CATHOLIC SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE INSPECTION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND ACADEMIES

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Thornton-Cleveleys

URN: 149265

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Lancaster

29–30 January 2026

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

2

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

2

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

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 laid down by the Bishop of Lancaster.
- The school has responded fully to the areas for improvement from the previous Catholic school inspection.

This Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection was carried out under canons 804 & 806 of the code of canon law. For maintained schools and academies in England it fulfils the statutory requirements of s.48 of the Education Act 2005. For maintained schools and academies in Wales it fulfils the statutory requirements of s.50 of the Education Act 2005.

What the school does well

- Strong leadership has ensured that Catholic life, religious education and prayer and liturgy remains good throughout the school, since the last inspection.
- The impact of the subject leader's school improvement work is valued by governors, staff and parents.
- Pupils' behaviour and respect for others is evident, channelled through their understanding of 'Love one another as I have loved you'.
- Staff are a cohesive team and care deeply for one another's well-being and personal development.
- Support from governors and close links with the parish are well-developed and strong.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure consistency in the school's marking and feedback structures, so that children know how well they are doing and how to improve their work.
- Refine the prayer and liturgy policy so that the skills of pupil participation are clearly articulated, enabling pupils of all ages to plan and lead age-appropriate prayer and liturgy.
- Develop the role of existing pupil groups, such as the prayer leaders and school council, so they have a clear and active role in promoting the Catholic life of the school.

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

2

Pupil outcomes

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

2

Provision

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

2

Leadership

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

2

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School has a clear and well-defined Catholic identity, which is understood by the pupils. They explain this, across all age ranges, in terms of the artefacts and religious images that can be seen around school, the prayers they say and what they have learned in religious education lessons. Although not always able to fully articulate their school's Catholic aims, with support, they can explain how faith calls them to act in certain ways, supporting those in need. One child commented, 'School is special because we're Catholic and God's inside each one of us.' The school's motto, 'Love one another as I have loved you', is known and practised by the pupils through their behaviour, which is very good, acting as buddies for younger pupils and in their commitment to supporting charities. One pupil linked their learning about the beatitudes to fundraising and said they do this because, 'Jesus would have raised money for charity'. Pupils feel safe, enjoy coming to school and are keen to be chosen as prayer leaders, wearing their crucifix badges with pride.

A wide and varied range of opportunities are provided by the school to consolidate the school's Catholic identity and mission. Renewed when the school joined the Trust, the mission and aims are evident on the school's website, in daily conversations and greetings shared. Pupils delight in saying, 'Good afternoon and peace be to you,' when they answer during registration. The commitment of staff is a strength of the school. This is seen in their contributions during prayer and liturgy and when promoting Catholic social teaching through the school's activities. Support for the local Brian House charity, UNICEF, CAFOD, local foodbanks and links with a nearby specialist school, show that staff value and live out the mission and are focused on the community both locally and further afield. The school evidence its inclusive and accepting culture in keeping with Catholic social teaching and papal teaching. The school environment fully shares its Catholic character. Prayer tables in classrooms, displays celebrating pupils' work, the beautifully created altar in the hall and other art works around school, including the children's Stations of the Cross, all indicate that this is afforded great importance. The

provision for relationships and health education is secure in school and fully meets diocesan requirements.

Leaders and governors articulate Catholic mission clearly and ensure that each school day is governed by prayer, gospel values and policies that draw on the school's mission statement. Governors are well-informed about the strengths and steps taken towards further improvement and have robust structures in place to support the staff, including those new to the school and to Catholic education. Staff cohesion is evident in the relationships between colleagues. The subject leader has a clear vision for the Catholic life and mission of the school. This along with its implementation, is appreciated by governors, the Trust, staff and parents alike. Engagement with the diocese is effective and the school accesses a range of services, including professional development. Parish links are constructive and strong, especially the link with the parish priest, who is a weekly visitor to school. Good communication exists between the two, and further opportunities to work collaboratively are always being sought. The parish priest, who assists in the formation of staff, is also a valuable knowledge source, working with teachers and pupils to share understanding of the faith. The parental survey indicated that, 'School is brilliant…' but a small percentage indicated that communication about the Catholic life of the school could be improved.

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

The majority of pupils enjoy religious education lessons and can make links between their current learning and prior knowledge. As a result, pupils make suitable progress throughout school, including pupils who require additional support to access learning. The recall of knowledge is good and pupils in all classes observed were able to explain what they were learning about. A child in the early years said that 'God created the earth and loves us', whilst a pupil in Key Stage 1 explained that repentance is, 'Washing away your sins and turning back to God'. Samples of work and discussion with pupils demonstrated that, although knowledgeable, they found it more difficult to apply what they had learned to their own day-to-day experiences and the lives of others. During lessons, the majority of pupils were engaged, listened intently and participated with enthusiasm, demonstrating independence and collaborative working skills. The regular use of talk partners ensured that pupils shared their ideas and understanding before the lesson moved on. Attainment in religious education is measured effectively by teachers and standards are comparable to those in other core subject areas. However, pupils are not always sure how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

