies in its presentation and the range of activities they complete. In most year groups, there is a lack of challenge, particularly for pupils with higher prior attainment, making it difficult to achieve higher-level learning outcomes. Consequently, these pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Pupils in all classes are well-engaged with religious education and speak enthusiastically of being resilient and wanting to do their best. While they know when and why their work is good, pupils struggle to articulate how to improve it. Much of the work in pupils' exercise books is limited to retrieving facts without opportunities to develop deeper responses or demonstrate their understanding of how their learning affects their lives and beliefs.

Teachers' subject knowledge is good. They plan religious education lessons based on the diocesan scheme, with some teachers adapting activities to give further opportunities for pupils to learn creatively. However, this good practice has not been shared across the school, resulting in inconsistent provision. Teachers value religious education, which is apparent in how they present lessons to the pupils. However, because too little time has been spent developing staff's skills in teaching religious education, inconsistent standards across the school are further reinforced. The level of challenge in both lesson delivery and associated learning tasks requires improvement because most tasks are not planned to meet the needs of the pupils in each classroom. For example, all pupils within a classroom are questioned at the same level and complete the same task with no adaptations made according to their

needs. Feedback neither routinely nor positively impacts pupils' understanding because it rarely provides challenge to facilitate progress or allow pupils to correct errors and hence improve their work.

The school follows the diocesan scheme of work planning lessons based on the units of study for each year group. Leaders have not ensured that the time allocated to each unit is sufficient for pupils to develop their understanding fully. For example, in one classroom, only a single tangible piece of work was completed for the Christmas unit, despite the school's curriculum map stating that the topic should be taught over three weeks. The newly appointed religious education subject leader is taking effective, rapid action to accurately identify the next steps for developing standards in religious education, including the need for robust monitoring and greater opportunities for creative learning. Since his appointment, he has positively impacted the subject's standards and has a clear vision for religious education. Leaders have recently ensured that positive engagement with diocesan advisors results in action being undertaken in school. However, it is too soon for leaders and governors to evaluate whether these strategic actions lead to sustained improvements.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

2

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

2

Pupils respond well to all forms of prayer and liturgy the school provides. They sing beautifully and join in confidently with prayer responses. The parish priest comments that the quality of singing within the school is a particular strength. This was witnessed during the inspection. Pupils' understanding of the liturgical year is good, with even the youngest pupils able to talk about the different religious seasons. The recently appointed leader of prayer and liturgy ensures that all pupils experience a range of ways to pray, including scripture, reflection, and moments of silence. This term, pupils have taken responsibility for planning and preparing prayer experiences, which they do well. They have not had opportunities to evaluate the effectiveness of these experiences to see how they can be improved even further. Prayer pervades all aspects of school life, and pupils can talk about its place in the wider school life; for example, praying for a staff member needing spiritual support.

Staff ensure that routine prayer is planned throughout the day and pupils are taught a range of prayers suitable for their age and ability. In Early Years, children can confidently write their own prayers, experience various prayer prompts, and are given multiple ways to express their feelings through prayer. For example, in one class, very young children were sharing a liturgy about the Last Supper and a video was used to experience Eucharistic adoration. The children were subsequently invited to kneel before the Blessed Sacrament. Scripture is well-used, and staff consistently model reverent behaviours and gestures when leading acts of prayer and liturgy. A newly invigorated chaplaincy team is well-supported to lead prayer; consequently, they speak very confidently about the messages contained within their services. Parents are invited to participate in the prayer life of the school. They value the prayers taught to their children and how these can be used during prayer time at home.

Pupils are given a variety of opportunities for prayer and are taught the relevant skills to be able to participate confidently. Leaders and governors ensure that the school calendar reflects the liturgical year, with founders' and patrons' days taking a prominent position within the school year. Pupils from St Joseph's Preparatory School join with children from other local schools in an effective partnership for sacramental preparation. Parents value the part their children play within the parish community, and some have been received into the church as a result. Recent prayer and liturgy training has helped staff become confident in leading liturgies, and there is an appetite for further training. Leaders, including two new staff members, have the necessary knowledge and skills to ensure prayer meets the community's needs. Pupils value the guidance they receive to lead their prayer times and make good use of the resources available to ensure prayer experiences are high-quality. Self-evaluation of prayer, though happening, lacks the necessary focus on the quality and impact of prayer and doesn't seek pupils' views regularly enough for leaders to be confident that their evaluation is accurate and robust.

Information about the school

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| Full name of school | St Joseph's Preparatory School |
| School unique reference number (URN) | 124484 |
| Full postal address of the school | Rookery Lane, Trent Vale, ST4 5RF |
| School phone number | 01782 417533 |
| Name of head teacher or principal | Daniel Hood |
| Chair of governing board | Lorraine Atherton |
| School Website | stjosephsprepschool.co.uk |
| Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable) | N/A |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Independent |
| Age-range of pupils | 3 to 11 |
| Trustees | Congregation of Christian Brothers |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Date of last denominational inspection | November 2009 |
| Previous denominational inspection grade | N/A |

The inspection team

Karyn Oakley

Lead inspector

Robert Duigan

Team inspector

Key to grade judgements

| Grade | England | Wales |
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| 1 | Outstanding | Excellent |
| 2 | Good | Good |
| 3 | Requires improvement | Adequate and requires improvement |
| 4 | Inadequate | Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement |