



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for  
**Blessed John Duckett Catholic Primary School,  
 Tow Law**

URN: 148916

Carried out on behalf of the Rt Rev Stephen Wright, Bishop of the diocese of Hexham and Newcastle on:

Date: 05 October 2023

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 curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

## Summary of key findings

### What the school does well

- Pupils fully embrace the Catholic life of the school; they value greatly the opportunities they are given and have a deep sense of their own self-worth.
- The school has excellent links with its local parish and community that enrich the opportunities for all children.
- Parents are very supportive of the school; they value greatly how caring and nurturing the staff are and how pupils look after one another.

- The commitment of the headteacher and religious education leader to the continuous development of the school is highly regarded and appreciated by all stakeholders.
- Pupils take great pride in their work in religious education and talk about their enjoyment and enthusiasm for the subject.

What the school needs to improve:

- Embed self-assessment practices across the whole school so that pupils know what they need to do next to improve their own learning.
- Develop the effective questioning and retrieval strategies of all staff to a consistently high standard 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:.....

1

### 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



Pupils fully embrace and value the experiences and opportunities that the Catholic life of the school offers them. They describe a deep sense of self-worth and the importance of always helping others through the principles and values of Catholic social teaching. The pupils describe feeling well-loved and feeling part of a close family and community. Through well planned and embedded links to the local church and community, the children thrive and understand their value and their important place in society. Pupils talk about being involved in different groups in school such as Mini Vinnies and the Inter Faith Council. They show great respect to each other and to all staff and this is evident through the caring and nurturing nature of the older children with the younger ones. Pupils are actively and fully engaged in the chaplaincy opportunities offered; they take pride in the development and leading of their faith through social, environmental, and fund-raising opportunities with the local community.

Pupils are able to discuss the Trust's virtues and the school mission statement, 'Moving forward together', and how this helps them grow and learn as one family and be united as one team. There is a strong sense of pride from the children in the school and they discuss how it is very important to them that everyone feels welcome. One pupil said, 'Everyone is welcome in our school. We accept everyone'. The staff are excellent role models for the pupils to emulate. The pastoral care and support enable all children to grow in a very nurturing and safe environment. The understanding and commitment of staff to truly understanding the uniqueness of each child and the support they need to develop is a strength of this school. Pupils talk about how they are happy and excited to come to school and one pupil said, 'It's because we all know we belong here'.

Leaders, governors, and the parish priest are exceptionally passionate and committed to the role that they play in developing and strengthening the pupils' understanding of the Church's mission and the opportunities that this presents. The links made by the leadership team, staff, governors, and pupils with the local parish and priest are exemplary. The parish priest stated that he works so closely with the school he felt 'like a colleague in close partnership with the staff, pupils, and school community'. Leaders have fostered excellent relationships with parents who say the school is 'an amazing place'; parental surveys are overwhelmingly positive. The school has ensured that it knows its community and families well and this has allowed them to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils receive the appropriate nurture, love, and support. Professional development of all staff in Catholic life and mission has been very well-planned to meet the development needs of the school. It is clear that professional development has been plentiful, in many forms, and of high quality for all staff members. Staff talk in detail about the strong support they receive from the religious education lead and how his help and encouragement allow them to develop their skills and knowledge to the highest standards. Pupils, parents, staff, governors, and the parish priest all discuss with great enthusiasm and respect the role the headteacher has played in leading the school with a clear faith-based vision which holds Christ at the centre.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

1

### Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

1

### Provision

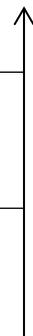
The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

2

### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....

1



Pupils achieve well in religious education at this school. Pupils discuss how they enjoy their lessons, and they make excellent progress from their individual starting points. Behaviour for learning is strong across school and the work in books is well presented and of a high standard. During a lesson observation pupils could skillfully recall previous knowledge that they had learned and use it to build upon their next steps in their learning. Pupils are motivated and engaged within their lessons and show true enthusiasm for religious education. Pupils enjoy discussing their learning and in one lesson, they were able to skillfully use many resources, including the Bible, to develop links to their learning. As pupils are becoming more mature, they are able to discuss their learning in more depth, making links to scripture. The pupils can also discuss in depth the demands of religious commitment including the vocation of a priest due to their learning experience when the priest spoke to the children as part of their religious education lesson. Pupils are guided by effective marking and feedback. To further strengthen this area and help pupils identify next steps in their learning, self-assessment practices are being introduced across the school.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and know their pupils well. New staff are well supported by the religious education lead and headteacher to ensure that all staff are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to plan and deliver well sequenced lessons. Teachers ensure that lessons are planned well and pitched to the age groups and abilities of the children in their classes. Despite some challenges based around small class sizes and mixed age classes, staff work hard to ensure all pupils make good or better progress in their lessons from their starting points. In one class the use of strong questioning techniques, alongside carefully scaffolded retrieval questions that guided children into their new learning,

