



St Ethelbert's Roman Catholic Primary School, a Voluntary Academy

URN: 150179

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Salford

24 June 2026 – 25 June 2026

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 RE

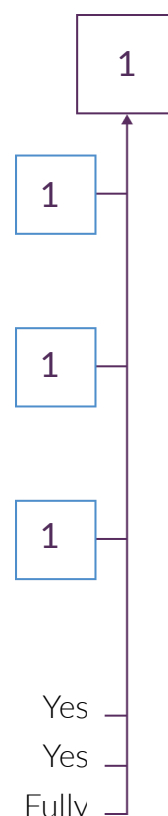
Collective worship (p.7)

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



What the school does well

- The mission statement, 'Love, Care, Share', is deeply embedded in the daily life of the school and permeates every aspect of its work. As a result, Catholic life and mission are inspirational. St Ethelbert's is an exceptionally welcoming and inclusive community where every person is known, valued and treated with equal dignity. Staff are relentless in ensuring that every pupil is supported to flourish, and no one is left behind.
- The headteacher provides inspirational leadership, remaining steadfast in her vision for Catholic education and empowering leaders at every level to contribute confidently to the school's continued development.
- Pupils are at the heart of the school community and are clearly prioritised in every aspect of school life. They know they are loved, respected and cherished as unique individuals created in the image and likeness of God. This is reflected in their confidence, strong sense of belonging and positive engagement in the life of the school.
- Leaders are highly ambitious for religious education, ensuring that it is carefully planned, well resourced and relevant to pupils' lives. As a result, pupils make meaningful connections between scripture, Catholic teaching and their lived experience.
- Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school. Leaders prioritise high-quality resources and opportunities for pupils to plan, lead and participate in prayer, resulting in rich experiences that deepen faith and foster spiritual growth.

What the school needs to improve

- Provide more opportunities within religious education for pupils to ask increasingly incisive questions that deepen their theological understanding and extend their learning.
- Further develop pupils' independence in planning, leading and evaluating prayer and liturgy so that they confidently use an appropriate range of media and creative approaches while remaining faithful to the school's agreed structure.

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

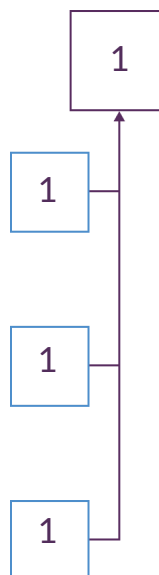
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



The mission statement, *'Love learning as friends; care for our community as neighbours; share our faith in Jesus as disciples,'* is deeply embedded in the life of St Ethelbert's and is lived authentically by the whole school community. The school is exceptionally welcoming, and its Catholic ethos remains a defining strength despite changes in the local community it serves. Pupils know they are loved, valued and safe, and they confidently articulate how the mission shapes their relationships, attitudes and actions. They actively promote the school's values through their support for charitable initiatives and can explain how Catholic social teaching underpins the choice of charities and fundraising activities. Initiatives such as the *One World Tea Party* exemplify mission in action, enabling pupils to demonstrate love, care and service for others. Pupils describe the school as a family, a view shared by parents, staff and governors. Relationships rooted in Gospel values are exceptionally strong, behaviour is exemplary, and pupils demonstrate maturity, compassion and respect in their interactions. They readily reflect on their choices, seek reconciliation where appropriate and move forward positively. Pupils embrace leadership opportunities with confidence, and faith-based leadership groups make a significant contribution to the Catholic life of the school through promoting prayer, supporting liturgical celebrations and encouraging others to live out the school's mission.

The school's commitment to human dignity is evident in its deeply inclusive culture, where every member of the community is welcomed, respected and enabled to flourish. Pupils and families from all faiths and backgrounds are embraced within a nurturing environment where diversity is celebrated. Those with complex or additional needs participate fully in every

aspect of school life through carefully planned provision and highly effective support. Throughout the school, high-quality displays celebrate faith, mission and Catholic social teaching, reflecting pupils' lived experiences and commitment to faith in action. A deeply embedded culture of care ensures that those who are vulnerable or marginalised are recognised, valued and supported with compassion and dignity. Pupils' strong attendance reflects their genuine enjoyment of school, their sense of belonging and the high-quality care they receive. Relationships and health education is carefully tailored to the needs of the community while fully meeting diocesan requirements.

