CATHOLIC SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

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

St Nicholas Catholic Primary School

URN: 108029

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Leeds

30 September 2026 – 01 October 2026

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

1

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

1

Collective worship (p.7)

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

1

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference	Yes
The school is fully compliant with diocesan directives	Yes
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

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

- Staff, pupils and parents are united in living out the school's mission of 'Love one another as I have loved you'. This resonates in all areas of school life.
- The highly effective school leaders provide outstanding Catholic leadership. Their inspiring vision ensures high standards and continued improvement across the school.
- The school's Early Years Foundation Stage is exemplary. Pupils at St Nicholas receive the best possible start, through the outstanding learning environment and teaching.
- Prayer is central to the life of St Nicholas. Pupils appreciate and enjoy the regular opportunities to have time to develop their relationships with God.
- The school's special educational needs coordinator and designated practitioner support all staff very effectively with a range of resources and strategies to reduce or remove barriers to learning and meet the needs of all groups of pupils.

What the school needs to improve

- For pupils to clearly articulate the theology underpinning their actions and link these with the demands of Catholic social teaching.
- Provide pupils with regular opportunities to take the initiative in their religious education learning, thereby developing their independence and individuality.
- Pupils and staff to regularly use their creative and artistic skills to enhance prayer and liturgy.

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

1

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

Provision

1

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

Leadership

1

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

Pupils understand and embrace the distinctive Catholic nature of the school. Regular opportunities for pupil voice, alongside a wide range of leadership roles and responsibilities, enable pupils to play an active and meaningful role in contributing to the Catholic life and mission of the school. Pupils feel safe, cared for and loved and greatly value the kind, caring and nurturing staff, whom they identify as a key strength of the school. All pupils know that there is someone they can turn to if they need help or are worried about anything. Pupils actively respond to the demands of Catholic social teaching through their actions and service to others. They willingly take part in fundraising activities and are enthusiastic in their approach to helping others. However, they are less secure in articulating the theological principles that underpin these actions and in explaining how these are rooted in the life and teachings of Jesus. Pupils demonstrate excellent behaviour and have a deep respect for those of other faiths, valuing the expertise, first-hand experiences and insights that their peers bring to the school community. As one pupil remarked, 'We are all part of one team at St Nicholas's school.'

The school's mission statement, 'Love one another as I have loved you', is a lived reality of school life. Staff and pupils understand the mission and demonstrate it through the way they care for and support one another. The school is fully inclusive and welcomes, celebrates and values the presence of those of all faiths and none. Staff provide exceptional pastoral care for pupils and their families, with numerous examples of them going above and beyond to support families within the community. Parents describe the school as 'a family where we feel loved and supported' and comment that 'nothing is too much trouble'. The Catholic character

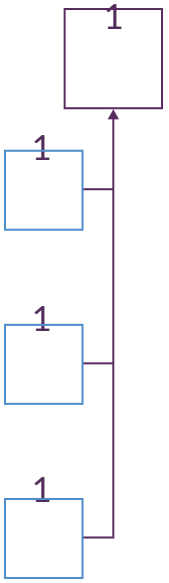
of the school is highly visible throughout the physical environment, with scripture-rich displays and spaces that promote pupils' spiritual and moral development. This is particularly evident in the outstanding provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff value opportunities for their own spiritual and moral development, which are coherently planned into the school calendar and include external support, for example, preparation for Lent and Advent. Provision for relationships, health and sex education meets diocesan requirements and is adapted to meet pupils' needs. Pupils confidently articulate what they have learned and understand how this contributes to their wellbeing.

Leaders and governors ensure that the school's Catholic life and mission are central to all that they do. There is a flourishing partnership between the school and parish. The school regularly visits the church for Mass, while parishioners value opportunities to participate in celebrations in school. Parents have a thorough understanding of the school's mission and greatly value its caring and supportive nature. They feel a key part of the school community through regular opportunities to attend assemblies, parent courses, performances and celebrations of the word. Leaders are inspirational witnesses to Catholic social teaching, demonstrating a strong commitment to the common good and to helping and serving those most in need. While the Catholic ethos of the school is central, subject leaders have not yet worked collaboratively to make stronger connections between their areas of responsibility and Catholic teaching. Governors are ambitious for the Catholic mission and recognise its development as a key part of their role. The effective Catholic Life committee regularly monitors the impact of Catholic life and mission, providing appropriate support and challenge. This monitoring leads to continued improvement in practice. Pupil voice is captured regularly, with key points identified and acted upon.

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

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, understanding and skills that reflect the learning required by the *Religious Education Directory*. All groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well. This results in attainment that is consistently above other core subjects. Pupils are religiously literate and speak confidently about their learning, reflecting spiritually, ethically and theologically using key concepts and subject-specific vocabulary. This reflects the school's commitment to developing oracy and high-quality discussion in religious education lessons. Throughout the school, pupils use 'I wonder' questions to reflect and think deeply. The high standards of oracy were particularly evident in a Year 5 lesson, where pupils expertly discussed different interpretations of a piece of artwork. Pupils enjoy their learning, display consistently high standards of behaviour and are actively engaged in lessons. They produce good-quality, well-presented work using a variety of recording styles. However, pupils do not yet have sufficient opportunities to take the initiative in their learning or choose how to present their work. Pupils have a strong understanding of how well they are doing in religious education, although they are less clear about what they need to do to improve.

