



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for **St Pius X Catholic Primary School**

URN: 114249

Carried out on behalf of the Most Rev Malcolm McMahon, Archbishop of Liverpool and Apostolic Administrator of the diocese of Hexham and Newcastle on:

Date: 30 June 2023

Overall effectiveness The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....	2
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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	Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- Catholic life and mission are central and at the heart of this small but thriving community. The high quality, authentic pastoral relationships are clearly evident on every level and are a true strength of St Pius X.
- The headteacher is an inspirational example of the distinctive Catholic nature of St Pius X.
- St Pius X is a fully inclusive community where pupils, families, staff, and governors feel valued and have a real sense of worth and mission.
- Pupils clearly enjoy religious education lessons; they understand the value of the teaching and it feeds directly into the development of the whole child.

- Senior leaders are excellent role models to other staff and pupils in relation to prayer and liturgy and demonstrate firmly that Christ is at the centre and at the heart of their vision.

What the school needs to improve:

- Raise the profile of religious literacy, placing a clear focus on religious vocabulary and its use by pupils.
- Enhance the use of questioning to deepen levels of understanding and provide greater opportunities for 'deeper thinking', building consistency across the whole school.
- Provide clear guidance for pupils to enable them to fully understand what they must do to progress in their learning.

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

1



Pupils fully embrace and understand the distinctive Catholic identity and mission of St Pius X. They speak about 'being a little school with a big heart – even though we are a small school, we can spread the love of God by following in the footsteps of Jesus'. They speak confidently and show understanding that they are valued and cared for. They know they are made in the image and likeness of God; they value the 'special relationships between each other'. The school is driven by its mission statement, 'Renew all Things in Christ', which is embraced and lived out through the high quality, caring, and nurturing relationships in this inclusive community. St. Pius X is an extremely supportive community, ensuring everyone is welcomed in a spirit of hospitality. The pupils clearly articulate their commitment to Catholic Social Teaching, describing a variety of fundraising activities including charity walks for CAFOD, a children's cancer charity, and their regular collections for the food bank. Behaviour in lessons, around the school, and in the playground, is exemplary and clearly demonstrates a deep sense of respect for everyone.

The mission statement is clearly visible throughout school. It is embraced by the staff and witnessed through the high quality relationships and interactions across the school community. Christ is very clearly at the heart of the school. Staff have very strong and supportive relationships and are excellent role models for the pupils. There is a strong witness to the importance of human dignity and the education of the whole person. Pupils are secure, happy and confident and parents refer to a 'safe haven where the values of Christ are demonstrated on a daily basis'. Pastoral care and nurture of pupils are a high priority for the staff. Parents refer to staff, particularly senior leaders, as 'going above and beyond to nurture and support'. They talk about senior leaders knowing all the families and having an 'awareness of how to help and support them'. The school environment is a highly effectively witness to its identity, mission, and Catholic

character. From the distinctive sculpture in the entrance, high quality displays throughout school, liturgically linked prayer focal points in each classroom, and a wide variety of creative sacred spaces throughout school, the school's mission is explicit and celebrated. The relationships, sex and health education curriculum is carefully planned and resourced using diocesan approved teaching material which fully meets all statutory requirements and is firmly rooted in Church teaching.

Leaders are inspirational witnesses to the Gospel. The headteacher, religious education subject leader, and governors demonstrate a deep commitment to the school's Catholic life and mission. They are knowledgeable and articulate about their role in both inspiring the community and evaluating and reviewing its mission. The flourishing and highly supportive local governing committee has recently federated with a partner school. Governors describe Catholic life and mission as being at the centre of everything that they do and talk about the 'school wrapping its arms around the families' and 'being the net underneath if any family needs it'. Leaders and governors are knowledgeable of the school's strengths and areas they would like to further enhance. There are clear systems in place for school self-evaluation and improvement priorities are built into the school improvement plan. School self-evaluation includes staff, parent, and pupil voice ensuring that governors are well-informed and able to effectively offer support and challenge. St Pius X is very well supported by its parish clergy. Leaders and governors work very closely alongside the parish priest and local deacon to enhance the partnership between school and parish, building community and strengthening relationships.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

2

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



From variable starting points, most pupils make good progress in relation to their age and stage of development, with no significant variation between groups of learners. Pupils are engaged by religious education lessons and are able to talk about their previous and current learning. They speak confidently about their work, using some religious vocabulary. Pupils engage well in lessons and their books show a good level of work with a developing use of religious vocabulary. There is evidence of some variety and creativity in presentation of religious work with the inclusion of age-related art tasks to enhance experiences. Vulnerable pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are very well supported through the use of additional, well-trained adults. Pupils understand how well they are doing and what they have achieved but are not as confident when articulating what they need to do to improve their work.

