



## St Benet Biscop Catholic Academy

URN: 141814

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Hexham & Newcastle

22 January 2026 – 23 January 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

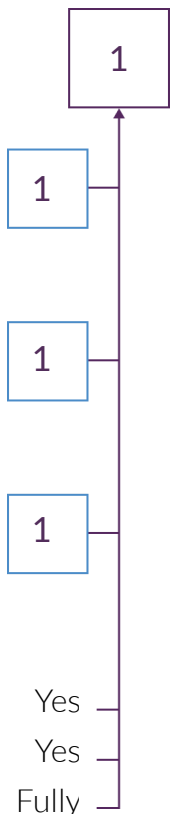
##### Collective worship (p.7)

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

- The Headteacher has a clear and transformational vision for the Catholic life and mission of the school. This is lived out through the RISE values which are deeply embedded at the heart of the school and lived out by all staff and students.
- There is a wide variety of chaplaincy and enrichment opportunities on offer for students and staff, which allow students to develop spiritually and holistically.
- Lessons in religious education are outstanding because they are creative, engaging and inspiring to the students that they teach.
- Students in religious education know what they are attaining, how to improve and receive exceptional support to make progress.
- Leaders passionately instil a deep love of prayer and liturgy within the students they serve. This leads to acts of worship that demonstrate creativity and student-leadership, which truly inspire students into action.

## What the school needs to improve

- Provide opportunities for students in Key Stage 4 to understand and clearly articulate how Catholic social teaching underpins the social action that they do.
- Ensure that students and staff can clearly articulate the key times of the liturgical year and that they are able to explain their deeper meaning.
- Embed the new Prayer and Liturgy Directory across all key stages.

## 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



Students understand, value and strive to live out the school's RISE values which are authentically and deeply embedded across the entire school. Inspired by Isaiah 60, students state that the RISE values encourage excellent behaviour and are deeply rooted across both the academic curriculum and personal development programme. Students embrace the wide-array of engaging enrichment opportunities on offer ranging from Chaplaincy Club to Just Dance to Warhammer society. Societies support the holistic development of students who willingly attend with enthusiasm and excitement. They love attending this school and state that they are 'proud to belong here'. Students of all faiths and none expressed that they feel 'valued, welcome and cared for'. There is a genuine culture of respect for all students, staff and for the wider community. Students are keen to live out the Catholic life and mission of the school through a truly impressive range of social action projects that make a powerful difference on a local, national and international level. Many students are aware of Catholic social teaching however students in Key Stage 4 are not able to articulate the theology behind it. Students actively participate in both the Faith in Action and Pope John Paul II Award and additionally, the thriving Chapel Club is having a tremendous impact upon both the students who attend and the wider community that it serves.

Staff are exemplary witnesses to the school's RISE mission. They are inspirational in their desire to live out the school's mission, as a result they provide a wealth of opportunities for development of every students' faith. Students state that their staff are 'supportive' and 'with

us every step of the way'. Pastoral care is robust and the school works hard to ensure that every student at this school is supported, loved and cared for. Students from other faith traditions and none feel that staff ensure they too belong here and that their faith needs are well-catered for. The provision of spirituality drop down days is an inspiration. Students speak with passion about retreats such as going to the beach to build Holy Trinity sandcastles. This has made them grow in love with and develop respect for the Catholic faith. Significant investment has been given to the school's Catholic environment, such as the student-led creation of impressive stained-glass windows for the chapel. The school's spirituality co-ordinator has invigorated the chaplaincy provision, leading to a school chaplaincy that is thriving and vibrant. The relationship, sex and health education programme is faithfully planned and deeply rooted in the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Leaders ensure that the Catholic life and mission of the school is lived, loved and evident across every aspect of the school. Leaders demonstrate a genuine and exemplary love of the Catholic faith. This is infectious and inspires staff and students to develop along their own faith journeys. Leaders are selfless and inspirational in their service to the diocese and to Catholic education nationally, supporting the training of future Catholic leaders, leading Catholic teacher training and serving in the Catholic Schools Inspectorate. The Headteacher stated that this role is 'her vocation and mission; it is where God intended me to be'. As a result, faith is at the heart of everything that takes place here. Governors are steadfast in their passion for developing the Catholic life and mission of the school. They demonstrate incredible devotion, offering constant support and challenge. