

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Barrow-in-Furness

URN: 148699

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Lancaster

08–09 October 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

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 curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

2

What the school does well

- Sacred Heart is a joyful community, described by pupils, parents, staff and governors as a family.
- Staff are exemplary role models for pupils through their relationships with each other and the love and care they show for pupils.
- Strong collegiate collaboration among teachers influences the development of religious education teaching across the school.
- Strong relationships with other Catholic schools, most noticeably St Bernard's Catholic High School, support the liturgical life of the school.
- Governors are highly ambitious for the school, which is part of the Mater Christi Multi Academy Trust.

What the school needs to improve

- Provide a broader range of opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their learning through different forms of expression, enabling them to communicate their understanding in increasingly creative and reflective ways.
- Use questioning more effectively in lessons to extend pupils' thinking, deepen their understanding and enable them to engage more fully with theological concepts.
- Develop strategies to enable pupils to evaluate the quality of the prayer and liturgy they have planned, so they can identify how to improve next 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

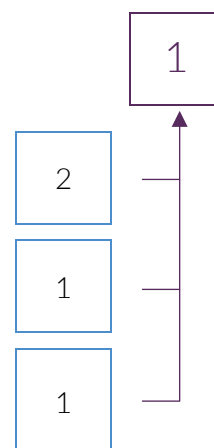
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



Due to the exceptional care they receive and the joyful and welcoming atmosphere throughout the school, the pupils of Sacred Heart Catholic primary school are happy, confident and enjoy coming to school. They understand that they are loved and valued and some older pupils recognise they are unique individuals created in the image and likeness of God. There is a strong sense of belonging in school and many pupils recognise the distinctive nature of their school as a Catholic community. For example, they understand the importance of following the example of Jesus in their daily lives, although some pupils, across the key stages, find it difficult to articulate this. During inspection, pupils enjoyed selling flapjack to raise money and support the work of *Mary's Meals*. Across the whole school, pupils show respect and care for one another and embrace the school's values through their actions and relationships. Consequently, behaviour in lessons and around the school is consistently good. Relationships between pupils and staff are characterised by mutual respect, kindness and genuine care, contributing to the school's warm and nurturing ethos. These strong relationships have a positive impact on all aspects of school life, including in religious education lessons.

The mission statement, which is rooted in the Word of God, is deeply embedded within the life of the school. It has a significant influence on decision-making, relationships and daily practice. Staff are exemplary role models and their dedication ensures that all pupils receive the highest levels of pastoral support. They fully embrace and contribute to the mission of the school and are highly committed to its Catholic life. They consistently bear witness to Gospel values through the quality of their relationships and the exceptional care they provide for pupils. Despite being in temporary accommodation, across two sites, the learning environments reflect the school's Catholic identity and provide visible evidence of its mission and values. Many members of the community describe Sacred Heart school as a family, reflecting the strong sense of belonging experienced by pupils, staff and parents. A generous spirit of hospitality is evident, particularly in the way new members of the community, including those new to the country, are welcomed and supported. Chaplaincy provision is a central and highly

effective aspect of school life, enabling members of the community to deepen their relationship with God and one another. The provision for Relationships, Health and Sex Education meets diocesan requirements and reflects the teachings and values of the Church.

The leadership of the Catholic Life and Mission is a significant strength of the school. Leaders ensure that Christ remains at the centre of all aspects of school life, influencing all their decisions. Despite disruption caused by the closure of the school building four years ago, the development of the Catholic Life and Mission remains a core strategic priority in school. Leaders and governors engage effectively with diocesan services, benefiting from a wide range of support and professional development opportunities. In addition, they maintain a dynamic partnership with the local Catholic schools, most notably St Bernard's Catholic High school. Partnerships with the parish are a significant strength and make a valuable contribution to the school's Catholic identity. Leaders have established highly effective strategies to engage parents and carers in the life of the school, across both sites. Parents greatly value the support provided and recognise the school's commitment to the formation and development of their children. Governors are highly ambitious for the Catholic life of the school and lead by example in their commitment to its mission. The headteacher provides inspirational leadership and is deeply committed to ensuring that Sacred Heart continues to flourish as a vibrant Catholic community where every individual is enabled to thrive.

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

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

2

Across the school, pupils are developing the knowledge, understanding and skills set out in the *Religious Education Directory*. School assessment information demonstrates that, over time, pupils are making progress in knowing more, when measured against the planned curriculum for their respective year groups. There is some evidence of increasing religious literacy as pupils move through the school and whilst some pupils lack the skills to speak confidently about their learning in religious education, others are able to recall and discuss key concepts, scripture and themes from their lessons. However, leaders recognise that the use of more incisive teacher questioning in lessons across the school will develop this, enabling pupils to begin to reflect spiritually while engaging with ethical and theological questions appropriate to their age and stage of development. Across the whole school, pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and they work hard during lessons. They engage well with whole class, paired and individual activities. Overall pupil work is of a good standard. However, pupils would benefit from a wider range of opportunities to present and express their knowledge, understanding and reflections in ways that reflect their individuality and creativity.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge and a strong understanding of how pupils learn. They use a coaching model to support one another in planning, teaching and assessing. Teachers recognise and are committed to the value and importance of religious education and they have high expectations of pupils. A clear structure for planning religious education lessons is used across the whole school and is reflected in lessons, where religious vocabulary is taught discretely and teachers model answers for pupils to guide their responses. Relationships within lessons are positive, enabling pupils to participate confidently. Where teaching is strongest, questioning is used to extend pupils' thinking and deepen their understanding. Further development of this practice across the school would support greater challenge and enable pupils to engage more fully with theological concepts. Assessment is used to identify pupils' progress and inform next steps in learning. Stamps are used in pupil books to show where work has been checked. This is sometimes done verbally, in pupil book interviews, where pupils discuss their learning with teachers or leaders. To build further on current strengths,

teachers should provide a broader range of opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their learning through different forms of expression, enabling them to communicate their understanding in increasingly creative and reflective ways.

