



St Alban's Catholic Primary School

URN: 148410

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Hexham & Newcastle

07 May 2026 – 08 May 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

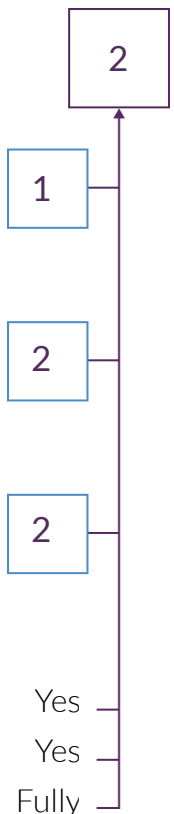
Collective worship (p.7)

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

- Senior leaders and governors inspire the whole school by driving the vision and mission of St Alban's with a caring, inclusive approach that shapes its strong family ethos.
- Relationships across the school are rooted in high levels of care, creating a welcoming community where every individual is loved, respected, and valued.
- Pupils engage enthusiastically in religious education lessons and consistently strive to do their best, demonstrating curiosity, commitment, and a positive attitude to learning.
- Pupils confidently plan and lead prayer and liturgy with deep reverence, relishing leadership opportunities and participating with enthusiasm, especially through joyful, wholehearted singing.

What the school needs to improve

- Provide opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of Catholic social teaching principles in order to live them out in their daily lives.
- Ensure consistency in good practice in the teaching and learning of religious education so that high standards are secured across the school.
- Strengthen opportunities for pupils to engage in independent prayer by creating clearly signposted quiet spaces around school, equipped with simple prayer resources to support personal reflection.

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

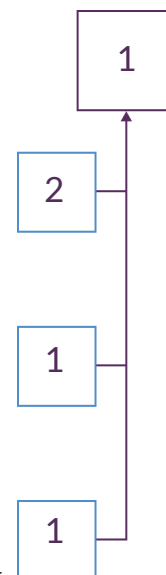
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



Pupils have a strong sense of belonging to the Catholic community of St Alban's Catholic Primary School. They speak confidently about being valued as individuals created in the image and likeness of God, and they understand that they each have a role in contributing to the life of the school and the wider world. One Key Stage 2 pupil commented, 'Our school is a democracy. We wear our school uniform with pride as part of St Alban's,' reflecting the honour pupils take in their identity. Pupils are safe, happy and confident, and describe the school as a big family, demonstrating the positive relationships that underpin daily life. Their behaviour is exemplary; they are consistently respectful, kind and welcoming, maturely embracing the faith and cultural backgrounds of others. Pupils show a strong commitment to living out gospel values, particularly in the way they support and look out for the most vulnerable. While they respond well to Catholic social teaching in practice, they are not able to articulate the deeper faith-based reasoning behind their actions. Leadership opportunities are well established. Older pupils take pride in their buddy roles, and the Mini Vinnies demonstrate enthusiasm as young Catholic leaders, especially in developing their sustainable garden.

St Alban's provides a joyful, nurturing environment where all are valued and where Christ's presence in others is recognised and celebrated. The school's mission statement, 'Together we learn to live life to the full,' is central to the life of St Alban's and is well known across the community. Parents describe St Alban's as a welcoming and supportive community, emphasising the strong sense of family that characterises the school, and illustrated clearly by the hospitable office staff. Relationships are a key strength, reflecting a community that

joyfully embraces and celebrates the growing diversity of cultures and traditions as an expression of its Catholic mission. Staff are positive role models who prioritise pupils' wellbeing, offering high-quality pastoral care. One parent noted that, 'Children have always been the priority', while a pupil shared that staff are always available to listen and support them, saying, 'Teachers won't leave you upset, they will help you.' The school environment clearly reflects its Catholic identity, with displays, sacred spaces and symbols that communicate the mission and ethos of the community. Provision for relationships, sex and health education meets statutory and diocesan requirements, is faithful to Church teaching and has been shared transparently with parents.

The leadership team, together with governors, is highly ambitious for the Catholic life and mission of St Alban's. Leaders demonstrate a deep commitment to the Church's mission in education and ensure that decisions are rooted in the well-being of pupils and staff. Parents speak very positively about leadership commenting that, 'I will be forever grateful for the pastoral support given to me and my family by the school leaders.' Similarly, governors share this commitment and speak proudly of the school's, 'purposeful community feel, with high-quality education, but also strong Catholicity'. They provide both effective support and appropriate challenge, contributing positively to the school's continued development. Professional development is regular, purposeful and strategically planned, enabling all staff to develop a secure understanding of the school's Catholic mission. The school enjoys a strong relationship with the parish. The parish priest visits regularly, supporting pupils' learning and strengthening the connection between school, parish and home. Leaders work hard to engage parents in their children's faith formation, offering a range of opportunities for families to participate in prayer, worship and the wider Catholic life of the school.

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

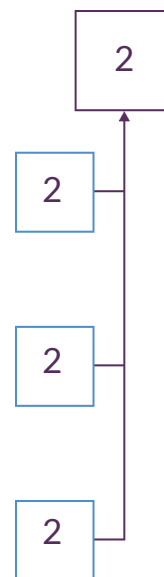
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 are developing secure knowledge and understanding in line with the expectations of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. Work in books shows clear progression, with pupils building effectively on prior learning so that they know more and remember more over time. As a result, pupils across all year groups, including those with additional needs, make good progress from their starting points, and outcomes in religious education are in line with those in other core subjects. Pupils are enthusiastic learners who engage confidently in discussion. Older pupils, particularly in Year 6, speak with assurance about scripture and make meaningful links to previous learning. Across the school, pupils are becoming increasingly religiously literate; they can reflect ethically, apply their learning to daily life and articulate how faith influences their choices. Year 5 pupils, for example, speak thoughtfully about the gifts of the Holy Spirit and how they might share their own gifts with others. However, this depth of understanding is not consistent across all year groups. Pupils take pride in their work, and this is evident in the generally high standards of presentation. Where expectations are less consistent, this impacts the quality of outcomes.

Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and a secure understanding of how pupils learn. Lessons are well sequenced and thoughtfully planned, enabling most pupils to engage successfully with their learning. Teachers use questioning effectively to assess understanding and adapt explanations or tasks where necessary, ensuring pupils are supported to make good progress. However, there are some inconsistencies in the delivery of religious education across a small number of year groups, which leaders recognise as an area for further

development. Teachers know their pupils well and maintain high expectations. Pupils' efforts are regularly acknowledged in class and celebrated in the weekly assembly, contributing to high levels of motivation. Highly positive relationships create a calm, purposeful atmosphere where pupils feel valued and are encouraged to do their best. Learning support assistants are deployed effectively and make a strong contribution to learning, particularly for pupils who require additional support. Their work enables pupils to access the curriculum confidently and with increasing independence. One parent commented, 'I cannot thank the teachers for supporting my child the way they do and letting him be himself,' reflecting the high levels of pastoral and academic support offered. Staff moderate work with other schools, including within the Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust, strengthening the accuracy of assessment.

Leaders, including the executive headteacher, headteacher and governors, ensure that religious education is given the highest priority and fully meets the expectations of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. The curriculum offers an increasingly rich range of creative learning opportunities, including effective use of the extensive outdoor areas, enabling pupils to engage with scripture and theological concepts in varied and meaningful ways. Religious education is afforded equal status with other core subjects in terms of funding and curriculum time. Leaders are committed to developing staff expertise. Regular, well-planned professional development ensures that teachers deepen their subject knowledge and confidence, with many staff accessing additional training to strengthen their practice. All staff benefit from internal and cross-trust professional development, which supports consistency and improves the quality of teaching across the school. Leaders work diligently to secure high-quality teaching and learning, and staff feel extremely well supported in their roles. The evaluation of religious education provision is rigorous and accurately identifies strengths as well as clear next steps, ensuring that actions taken have a positive impact on classroom practice and pupil outcomes.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