was skillfully done. This ensures all pupils, regardless of starting points or ability, keep up with the lesson. Staff are working to ensure that this exemplary practice is embedded across the whole school and in every classroom. There is a strong culture of working together to ensure all lessons are of at least a good standard across the school. A termly newsletter entitled 'RE news' informs parents about all things related to the Catholic life, religious education, and prayer and liturgy happening in school that term. Support staff work well with teachers and are skillful in the way they support the teaching and learning of religious education in class. Leaders ensure that the curriculum meets the requirements of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory 2012*. The professional development linked to the subject is well planned and designed to meet the needs of staff and pupils as identified in school improvement planning.

The subject leader and headteacher work hard to ensure a thorough, comprehensive, and well thought-out plan for the professional development of staff is in place. The subject leader has been meticulous in his monitoring of teaching and learning and he supports staff well in helping them to improve the quality and provision of the religious education in their classes. Through effective school improvement planning, the headteacher has identified the strengths and next steps for the school so that it can continue to thrive. Leaders have a clear vision for religious education. The curriculum is well resourced, carefully timetabled and staffed. It is comparable with core curriculum subjects in relation to the timetable, resources, and professional development.

## 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



Praying together in many different forms fully engages all pupils and they are able to articulate how the prayer life of the school reflects the seasons of the liturgical year. Pupils say that they frequently pray in a variety of ways and that they are given many opportunities to lead prayer across the school year. Pupils show great reverence and confidently participate in their times of prayer, which are varied and engaging. Meditation is fully embedded in the daily life of the school and all pupils, even the youngest, fully participate and are deeply engaged. Pupils discuss in detail how prayer and the celebration of the word are integral to school life and how this is taken into the community. For example, the children have been involved in a local community wildlife project. From this experience the pupils were able to embed this into the prayer life of the school by writing their own celebration of the word based on Laudato Si'. There was clear evidence in floor books of reflection and evaluation of planned prayer times and celebrations of the word so that pupils could use this to grow and develop their faith further.

The importance of prayer and liturgy is central to the daily life of the school. The school has timetabled throughout the week many opportunities for children to develop their faith and spirituality. Various prayer styles are used including music, mediation, use of scripture, prayer stations, and reflective focal points. Staff are excellent role models for pupils in leading prayer and they are highly skilled in supporting pupils to confidently lead their own prayer and liturgy. Scripture is at the core of all prayer opportunities and is used to reflect the liturgical year and to also scaffold pupils' deeper thinking. The close and exemplary links to the local parish and parish priest enhance and support the pupils and staff to develop their spirituality and faith to a deeper level. Pupils show great enthusiasm when discussing the opportunities provided at church and in school through the

strong links with the parish community and they are clear about how much they value this. The older pupils talk in detail about the parish priest's vocation and how prayer is central to his calling and how it helps him. They reflect that this has helped them to understand how prayer can support them in their daily lives too.

Leaders plan carefully to ensure that the school's prayer and liturgy is closely linked to the liturgical year. Leaders ensure that staff and pupils have access to many resources. The Trust also provides high quality online resources that staff, pupils, and parents can access to support the prayer life of the school further. Leaders provide all staff with many opportunities of quality professional development to enhance the provision of prayer further. They work hard to ensure that all staff feel fully supported in the planning and leading of prayer and liturgy, and in supporting pupils to do the same. Leaders are role models of strong practice for staff and pupils in planning and providing high quality acts of worship. Leaders ensure that all pupils regularly have the opportunity to develop the skills at an age-appropriate level to participate in prayer and liturgy as they progress through school. As a result, pupils lead high quality acts of worship and prayer, in many various forms, confidently and reverently. Leaders have in place a detailed action plan to ensure the provision is always reviewed and evaluated so that no opportunities to improve further are missed.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	Blessed John Duckett Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	148916
Full postal address of the school	Smith Street, Tow Law, Bishop Auckland, County Durham, DL13 4AU
School phone number	01388731082
Name of head teacher or principal	Jenna Ellison
Chair of governing board	Elizabeth McGurk
School Website	<a href="https://blessedjohnduckett.bhcet.org.uk/">https://blessedjohnduckett.bhcet.org.uk/</a>
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	3 to 11
Trustees	Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	November 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

## The inspection team

Sonia Fraser	Lead inspector
Lisa Hoey	Team inspector

## 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