Teachers have a high level of subject knowledge and confidence and are assured and authentic in their teaching of religious education. They demonstrate high expectations and communicate these effectively, insisting that pupils produce their very best work. Staff are deeply committed to religious education and speak positively and enthusiastically about how they have developed their practice. Effective questioning is a key strength. Skilful questioning from teachers and teaching assistants develops depth of learning, probes pupils' thinking and

enables explanations to be adapted effectively to meet the needs of all pupils. The outstanding Early Years Foundation Stage provides children with an excellent start to their religious education. Highly engaging teaching and creative provision give children a rich learning experience. Teachers adopt a flexible approach to teaching and use a wide range of resources and strategies to support learning. Highly skilled and effective teaching assistants make a significant contribution to ensuring that pupils, including those with additional needs, are well supported to access and engage with learning. Teachers provide feedback, but this does not consistently enable pupils to identify their next steps or understand precisely how they can improve their learning.

School leaders, including governors, are committed to the continued development of religious education and to providing regular, high-quality support and continuous professional development, encompassing both subject knowledge and pedagogy. The highly effective subject leadership team has an inspiring vision and a high level of expertise, enabling them to provide bespoke and expert support to staff. They are highly valued by colleagues and are recognised as key to their development as practitioners. Monitoring and evaluation are regular, rigorous, supportive and appropriately challenging and have a positive impact on the quality of religious education throughout the school. The curriculum for religious education is enhanced by educational visits and retreats, regular visits from the parish priest and Catholic Care and thoughtfully planned and resourced forest school provision. Religious education is imaginatively and thoughtfully planned to meet the varying needs of all pupils. The special educational needs coordinator and designated practitioner provide highly effective support to staff through a range of resources and strategies that reduce or remove barriers to learning. A flexible approach to teaching is adopted, informed by staff's strong knowledge of pupils and their individual needs.

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

Experiences of prayer and liturgy provided by the school engage pupils deeply. Pupils value opportunities to be still and spend time with God. During celebrations of the word, pupils are able to reflect in silence for extended periods through guided reflection and response time following scripture readings. One pupil remarked, 'I really enjoy prayer time because it makes me feel calm and close to God'. Pupils also engage well in communal singing, singing worship songs tunefully and with enthusiasm. Their understanding of the liturgical year is developing, although they are unable to explain how it influences the prayer life of the school. Pupils work well with adults to plan and prepare well-constructed prayer and liturgy, demonstrating increasing confidence in taking an active role. Pupils respond respectfully and thoughtfully during times of prayer and liturgy. However, pupils' evaluation of the quality of the prayer and liturgy that they plan is at an early stage of development and does not yet identify improvements to practice. While pupils experience a range of different ways of praying, their ability to name these forms of prayer and articulate their impact on their lives is limited.

The prayer life of the school is clearly evident at St Nicholas. There is a naturally embedded daily pattern of prayer that reflects the rhythm of the prayer life of the Church. Pupils speak eloquently about the creative balance between routine and innovative opportunities to pray. One pupil commented, 'We have set times that we pray but we can pray any time and there are lots of places to pray in our school'. Each classroom has a prayer space, while communal areas, including a well-maintained prayer garden, provide pupils with opportunities for private prayer and reflection. Staff are skilled in helping pupils to prepare well-constructed and reverent prayer and liturgy. Scripture passages are expertly chosen to reflect the themes of

celebrations of the word and support meaningful reflection. Although these celebrations are well constructed, there is scope to develop more creative elements, such as drama, dance and music, to enhance the experiences of participants. There are numerous opportunities for families and parishioners to share in and contribute to the prayer life of the school, including weekly Mass and assemblies, regular performances and special celebrations. One parent remarked, 'The various opportunities to come to school and share in these celebrations has developed and strengthened my own faith'.

Leaders have established a clear policy for prayer and liturgy, which is regularly reviewed and provides a helpful reference point for staff. The school also has a comprehensive, progressive strategy that develops pupils' skills and participation in leading prayer and liturgy across the school. Pupils regularly lead celebrations of the word and, by the end of Key Stage 2, do so with high levels of independence and confidence. Regular monitoring, including by governors, has a positive impact on the quality of prayer and liturgy across the school. Staff readily provide examples of how well-tailored support has developed and improved their practice. Professional development includes training focused on liturgical formation. Staff's spiritual and moral development is prioritised through staff meetings and twilight sessions, with effective support from external providers. The school calendar and timetable clearly identify and prioritise opportunities to celebrate the Eucharist, holy days of obligation and saints' days, alongside opportunities for pupils to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Pupil voice, particularly through the school chaplaincy team, is regularly used to enhance the quality of celebrations. For example, pupils' requests for more opportunities to sing during celebrations of the word were quickly acted upon and incorporated into the school's pattern of prayer.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Nicholas Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	108029
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3833375
Full postal address of the school	Oakwood Lane, LEEDS, LS9 6QY
School phone number	0113 2930318
Headteacher or Head of School	Mrs Jane Burns
Chair of Governors	Mrs Jenny Stuart-Collins
School Website	www.stnicholasprimaryleeds.org.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non Selective
Age-range of pupils	4 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	21 June 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The Inspection Team

Christopher Power	Lead
Fiona Parker	

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