Teachers and support staff are confident in their religious knowledge and use a variety of resources to support them in their delivery including CAFOD resources linked to the *Come and See* teaching programme. Learning is delivered through a variety of tasks including the use of artwork to enhance creativity. Planning follows the *Come and See* and diocesan format and is tailored to meet the needs and stage of development of the pupils. Due to the mixed-age classes, staff follow a two-year cycle in their topic delivery. Work is adapted, through either a change in task or through the level of support. There are a high proportion of skilled support staff working alongside SEND learners to ensure that they can fully access the lessons and maximise their learning opportunities. Pupil effort is celebrated, and this motivates learners. Questions are used to clarify knowledge and understanding and there is some evidence of questioning being used to support pupils in moving their learning forward, but this is not yet fully embedded. Teachers understand the impact that religious education has on the spiritual and moral development of pupils and allow time for reflection within lessons.

Leaders and governors maintain religious education at the heart of the curriculum. They ensure that the curriculum meets the requirements of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory 2012* and that it is given parity with other core subjects in terms of funding, resourcing, and professional development. They have ensured that the required amount of curriculum time is given to religious education. The very experienced religious education subject leader has a clear vision for religious education teaching and learning and works closely with the headteacher and governors to drive this forward in the partnership between the two schools. Leaders are committed to training all staff, which is seen as an important element in developing them to ensure all pupils receive high standards of teaching. A high proportion of the teachers have secured their Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies. Leaders have ambitious plans for monitoring and evaluation. However, this is not yet fully embedded due to the recent changes across school and the partnership across the two schools. The findings of monitoring are reported to the local governing committee on a regular basis. There have been capacity challenges, linked to school changes, that leaders and governors are very mindful of, and strategic plans are in place to move forward with this and to continue to build on the good outcomes.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

1

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

1

Leadership

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

1



Pupils respond well and engage respectfully in prayerful opportunities. This is evidenced through class liturgical prayers, adult-led community prayer times, periods of silent meditation, response to liturgical music, communal singing, and in the call to spontaneous prayer. Scripture is central to most prayer opportunities and is used skillfully by staff so that even the youngest pupils are able to hear and respond to the Word of God. Pupils work well with others to prepare and deliver engaging prayer experiences and demonstrate a reverence when participating. Pupils are aware of the Church's liturgical seasons and are able to articulate some of the key colours and symbols associated with them. Pupils are involved in preparing for prayer opportunities from the youngest children selecting appropriate coloured cloths and resources from their class liturgy box to the older children preparing liturgical prayers linked to the end of topic 'respond' booklet. The oldest pupils are developing their skills in planning their own liturgy based around a chosen piece of scripture, but this is not yet embedded.

Prayer and liturgy are central to life at St Pius X, from the embedded daily pattern of prayer to the weekly structure of prayerful gatherings. These are enhanced by planned prayer and liturgy linked to significant dates in the liturgical calendar, and by times of spontaneous prayer in response to moments of joy and sorrow for the school community or current events. Prayer opportunities for pupils are enhanced by the using music and instruments. Carefully chosen passages from Scripture, linked to the weekly Gospel readings or liturgical season, are introduced at the start of the week in whole-school prayer and liturgy. Dedicated time is identified for class prayer throughout the school week and the week ends with a prayerful whole-school gathering to celebrate pupil successes, both academic and personal. Staff pray together, led by senior leaders, modelling and inspiring colleagues. Space within school is used creatively and reverently. The sculpture and prayer focus in the entrance foyer is clear evidence of the distinctive Catholic nature

of St Pius X. This is further enhanced by the creative and imaginative use of 'sacred spaces' throughout school and the centrality of religious displays. The outdoor prayer space adds a further dedicated space for class prayer and for spontaneous personal prayer. Prayer spaces within classrooms are integral to pupil-led prayer and reflect the liturgical season.

The headteacher and religious education subject leader are authentic and inspirational witnesses to the faith and deliver high quality prayer and liturgy experiences confidently and naturally. Leaders and governors have a comprehensive understanding of the importance of prayer, and they ensure that prayer and worship are relevant with a clear purpose and message. Leaders are highly effective in articulating their vision for prayer and liturgy. They are currently developing a guidance document linked to progression in worship to further enhance the independence of the pupils in planning their own liturgy experiences. Professional development, resourcing and budget setting reflect the priority placed by leaders and governors on the delivery of consistently high quality experiences for pupils. Leaders and governors place a high priority on monitoring and evaluating the quality and impact of prayer and liturgy. The views of all stakeholders are sought and are integral to the self-evaluation process. Leaders and governors are working ambitiously to ensure that their self-evaluation process fully embraces the partnership across the two schools as they move forward together. Leaders work successfully alongside the parish and have a flourishing partnership with the community and serving clergy. The parish priest refers to 'the parish supports inwards and the school supports outwards'.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Pius X Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	114249
Full postal address of the school	Thornfield Road, The Grove, Consett Co. Durham, DH8 8AX
School phone number	01207 503604
Name of head teacher or principal	Joanne Cruise
Chair of governing board	Pauline Parker
School Website	st-piusx.durham.sch.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	4 to 11
Trustees	Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	May 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Leigh-anne Young	Lead inspector
Louise Maitland	Team inspector

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