



St Helen's Catholic Junior School

URN: 136977

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Brentwood

30–31 January 2025

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

1

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 general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

Compliance statement

- The school uses the required scheme of work and allocates at least 10% of curriculum time to the teaching of religious education.
- There are no additional requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- The school has continued to address improvements from the previous inspection, developing the self-evaluation process and working with organisations beyond the school to moderate religious education assessments.

What the school does well

- The leadership team embraces the Church's mission in education, inspiring pupils to be agents of change and hope.
- Pastoral care for pupils across the school is exceptional and as a result, pupils build positive relationships and behaviour is exemplary.
- Pupils have a strong awareness of how to live out their faith and are actively engaged in supporting those in need.
- Teachers use a range of creative activities in RE lessons which the children enjoy and for which they show great enthusiasm.
- Pupils lead prayer and worship demonstrating a strong understanding of how to follow Jesus.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop and embed rigorous systems for detailed monitoring, analysis, and self-challenge to enhance self-evaluation in Catholic life and mission, religious education, and prayer and liturgy.
- Establish a consistent, whole-school approach to assessment, feedback and marking to enhance pupil progress.
- Provide a wider variety of prayer opportunities to further enrich pupils' spiritual experience and engagement across 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

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

1

The mission statement is deeply embedded in daily life, shaping the experiences of every pupil. They not only know it by heart but actively refer to it when reflecting on their actions and school life. It is a truly lived mission, evident in the way pupils speak, learn, and support one another. Inspired by St Helen, they develop a profound sense of faith and purpose, recognising that their time in school helps them build a strong relationship with God, and they are proud of this. One Year 3 pupil shared, 'I am not a Christian, but I am made to feel like I am unique and special.' A deep commitment to Catholic social teaching is evident in all aspects of school life. Pupils clearly articulate how their actions, rooted in Gospel values, 'make God happy.' Through house groups, pupils choose local, national and global charities to support, using fundraising to actively live out the principles of justice, compassion and service. Across the school, there is a genuine sense of love, care, and responsibility for one another. Pupils instinctively offer comfort, welcome new peers with warmth, and support one another in times of need. Their behaviour is exemplary, and they take ownership of their role in fostering a joyful, faith-filled community.

The mission statement, brought to life by the leadership team, underpins the school's strong sense of community, service and faith. Staff are dedicated to their vocation, actively shaping the school's Catholic ethos and guiding pupils in virtues and values. Their commitment and impact are a source of pride, fostering a welcoming environment where pupils and families feel a true sense of belonging. One parent shared how, within a year of joining, they have seen a profound and positive impact on their child. Staff serve as exemplary role models, nurturing respectful relationships and ensuring every child is valued and celebrated. This is evident in inclusive practices, such as the celebration of the Hindu community in the Year 5 assembly. The school's pastoral care is a significant strength, reflecting its distinct Catholic identity. The school

environment visibly bears witness to the Catholic faith, with displays highlighting Catholic social teaching and school virtues. Chaplaincy is central to school life, providing rich opportunities for spiritual and moral development. The Ten:Ten programme ensures that relationship, sex, and health education meets both statutory and diocesan requirements, reinforcing the school's commitment to the formation of the whole child.

Following a leadership change, the revised mission statement has strengthened the school's sense of purpose and identity. Leaders and governors clearly articulate the mission, ensuring Christ remains at the heart of the community. Policies and practices reflect unity, faith and service. The school maintains a close partnership with the diocese, with leaders and governors engaging in ongoing training and formation. Parish links continue to grow, enriching the school's Catholic identity. The parish priest is well known to pupils, and events like the recent 'Pilgrimage of Hope' to the cathedral deepen their faith. Parents are integral to the school, attending Masses, assemblies and coffee mornings which enhance their engagement in Catholic education. They enjoy using the family prayer resources which one parent states has 'helped them to start to pray together as a family.' The Ethos Team is establishing strategic direction, focusing on effective monitoring and analysis to drive improvements. Pupil voice is valued, with leadership responding thoughtfully to their ideas. Extensive professional development and staff induction programmes have supported positive change. New staff feel welcomed, valued, and well-trained, recognising their role in bringing the headteacher's vision to life. Catholic social teaching is embedded, shaping a community of faith and service.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

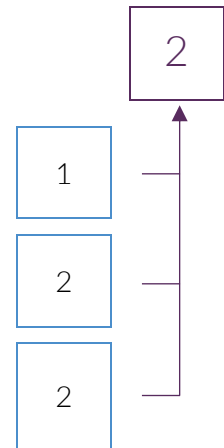
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 demonstrate a strong ability to recall and build upon prior knowledge, fostering deep engagement and understanding. Their religious literacy is excellent, as seen in their written work, which reflects ethical thinking and a secure grasp of key concepts. The use of precise religious vocabulary and the ability to articulate learning confidently further highlight their high attainment. Independence in learning is impressive, with pupils taking the initiative and embracing challenge. High-quality discussions, collaborative tasks, and active learning ensure pupils remain highly engaged, supporting their ability to refine and extend their thinking. The excellent presentation in books reflects the pride pupils take in their work, and their enthusiasm for learning is evident. Pupils are able to talk about how they have made progress over time. The ability to use scripture effectively highlights pupils' depth of understanding, as demonstrated by Y6 pupils linking their learning to the principles of Catholic social teaching, religious virtues and the school's behaviour charter and mission statement, highlights their depth of understanding. Pupils' enjoyment and passion for learning result in exemplary behaviour and sustained high performance. End-of-key-stage data confirms consistently strong attainment, aligning with other core subjects and showcasing the school's commitment to high-quality religious education.

Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and confidence in delivering religious education. All staff are highly committed; they know the teaching expectations of the leadership team and they communicate this effectively to their pupils. While formal assessment systems are still developing, planning builds on prior learning, allowing pupils to progress well. Teachers use questioning effectively, including 'big questions' at the start and end of topics, to deepen pupils' understanding and encourage reflection. In some classes, 'I wonder' questions further support their personal growth and engagement with their faith. The

school promotes a growth mindset, encouraging pupils to take an active role in their learning by asking and answering questions. Teachers provide written feedback, often including praise, which pupils find motivating. Opportunities for structured reflection are included in many lessons, helping pupils consider how their learning influences their daily lives. Book scrutinies show a wide variety of learning activities are planned for, such as letters, adverts, drama, and extended writing, ensuring an engaging curriculum. Teachers make thoughtful adaptations to ensure accessibility for all pupils, and teaching assistants are used effectively to support those with additional needs. Overall, religious education is well-planned and delivered, creating a positive and reflective learning environment.

Religious education is well-embedded within the school and holds a high status, comparable to other core subjects in terms of professional development, resourcing, and timetabling. The implementation of the *Religious Education Directory* is progressing well, with full adoption in Year 3 and training underway for Year 4, following a clear plan for whole-school implementation. Staff benefit from regular professional development, including sessions delivered by the subject leader, who also shares insights from diocesan training to enhance practice. Despite being new to the role, the subject leader is already making a significant impact, demonstrating a clear vision and strong leadership. Their passion for the subject is evident, positioning them well to drive further improvements, such as the implementation of a consistent and impactful approach to marking, feedback and assessment to ensure greater pupil progress. Learning is well-sequenced, with high-quality activities that support all pupils in deepening their faith and understanding. Enrichment activities further enhance engagement, for example, pupils drawing inspiration from a local parish priest's story of vocation. The school has also forged strong links with the neighbouring Sion community. Monitoring of religious education takes place regularly, with the subject leader reviewing teaching, planning, assessment, displays, and workbooks. This process helps to identify areas for further development and informs next steps to continue strengthening the religious education curriculum and provision across the school.

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

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

2

Pupils actively and joyfully engage in the prayer and liturgical life of the school, with enthusiastic participation in communal worship. Their uplifting singing, particularly of the school hymn they helped to create about St Helen, enhances these experiences. They demonstrate a strong understanding of the liturgical year, confidently discussing the significance of prayer during Lent and Advent, and sharing ideas for prayer during the Jubilee Year of Hope. All pupils take part in planning and leading liturgy, with clear progression evident. Younger children, with less experience, respond well to the prompts provided, while older pupils use the four-part planning template confidently. Pupils are proud of their ministry and the role they play in leading worship. They are beginning to evaluate prayer experiences to help improve future sessions. Pupils make meaningful connections between their learning and personal prayer life, often referring to their spiritual journey books to articulate what inspires them to pray. They value time spent in prayer, recognising its power and expressing a deep sense of trust in God, as one pupil shared, 'I know God and Jesus will always be there for me.'

Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school, with staff committed to thoughtful planning that supports pupils' spiritual development. Scripture and music, carefully chosen to reflect themes and the liturgical season, are integral to all acts of worship. The headteacher's assemblies introduce new virtue focuses using real-life examples, drama, and questioning to encourage pupil reflection. Staff guide pupils in planning and delivering age-appropriate celebrations of the Word, ensuring progression as they move through the school. They are keen to improve pupils' skills in leading prayer and liturgy, with senior leaders using their detailed knowledge to support this development. Music, visuals, videos, and drama techniques, such as freeze-frames, enhance prayer experiences, while art images are sometimes used as a focal point for reflection. Well-maintained prayer spaces in classrooms, corridors, and the

school hall provide pupils with opportunities for quiet reflection. Masses are celebrated both in school and within the parish, strengthening the link between school and the wider faith community. Parents appreciate the school's efforts in supporting them as the first educators of their children in the faith and speak positively about the inclusive and welcoming nature of worship opportunities.

Leaders and governors have a clear vision for prayer and liturgy in the school and a strong understanding of pupils' capabilities. The school calendar is carefully planned by the headteacher and ethos team to ensure Masses are celebrated on holy days of obligation and other key occasions, including the feast of St Helen. The prayer and liturgy policy supports staff, particularly new members, in planning meaningful worship experiences. Ongoing professional development provided by the subject leader has strengthened staff confidence, leading to increasingly effective pupil-led prayer and liturgy. Leaders and governors are committed to upskilling staff, ensuring appropriate resources and budget are allocated to enhance prayer and liturgy across the school. Teachers use Ten:Ten resources for assemblies, which always begin with the mission statement and include scripture, prayer, and hymn singing. Many governors attend and actively participate in prayer and liturgy; they engage with pupils and talk with Liturgy Leaders about their role in worship activities. These insights from visits to the school are shared at formal meetings. To further develop prayer experiences, leaders now need a clear strategy for introducing a wider variety of forms of prayer, including creative worship, reflection, and spontaneous prayer. Additionally, embedding the evaluation of prayer and liturgy within the school's self-evaluation and improvement cycle remains essential.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Helen's Catholic Junior School
School unique reference number (URN)	136977
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8815253
Full postal address of the school	St Helen's Catholic Junior School, Sawyers Hall Lane, Brentwood, CM15 9BY
School phone number	001277213962
Headteacher	Liam Daley
Chair of governors	Barry Fitzgerald
School Website	www.st-helens-jun.essex.sch.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Helen's Catholic Junior School Academy
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	7-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	6 November 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Mrs Laura White

Lead

Mrs Christine Curtis

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