Religious education is at the heart of the curriculum at Sacred Heart and is valued highly by leaders, staff and pupils. Despite the challenges faced by staff, leaders have remained steadfast in ensuring that religious education retains its status as the core of the core curriculum. The subject is given parity with other core subjects in terms of curriculum provision, assessment, professional development and strategic leadership. The religious education leader effectively supports staff, including those new to teaching and new to the school, liaises and reports to governors and other leaders and seeks to drive improvement. For example, now that the curriculum is embedded and is a faithful expression of the Directory, she recognises the need to enrich the curriculum to further enhance pupil learning. Staff value the support, guidance and expertise provided, and this contributes positively to the developing consistency and quality of provision across the school. Religious education benefits from good investment in training and development, as well as curriculum resources, resulting in increasing confidence and expertise among staff. Leaders are committed to ensuring that Religious Education continues to flourish and is at the heart of the school's Catholic mission. Although not recorded in an annual monitoring calendar, the school's ongoing coaching and checking exercises ensure actions are taken to address areas for development and lead to good outcomes.

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

2

2

Pupils respond reverently and respectfully to prayer and liturgy. They participate confidently in communal prayer, sing joyfully and are able to engage meaningfully in periods of silence and reflection. Pupils are developing an age-appropriate understanding of the liturgical year and demonstrate familiarity with key aspects of Catholic prayer and liturgy. For example, they listen attentively to scripture, know the responses associated with the Gospel and can confidently pray a range of traditional Catholic prayers. Some pupils are beginning to recognise the influence of prayer in their daily lives, with one pupil explaining, "I pray to God when I need help," demonstrating an emerging understanding of prayer as a source of comfort, guidance and support. Pupils are increasingly taking responsibility for prayer and liturgy through a range of liturgical ministries. During inspection, pupils worked well with a group of high school pupils to undertake liturgical ministries during Mass. These opportunities to serve at Mass, proclaim scripture and lead prayer within classrooms are helping pupils to develop confidence and a deeper understanding of their role within the Catholic community. Pupils are less skilled in reflecting on or evaluating the quality of the prayer they have planned. However, leaders recognise this and seek to add this to the plan for the progressive development of skills, to ensure that opportunities for participation continue to be appropriate to pupils' age and stage of development.

Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of Sacred Heart, with a clear pattern of daily prayer which reflects the rhythm of the Church's liturgical life and ensures that prayer is a natural and valued part of the school day. Prayer and liturgy provide participants with a variety of experiences rooted in the Catholic tradition. Seasonally appropriate scripture passages are central to celebrations of the Word, enabling pupils to engage with the liturgical seasons and deepen their understanding of the Gospel message. Staff are strong role models and demonstrate confidence and reverence when leading prayer and liturgy. Their example supports pupils in understanding how prayer can be a meaningful and integral part of everyday life. The school has worked diligently to create environments that support prayer and reflection across both sites. Prayer spaces within classrooms, intervention rooms and

communal areas are thoughtfully maintained and provide focal points for worship and contemplation. Religious artwork, symbols and artefacts are evident throughout the school, including in corridors and shared areas, effectively contributing to the Catholic character of the environment and providing visible reminders of the school's faith life. Families are welcomed and encouraged to participate in the prayer life of the school. Leaders actively seek to remove barriers to participation, including providing transport across both school sites.

Leadership of prayer and liturgy is strong and purposeful. A clear policy, fully aligned with the *Prayer and Liturgy Directory*, provides a coherent framework for provision across the school. Leaders have established an annual programme of liturgical celebrations, including the Eucharist, feast days, holy days of obligation and opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. As a result, pupils experience the rich sacramental and liturgical life of the Church throughout the year. Leaders demonstrate a clear commitment to continuous improvement in prayer and liturgy. Professional development is carefully planned and includes collaboration with diocesan officers to enhance staff confidence, knowledge and expertise. Significant priority has been given to resourcing prayer and liturgy, ensuring that staff and pupils have access to high-quality materials and environments that support meaningful acts. Consequently, prayer and liturgy make a positive contribution to the spiritual formation of pupils and staff. Parents value the prayer life of the school, with some telling inspectors about the impact on home life.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	148699
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9433602
Full postal address of the school	Lumley Street, Barrow-in-Furness, LA14 2BA
School phone number	01229840940
Headteacher	Simone Beach
Chair of Local Governing Body	Marzena Zebryk
School Website	www.sacredheart.cumbria.sch.uk/
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Mater Christi Multi-Academy Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	N/A
Age-range of pupils	2-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	November 2021
Previous denominational inspection grade	1 - Outstanding

The inspection team

Jacqueline Hampson
Nicola Sayers

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