The quality of teaching in religious education is consistent across the school and where the strongest teaching was seen, higher levels of subject knowledge were evident, gained through experience or dedicated professional development. This led to effective questioning, adaptation for pupil groups and higher expectations. Quality of teaching, across the school, has been supported by the introduction of a new scheme of work which has raised staff confidence and provided structure and variety to lessons. As a result, pupils benefit from a variety of learning tasks such as letter writing, role play, prayer and other outcomes which increases their enjoyment of religious education lessons. Where pupils' work was of the highest quality, teachers had created tasks that replaced the scheme's worksheets which can often inhibit pupils from providing in-depth answers. Excellent practice was seen in one class where work had been carefully planned to support a child with additional needs. Specialist flashcards were

being used to develop religious vocabulary, as the content of the lesson was unsuitable for the pupil's level of understanding. The assessment of pupils' work has developed significantly, using diocesan materials, but further consistency is required, including the school's strategies to recall prior learning.

Leaders and governors have ensured, through effective planning and resourcing, that the *Religious Education Directory* is understood by the staff and is fully in place for September 2026. Although new to the school, an approved scheme has ensured that scripture is central to learning and meets the objectives of the directory. Religious education is taught for the prescribed amount of time in all classes and is prioritised in school improvement planning, when budgeting for development and when reporting to parents. The wealth of other resources used in school, such as the Wednesday Word, Life to the Full and Ten Ten daily prayer all contribute to improve staff and pupil knowledge. The professional development that staff have received, to underpin teaching of religious education, also shows the value placed on this in the school's vision for further development. The subject leader has made a significant contribution to raising standards and ensuring staff are confident, feel supported and have clear guidelines to structure their teaching. Monitoring of standards and self-evaluation, involving the governors, has correctly identified strengths and next steps, which have become priorities for further development in school.

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

Prayer and liturgy is central to each day at Sacred Heart, including traditional prayers said in the classroom, whole school gatherings and regular attendance at Mass. The pupils spoke confidently about these occurrences and showed some understanding of the liturgical year, explaining that, 'Prayer is good and it helps me to connect with God' and 'We can do anything if we have faith in God'. Pupils were respectful and reverent during observed prayer and liturgy sessions, although their direct involvement in planning and delivering this was only evidenced in the upper juniors. Great practice exists in Year 5 and Year 6, when pupils deliver prayer and liturgy to younger classes during the week. The younger pupils spoke about their enjoyment of this, valuing the efforts of their older peers. The majority of prayer and liturgy is planned and delivered by staff, meaning pupils can appear quite passive when this happens. Taking greater responsibility for the delivery of prayer and liturgy and regular evaluation of it will also help to identify what pupils enjoy and how they have been inspired to take action through what they have heard.

The school's physical provision for prayer and liturgy is very thorough. Classroom prayer tables are well used, and the prayer focus in the school hall has a clear purpose when the school meets for their Friday prayer and celebration. Daily prayer is evident and is also reactive to local and national events, such as the year of hope and the centenary of Lancaster Diocese. Prayer and liturgy also closely follows the liturgical year, ensuring that the whole school community understands the seasons of the Church and the colours associated with them. Scripture is always at the heart of prayer and liturgy, and pupils and staff join in confidently with appropriate gestures and responses. The variety of ways of praying are limited, however, and children have had few opportunities to experience the richness of Catholic tradition, such as Eucharistic adoration or praying the rosary. Staff are committed to leading and supporting pupils and senior leaders are models of good practice for others. This is mirrored by the parish priest, who ensures regular opportunities for pupils to attend Mass and is always looking for new opportunities to enhance parish involvement, in collaboration with school leaders.

Senior leaders and the parish priest have devised a suitable and varied pattern of prayer and liturgy across the school year, including the celebration of Mass, and some holy days of obligation. Liturgies, prepared by the school and performed by the pupils, during Advent and Lent, are a great example of how parish and school work together. Opportunities to further develop this close link could include celebrating the school's feast day in June and offering eligible pupils the opportunity to go to confession, during key times in the liturgical year. Leaders and governors are thorough in their duties to ensure prayer and liturgy is comprehensively planned and monitored. Coverage at Sacred Heart is clearly set out in policy, but this document requires more detail about how the skills of pupil participation should be developed, so that pupils of all ages can plan and lead elements of it, taking a more active role in the classroom. Professional development for staff has already begun to have some impact on this recognised school target. The quality of pupil-led prayer and liturgy is recognised by all as an important area for improvement. Leaders and governors have accurately evaluated standards in prayer and liturgy but should now also consider incorporating pupil and parent voice as part of the process.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	149265
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8883720
Full postal address of the school	Heys Street, Thornton, Thornton-Cleveleys, FY5 4HL
School phone number	01253821392
Headteacher	Paul Eaton
Chair of Governors/Trustees	Richard Clegg
School Website	www.sacredheart-primary.co.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	The Blessed Edward Bamber Catholic Multi Academy Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	N/A
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	October 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	2 - Good

The inspection team

Mark FitzGibbon	Lead
Alan Parry	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