CATHOLIC SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

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

St Stephen's Catholic Primary School

URN: 111310

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Liverpool

07 October 2026 – 08 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

- Highly effective partnerships with the parish make a significant contribution to the Catholic life and mission of the school. These strong links enrich pupils' faith formation, deepen their religious literacy, and foster a lived understanding of discipleship within the wider Catholic community.
- The staff provides exemplary witness to the school's Catholic mission, by nurturing a prayerful community where pupils and families are supported to flourish.
- Effective collaboration with local cluster schools enhances staff subject expertise and contributes significantly to the quality of curriculum provision. This enables the sharing of best practice, strengthens teaching, and enriches pupils' learning in religious education.
- Pupils and staff show a deep understanding of the importance of prayer, engaging with acts of worship with reverence and enthusiasm.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary, reflecting the school's values and creating a calm, purposeful learning environment.

What the school needs to improve

- As a key contribution to Catholic life, encourage more pupils to independently participate in and lead spontaneous prayer in the communal spaces already set aside for stillness and reflection.
- Strengthen governors' strategic oversight of religious education through more rigorous and regular participation in monitoring and evaluation activities.
- Increase pupils' capacity to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of prayer and liturgy, enabling them to contribute more fully to its ongoing improvement.

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 are deeply committed to the Catholic Life and mission of the school and demonstrate an excellent understanding of what it means to live as disciples of Christ. The mission statement is central to school life and is understood and embraced. Pupils speak confidently about being "versions of Jesus" and remaining "faithful to Him", demonstrating how values shape their attitudes, relationships and actions. The pride and reverence with which pupils sing the mission statement song reflects the extent to which its principles are embedded across the school community. Pupils make a significant contribution to the mission through their commitment to service and the common good. They articulate clearly how Catholic social teaching influences their actions and identify ways in which they support those in need. The work of the Mini Vinnies is a strength, with pupils supporting charities including St Rocco's, CAFOD and the local foodbank. A tangible sense of belonging permeates throughout the school. Pupils describe themselves as part of "one big family", reflecting a culture of welcome, inclusion and mutual respect. The system of house teams promotes unity and shared purpose, enabling pupils to work collaboratively as Pilgrims of Hope. Pupils from other faith backgrounds feel valued, respected and fully included, which contributes positively to the school's distinctive Catholic character.

Provision for Catholic life and mission is a strength. The mission statement is highly visible and permeates every aspect of school life. It is more than a statement of intent; it is lived authentically. Pupils and staff confidently articulate what it means to "love, learn and live like

Jesus", demonstrating the extent to which the school's mission shapes relationships and decision-making. The commitment of staff to the dignity and flourishing of every pupil is exemplary. They recognise and respond effectively to the needs of the whole child, ensuring that pupils, regardless of their background or starting point, are known, valued and supported. Consequently, they feel safe, respected and cherished. Pastoral care is a significant strength and reflects the school's unwavering commitment to human dignity. There is an inclusive culture where care and support are prioritised. From the moment pupils enter school, they encounter a welcoming environment characterised by compassion and concern for their wellbeing. Relationships across the school are exemplary and witness powerfully to the Gospel values. Staff lead by example through their active participation in the prayer life of the school. Parents are positive about the school and recognise its commitment to going above and beyond. The provision for relationships, sex and health education meets the requirements of the archdiocese.

Leaders ensure that the needs of pupils and their families are at the heart of Catholic life and mission. This commitment is evident in the decisions made, the support provided and the culture that is created, where children are known, valued and nurtured. Consequently, they flourish within a community that reflects Gospel values authentically and consistently lived. Leaders have established highly effective partnerships with the parish, which significantly enhance the school's Catholic identity. The parish priest is a visible and valued presence within the school, working closely with leaders to support pupils' faith development. Pupils speak enthusiastically about his involvement and appreciate the way he makes faith meaningful, relevant and accessible to their daily experiences. The formation of staff is given high priority. Leaders provide a carefully planned programme of professional development throughout the year, ensuring that staff are equipped to make committed and wholesome contributions to the school's Catholic mission. Staff show dedication in their continued pursuit to understand and offer their best service to Catholic life and mission. New staff are well supported through coaching, lesson modelling and regular opportunities to observe and share best practice. As a result, there is a strong culture of collaboration, professional growth and collective responsibility for sustaining and developing the school's distinctive Catholic character.

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

Outcomes in religious education are effective because pupils demonstrate a deepening knowledge and understanding that is securely embedded over time. The thoughtful implementation of the Religious Education Directory, strengthened through regular review and highly effective collaboration with cluster schools, ensures that learning remains ambitious, relevant and responsive. Pupils speak with confidence and conviction about their learning. They draw readily on prior knowledge, make meaningful links across topics and use religious vocabulary with precision. Their ability to recall key concepts reflects the impact of systematic revisitation and demonstrates that knowledge is retained and built upon effectively. Pupils show intellectual curiosity, asking insightful questions that deepen discussion and enhance understanding. The quality of pupils' engagement is a notable strength. They participate enthusiastically, demonstrate genuine enjoyment in their learning and are eager to share their knowledge with peers, staff and leaders. This positive attitude contributes significantly to the high standards achieved. Work in books evidences consistently strong outcomes. Presentation is of a very high standard, reflecting pupils' pride in their work and the high value placed on religious education by both staff and pupils. Creative approaches enable pupils to express understanding in varied and meaningful ways. Combined with exemplary behaviour and effective feedback, this ensures pupils thrive and achieve well in religious education.

