



## St Paul's Catholic Primary School

URN: 116487

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Portsmouth

05 February 2026 – 06 February 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

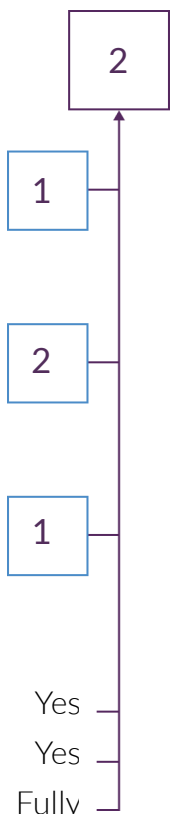
##### Collective worship (p.7)

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

- Pupils thrive in a faith-filled community, where they are happy, confident and secure and actively contribute to its Catholic life and mission. Inclusion is central to school life, with pupils and staff living out the mission to 'do everything with love'.
- The headteacher provides inspirational, Gospel-rooted leadership, which permeates all levels of leadership and results in a united community driven by Gospel values and the school's mission.
- Pupils enjoy their learning in religious education and approach lessons with great interest.
- Pupils engage deeply in prayer and liturgy, responding with reverence and enthusiasm to a rich and varied programme that nurtures spiritual growth.
- Leaders plan and deliver an engaging, inclusive programme of prayer and liturgy, enabling all members of the community to participate meaningfully in worship.

## What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that all pupils consistently understand how well they are doing in religious education and what their next steps are.
- Strengthen teachers' confidence, subject knowledge and age-appropriate pedagogy in religious education so that teaching is consistently strong and enables all pupils to make consistently good progress.
- Support pupils to articulate more clearly how prayer and liturgy can lead to action.

## 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

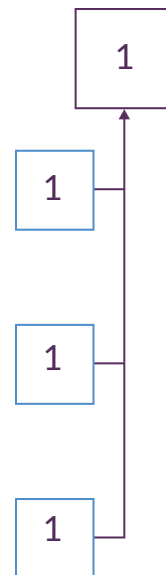
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### 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 at St Paul's are exceptionally happy, confident and secure within their school community. They have a strong understanding of and commitment to the school's distinctive Catholic identity and mission statement and are determined to 'do everything with love'. Pupils' active and enthusiastic participation significantly enhances the Catholic life and mission of the school. All pupils spoken to expressed a strong sense of belonging, stating that they feel safe, valued and cared for, describing the school as a place where 'everyone matters' and where 'we must love one another'. Pupil voice is highly effective and inclusive, with all pupils confidently involved in decision-making through structured opportunities such as Choseday Tuesday, whereby the whole school gets to vote on a suggestion every week. Behaviour throughout the school is exemplary. Pupils are welcoming and readily engage with visitors and with each other. They willingly take on the myriad of leadership roles, known as the St Paul's Missionaries with alacrity and pride, for example, the St Paul's Guardians lead charitable initiatives, supporting organisations such as Mary's Meals, Cafod and Sophie's Legacy, while other pupils serve effectively as Relational Leaders, CST ambassadors or play leaders. To further strengthen this outstanding practice, pupils should be supported to articulate more explicitly how their actions are rooted in theology and the school's mission.

All staff wholeheartedly embrace the school's mission statement and consistently implement it across the whole of school life. They describe the school as warm, forgiving, compassionate and inclusive, where children are given 'a second, third and fourth chance, just like God gives us.' The school provides the highest level of pastoral care and there is an explicit and concrete commitment to the most vulnerable, demonstrated through strong, trusting relationships

with families, regular pastoral meetings informed by teachers' insights and the visible presence of staff for parents. One parent described how the school's support led their family to begin the RCIA programme. An embedded culture of welcome ensures that every individual is celebrated as unique and special. Provision such as St Anne's enables pupils with complex needs to access all aspects of school life seamlessly, for example, joining in with the whole school singing practice. Catholic social teaching is woven explicitly through the life of the school and is regularly referred to in worship and lessons, with the principles displayed prominently throughout the school.

Leaders and governors are inspirational witnesses to the Gospel and compelling ambassadors for the school's mission. The headteacher is highly regarded by the whole school community and is seen as a visible and supportive leader who nurtures relationships and enables others to flourish. One parent described her as 'an amazing headteacher who supports her staff and parents tremendously'. Governors say their ambition is that the school is a place where God is encountered daily and prayer is second nature. Leaders and governors fully embrace and actively promote the principle that Catholic schools are at the service of the local church and links with the parish are exceptionally strong and mutually supportive. The parish priest plays an integral role in school life, visiting at least weekly to support prayer and liturgy, model high-quality worship, contribute to staff formation and train altar servers. School staff in turn are catechists in the parish for the first holy communion programme. The school has highly successful strategies for engaging parents and carers, such as inviting parents to work alongside their children and offering half-termly parent circles. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school, with one commenting, 'I cannot recommend more highly the opportunities for involvement, caring and nurturing that are supportive of the Catholic faith for both my children and myself.'

## 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

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

Religious education is valued highly by pupils and staff and makes a strong contribution to the Catholic character of the school. Pupils enjoy their learning in religious education and approach lessons with great interest, consequently, they make good progress in knowing more and remembering more. They are mostly actively engaged in lessons and speak confidently about their learning. This was evident during observations, for example, when pupils in Year 5/6 classes participated thoughtfully in partner talk while exploring the great commission, and when pupils in a Year 1/2 class discussed their God-given talents with enthusiasm and respect. Pupils produce good quality work which is consistently well presented across all year groups. Books are clearly valued by pupils, reflecting their understanding of respect and reverence within religious education. One pupil commented, 'If our books were not neat, it would be disrespectful to Jesus.' Although pupils are confident that their teachers celebrate their work, they are less sure about what they need to do to improve. Leaders should ensure that all pupils clearly understand how well they are doing in religious education and what their next steps are.

Provision in religious education is strengthened by the varied approaches used by teachers to meet the differing needs of pupils. In a Year 3/4 lesson on the Transfiguration, for example, some pupils were using widget symbols to enhance their understanding of key vocabulary, while others were supported by teaching assistants. Teachers provide pupils with regular opportunities to express their learning in a range of ways, including alternating written work with practical activities and pupils said they particularly enjoyed learning through drama and

drawing, alongside written tasks. While there are examples of strong practice across the school, some teachers are less confident, for example, using language or strategies that are not always appropriate for the age and abilities of the children. Leaders should now ensure that all teachers who deliver religious education have a consistently high level of confidence, subject knowledge and age-appropriate pedagogy, so that all pupils make strong and sustained progress over time. Teachers recognise the significant contribution religious education makes to pupils' moral and spiritual development and in many lessons, pupils are given time to reflect thoughtfully on their learning and on how it applies to their lives.

Leaders and governors ensure that religious education is comparable to other core curriculum subjects in terms of professional development, resourcing, timetabling and staffing and the quality of work in religious education is held to the same high expectations as English, reflecting the value placed upon the subject within the school. The subject leader has a clear vision for the subject and has successfully secured teaching that is consistently good. Leaders ensure that religious education is effectively planned to meet the needs of different groups of pupils and inclusion is at the heart of the school's work, with many strong examples seen, such as the use of widget symbols and the inclusion of religious education within bucket time and its integration into the school's St Anne's Learning Provision. Staff speak highly of the well-planned programme of professional development, which includes half-termly staff meetings, high-quality input from the parish priest and a thorough induction programme for new staff. This contributes positively to teachers' understanding of the curriculum and supports the delivery of religious education across the school. Leaders should ensure that self-evaluation is consistently accurate and rigorous, enabling best practice to be shared more widely and driving sustained whole-school improvement in religious education.

## Collective worship

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

### Collective worship key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

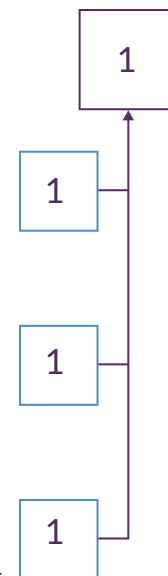
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

#### 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



The experiences of prayer and liturgy provided by the school engage pupils deeply. Across all age groups, pupils demonstrate reverence, confidence and spiritual maturity, appropriate to their age. In Reception, for example, children reflected prayerfully in silence on 'how to be kind today,' showing an early understanding of prayer as personal dialogue with God. By Years 5/6, pupils were able to demonstrate notable stillness and depth of reflection as they considered how to live out the Beatitudes in their own lives, articulating thoughtful and personal responses. Pupils work collaboratively with staff and peers to plan and lead creative, well-constructed acts of worship. Prayer leaders show initiative and commitment, preparing meaningful contributions and supporting younger pupils with sensitivity and confidence. For example, older pupils modelled leadership in worship in a Year 1/2 class by clearly proclaiming prayers and demonstrating how to respectfully place a heart in the prayer basket. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the Church's liturgical year and confidently explain how it shapes the prayer life of the school, including the symbolism of Ash Wednesday, Lent and Advent. To further strengthen worship, pupils should be encouraged to articulate more explicitly how prayer and liturgy inspire them to action, clearly linking worship to living out their faith in daily life.

Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school and are planned with exceptional care, offering a rich and varied experience of the Catholic tradition. Acts of worship reflect the liturgical year and include celebrations of the word, Eucharistic Adoration for Corpus Christi, the Liturgy of the Hours, and the Stations of the Cross during Lent. Staff are inspiring and prayerful role models who lead and participate in worship with confidence, reverence and

authenticity. Their exemplary practice sets a strong standard and has a significant impact on pupils' engagement and spiritual growth. This was evident in a Year 3/4 act of worship where pupils reflected deeply on the Beatitudes and identified how they wished to live out these values in their own lives. The school makes imaginative and highly effective use of its space to support prayer, including the rosary garden and creation garden. A highlight is the school's prayer corner which is staffed by prayer leaders every lunchtime and is an inviting and reflective space well used by pupils. The school should now plan how to appropriately identify and use the creative and artistic skills of staff and pupils to enhance prayer and worship. As a music lead school, this could include being a lead school for liturgical music.

Leaders, especially the inspirational prayer and liturgy leader, plan the school calendar and timetable to ensure frequent opportunities to celebrate the Eucharist and key liturgical events. There is a Mass every fortnight, which is appropriately adapted for pupils, for example through shorter homilies and the use of the children's Eucharistic Prayer. Leaders place the highest priority on inspirational professional development for all staff, with a strong focus on liturgical formation and the confident planning of prayer and liturgy. Senior leaders model exemplary practice through shared planning, joint observations and high-quality feedback. This approach is mirrored in the formation of pupil prayer leaders, ensuring consistency and high expectations. Evaluation of prayer and liturgy is rigorous and ongoing, with pupils playing an integral role, contributing meaningfully through joint observations, reflective discussions and decision-making. Emerging priorities are clearly identified and addressed through targeted training, such as the recent focus on proclaiming the Gospel. To further enhance this provision, leaders should continue to broaden the range of prayer experiences and ensure both staff and pupils are trained to a consistently high standard.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Paul's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	116487
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8515207
Full postal address of the school	Bourne Road, Portsmouth, PO6 4JD
School phone number	023 9237 5488
Headteacher or Head of School	Mrs Zoe Killick
Chair of Governors	Mr Jonathan Hallatt
School Website	<a href="http://www.st-pauls.portsmouth.sch.uk">www.st-pauls.portsmouth.sch.uk</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non Selective
Age-range of pupils	2 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	02 July 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

## The Inspection Team

Michael Lobo Lead

Roxanne Ashworth

## 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