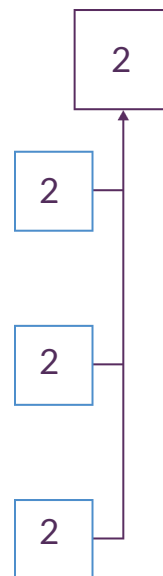
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

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 are enthusiastic and active participants in class and whole-school celebrations of the word, singing with joy, confidence and genuine emotion. They speak clearly about how prayer and liturgy influence both the wider life of the school and their own behaviour, demonstrating a developing understanding of the role of worship in daily life. Pupils are increasingly aware of different ways to pray; for example, Reception pupils participate reverently in whole-class meditation. Across the school, pupils show a secure knowledge of the liturgical year and can explain the use of liturgical colours from a young age. They are confident in leading and evaluating prayer and liturgy, using feedback to shape future worship experiences. Older pupils plan independently, drawing on the Let Us Pray 2Gether resources when needed, while adults guide younger pupils through the process. All pupils have opportunities to serve as class prayer leaders, a role they undertake with enthusiasm. There are emerging opportunities for creative prayer, which enhance the spiritual impact for pupils both as leaders and as participants.

Systematic planning for prayer and liturgy ensures that key themes are identified weekly across the school, creating coherence and consistency in worship. Daily prayer routines are well embedded, and pupils confidently recite traditional and school prayers at appropriate moments throughout the day. Staff, supported by experienced leaders, guide pupils effectively in planning seasonally appropriate celebrations of the word. The most impactful worship experiences use a thoughtful blend of scripture, silence and music to create a reflective atmosphere. For example, calming piano music helps pupils enter and leave whole-school worship with reverence. Sacred spaces across the school are calm, welcoming

and purposeful. The St Alban's prayer room is used regularly at lunchtimes by chaplaincy groups, supported by staff. However, opportunities for pupils to engage in independent prayer with simple, accessible resources are currently limited. Planned staff prayer is established and linked to significant moments in the liturgical year, strengthening the spiritual life of the whole community. Families are welcomed into their child's prayer life through initiatives such as nativity bags and pupil prayer books. Parents are regularly invited to worship in school and church, including Christmas carol services, Easter celebrations and weekly class liturgies. Parents comment, 'We love being part of the worship and writing our own prayers.'

A clear progression model and policy for pupil-led worship sets out expectations for pupils as they develop confidence and independence in planning and leading prayer. The liturgical year is well mapped and incorporates a wide range of significant events, including the start of the school year, Stations of the Cross, and Masses on key feast days such as the feast of St Alban. School leaders work closely with the parish priest to prepare pupils and families for the Sacraments of First Holy Communion and Reconciliation, strengthening the partnership between school, parish and home. The parish priest also collaborates with leaders to plan a coherent programme of prayer and liturgy across the year, ensuring staff and parents can support pupils effectively. Professional development is carefully planned, particularly for newly qualified or non-Catholic staff, and is delivered in partnership with the diocese and Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust. One new member of staff shared, 'Through professional development, I have gained greater confidence in supporting children to lead their own worship and to deepen their understanding of prayer and mission.' Evaluation of prayer and liturgy is thorough and forms part of a planned cycle. Pupil and staff voice is used effectively to identify strengths and shape next steps for further improvement.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Alban's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	148410
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3903335
Full postal address of the school	Rothbury Avenue, Pelaw, Gateshead, NE10 0QY
School phone number	0191 4693251
Executive Headteacher	Mrs Kate Swaddle
Headteacher or Head of School	Mr Sam Keys
Chair of Governors	Lilian Clay
School Website	www.stalbansgateshead.org
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education 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	27 April 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The Inspection Team

Paul Craig Lead

Ruth Whyte

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