Leaders and governors provide inspirational leadership, united by an ambitious vision that places Catholic life and mission at the centre of every aspect of the school's work. This vision is clearly communicated, widely understood and consistently realised across the school community. Catholic social teaching is woven through the curriculum and wider life of the school, enabling pupils to develop a strong sense of justice, responsibility and service. Strong and purposeful partnerships with the parish enrich pupils' faith journey and strengthen their understanding of belonging to the wider Church. Parents and carers are recognised as the first educators of their children and speak warmly of the care, encouragement and pastoral support they receive from staff in nurturing both faith and wellbeing. Staff feel exceptionally well supported by leaders, who have created a caring culture where professional development and personal wellbeing are genuine priorities. Governors share leaders' ambitious vision and provide highly effective support and challenge to ensure the Catholic mission continues to flourish. They are proud advocates for the school within the parish and wider community, ensure that policies consistently reflect the school's mission, and prioritise resources that strengthen Catholic life and mission. As a result, staff are highly confident in their roles and are inspirational witnesses to the mission and values of St Ethelbert's.

Religious education

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 key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

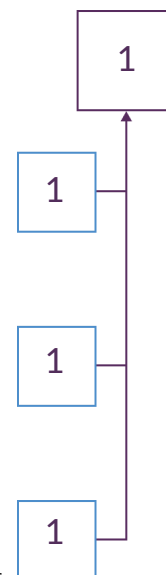
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 demonstrate highly developed religious literacy and speak confidently about key theological concepts, scripture and Catholic teaching. They recall prior learning with accuracy and make meaningful connections between scripture, doctrine and their own lived experience, reflecting the strength of the school's carefully sequenced curriculum and consistently high-quality teaching. The school implements *Lighting the Path* and diocesan resources with creativity and fidelity, ensuring that religious education is engaging, relevant and firmly rooted in the *Religious Education Directory*. Pupils articulate their thinking with confidence, justify their ideas using scripture and Catholic teaching, and make thoughtful links between different areas of learning. They use technology effectively to enhance and present their learning and demonstrate a genuine enthusiasm for religious education. Many pupils begin from low starting points, yet make strong progress over time and attain standards that are in line with those achieved in other core curriculum subjects. There is no discernible difference in outcomes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities or those with English as an additional language because teachers ensure that every pupil is fully included and supported to flourish. Behaviour for learning and participation in lessons are exemplary. Pupils are curious learners who take great pride in discussing the meaning of scripture and confidently explain how their learning inspires them to live out Gospel values through compassion, justice and service to others. Through consistently high-quality teaching and a nurturing faith environment, pupils develop a deep love of religious education, which shapes their values, strengthens their relationship with God and enables them to recognise their responsibility to contribute positively to the wider world. The next stage of development

is to provide more consistent opportunities for pupils to deepen their theological thinking through increasingly incisive questioning and the confident use of a wider range of disciplinary lenses.

Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and deliver high-quality religious education with confidence and commitment. Supported by the religious education leader and headteacher, they work collaboratively to ensure a shared understanding of curriculum expectations and the effective delivery of ambitious learning. Their expertise is evident in engaging, reflective classroom practice that is characterised by consistently high expectations for all pupils. This is reflected in pupils' workbooks and confirmed through pupil voice, which demonstrates secure knowledge, thoughtful reflection and a genuine enthusiasm for religious education. Teachers skilfully use scripture to inspire learning and enable pupils to make meaningful connections between biblical teaching, Catholic tradition and their own lived experience. Purposeful questioning, discussion and reflection deepen pupils' understanding and encourage them to articulate their ideas with increasing confidence and theological accuracy. Lessons are well resourced and carefully adapted to meet the needs of all learners, ensuring that every pupil can participate fully and achieve success. Staff have embraced the *Religious Education Directory* with growing confidence, resulting in a curriculum that promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, intellectual and personal development while maintaining high levels of academic challenge and engagement.