The quality of provision in religious education is effective, enabling pupils to make consistently good progress and develop a secure understanding of religious concepts. Teachers demonstrate thorough subject knowledge and a passion for religious education which contributes significantly to pupils' engagement and achievement. Staff are committed to their professional development and are well supported in refining their practice. This culture of continued improvement has a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Teachers have high expectations and show a commitment to ensuring progress. Assessment information is used effectively to identify pupils who require additional assistance or challenge, and teaching is adapted accordingly. As a result, pupils are well supported to make progress from their starting points. A strength of provision is the quality of teacher questioning. Staff use skilled and purposeful questioning to deepen pupils' thinking, develop religious literacy and promote theological reflection. Pupils confidently engage with complex ideas, debating and justifying their views with maturity and conviction. Learning is enriched through thoughtfully planned activities and resources that are tailored to pupils' needs and informed by pupil voice. Consequently, pupils demonstrate high levels of engagement, listen respectfully to others and confidently articulate their own opinions. This enables religious education to make a substantial contribution to pupils' intellectual, spiritual and moral development.

Leadership of religious education demonstrates a clear commitment to securing excellence for pupils. Leaders place a strong emphasis on professional development, creating a culture in which staff continually undertake high-quality professional development. There is collaboration within the local cluster which is disseminated strategically and used effectively to strengthen provision across the school. This ensures a consistent approach to improvement. The religious education leader is an inspirational and highly respected practitioner who manages the subject with passion, vision and commitment. Her dedication to pupils and the wider community is evident in the quality of provision and the confidence of staff. Alongside the headteacher and leadership team, she has fostered a culture of support, collaboration and ambition. This has resulting in strong staff morale and a shared commitment to the Catholic mission of the school. Leaders have developed a curriculum that is ambitious, responsive and continuously evolving. Careful collaboration with local schools has strengthened provision, particularly in Years 5 and 6. This has ensured learning meets the needs of the community. Leaders know their pupils exceptionally well and ensure planning is adapted to enable pupils to access and respond to learning successfully.

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

1

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

Pupils demonstrate a strong understanding of the purpose and impact of worship. They engage reverently and prayerfully, with sacred silence being a particular strength. Pupils consistently show respect and attentiveness, creating a reflective atmosphere that enables meaningful encounters with scripture and prayer. As a result of regular engagement, pupils are able to articulate how scripture influences their daily lives and inspires them. They confidently make links between the themes explored in worship and those encountered during children's liturgy and Mass. This demonstrates a secure understanding of the relationship between worship, scripture and Catholic life. Pupils have a well-developed knowledge of liturgical symbols and understand their significance within prayer and worship. They contribute thoughtfully to the creation of prayer focal points, within classrooms, selecting appropriate symbols with independence and confidence. The impact of worship is evident in pupils' actions and attitudes. They can clearly explain how they have responded to scripture through acts of service and their commitment to the school's "Go Forth" mission. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the ways in which scripture has inspired them to make a positive difference in their communities and the wider world. As a result, they are growing as reflective individuals who understand how worship shapes their relationship with God and influences their actions towards others.

Provision for collective worship reflects a commitment to developing pupils' spiritual and liturgical formation. A carefully planned programme of prayer ensures that pupils experience

a rich range of opportunities for worship that are appropriate to their age and stage of development. These include celebrations of the Word, parish and school Masses, and joyful occasions of praise and worship. Scripture is central to the school's provision. Themes are thoughtfully linked to the Sunday gospel, ensuring that pupils encounter the word of God. The strong partnership with the parish priest enriches this provision and supports staff in planning worship that is both authentic and engaging. As a result, prayer and liturgy is firmly rooted in the liturgical life of the Church. Staff demonstrate confidence in leading prayer. Effective coaching and collaboration across key stages, ensures that high-quality practice is shared and continuously developed. A wide range of resources are used creatively to deepen pupils' understanding of scripture, enabling them to engage with Gospel messages in a variety of ways. Pupils are well supported to participate respectfully and confidently through the use of appropriate liturgical responses and actions. Partnerships with families and the parish community make a valuable contribution to provision. They are warmly welcomed to participate in celebrations and acts of worship.

Leaders demonstrate a commitment to ensuring that prayer and liturgy is central to the life and mission of the school. Inspired by a clear Catholic vision, leaders have created a prayerful community where worship is integral to daily life and reflects the school's mission. The highest priority is given to developing opportunities for meaningful encounters with God, resulting in a culture where prayer is valued, understood and celebrated. Leaders provide inspirational leadership, ensuring that prayer and liturgy permeates every aspect of school life. Strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation are highly effective, leading to continuous improvement. Leaders have secured a shared understanding amongst staff of the purpose of prayer and liturgy, resulting in consistently high-quality provision across the school. Pupils take some roles in leading the preparation and delivery of worship. They demonstrate confidence and maturity when planning liturgies and selecting scripture. As a result, acts of worship are often pupil-centred while remaining reverent and authentically Catholic. Pupils can sometimes speak about the impact that prayer has on their spiritual development and their relationship with God. Governors provide support and some challenge and are kept informed frequently by the leadership team of key priorities for continuous improvement. Worship is authentic, inclusive and highly engaging, with the school's Catholic mission evident in the commitment and participation of the whole community.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Stephen's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	111310
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8773410
Full postal address of the school	SANDY LANE, WARRINGTON, WA2 9HS
School phone number	01925 630100
Headteacher or Head of School	Mr Steven Hatton
Chair of Governors	Mrs Joanne Lawton
School Website	ststephenscps.com
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	
Age-range of pupils	4 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	28 January 2020
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The Inspection Team

Sarah-Jane Carroll-McKevitt	Lead
Joanne Harrison	

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