Religious education is at the heart of the curriculum and is championed by highly effective leadership. The headteacher and religious education leader share a clear and ambitious vision that is understood across the school community and ensures that religious education remains central to the school's Catholic mission. Through rigorous monitoring, effective coaching and carefully planned professional development, leaders have established a culture of high expectations, consistency and continual improvement. Staff engage fully with diocesan training, using this professional formation to deepen subject knowledge, strengthen confidence and support the implementation of the *Religious Education Directory*. Governors have a secure understanding of the quality and impact of religious education through regular monitoring, strategic support and appropriate challenge. They ensure that religious education receives the same status, resourcing and strategic priority as other core curriculum subjects, enabling it to make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, intellectual and academic development.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

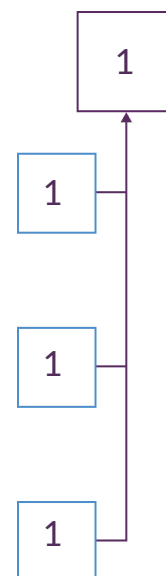
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

Leadership

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



Pupils participate in prayer and liturgy with joy, reverence and deep enthusiasm, demonstrating a genuine love of prayer and worship. They sing with confidence and respond prayerfully, creating a spiritually rich atmosphere throughout the school. Music is used skilfully to enhance worship, with actions and gestures enabling every pupil to participate fully and confidently. Pupils embrace moments of silence and reflection with maturity, readily offering spontaneous prayers both within their 'nest' and alongside their peers. They demonstrate a secure understanding of the meaning and purpose of prayer, recognising how it strengthens their relationship with God and influences the choices they make in their daily lives. Religious signs and symbols are understood and used confidently, deepening pupils' appreciation of the Church's traditions and the liturgical year. The structures and expectations of prayer and liturgy, including the movement from ordinary time to extraordinary time, are firmly embedded across the school and enable pupils to participate confidently and reverently. Pupil leadership is a significant strength. Pupils willingly undertake responsibilities in preparing and supporting prayer experiences, taking particular pride in initiatives such as the lunchtime *Stay and Pray* sessions in the chapel. They speak confidently about the importance of prayer in their own lives and understand how prayer and liturgy nurture their personal and spiritual development. Consequently, pupils are now well placed to develop greater independence in planning, leading and evaluating prayer and liturgy through the confident use of a wider range of creative approaches and media.

Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of St Ethelbert's and are valued by the whole school community, including pupils from different faith backgrounds. Opportunities for communal

celebration of the word, class prayer and quiet reflection are woven naturally throughout the school day, enabling pupils to develop a deep and lasting relationship with God. Carefully selected scripture ensures that celebrations are meaningful, age appropriate and relevant to pupils' lives. Staff model prayer with authenticity and confidence, fostering an atmosphere in which worship is both joyful and deeply reverent. The chapel, classroom prayer focal points and dedicated prayer spaces throughout the school are treasured by pupils and are used regularly for personal prayer, reflection and communal worship. These spaces make a significant contribution to the spiritual life of the school and encourage pupils to encounter God in a variety of meaningful ways. The partnership between school, parish and families further enriches pupils' faith journey. Initiatives such as the creation of *Jubilee Year* prayer stations within the parish church, high levels of participation in the sacramental programme, family involvement in Christmas celebrations and generous support for parish food collections demonstrate a flourishing relationship that strengthens both the liturgical life of the school and its witness within the wider community.

Leadership at St Ethelbert's ensures that prayer and liturgy are integral to the life of the school. Leaders ensure that pupils of all ages approach prayer and liturgy with respect, enthusiasm and increasing confidence. This was particularly evident during the whole-school assembly, where pupils sang joyfully and participated wholeheartedly in prayer. Staff model high-quality practice and work collaboratively with pupils to prepare meaningful experiences of prayer and liturgy. They understand the important role these experiences play in shaping pupils' spiritual and moral development. The school's well-established approach to prayer and liturgy is modelled consistently by staff and increasingly embraced by pupils. The dedication of staff to pupils' faith journey is particularly evident when Year 3 pupils receive the Eucharist for the first time. Teachers work alongside pupils to prepare meaningful experiences of prayer and liturgy and are well placed to support pupils further in becoming more confident contributors to the liturgical life of the school. High-quality resources, carefully selected and thoughtfully used, demonstrate that leaders value prayer and liturgy as central to the school's ethos, ensuring that these practices remain vibrant, inclusive and meaningful for the whole school community.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Ethelbert's Roman Catholic Primary School, a Voluntary Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	150179
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3503319
Full postal address of the school	Melbourne Road, Deane, Bolton, BL3 5RL
School phone number	01204 333036
Headteacher or Head of School	Mrs Mandy Messham
Chair of Governors	Mrs Gemma Pendlebury
School Website	www.stethelberts.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	06 October 2023
Previous denominational inspection grade	Requires Improvement

The Inspection Team

Josephine- Anne Butterworth

Lead

Colette Howe

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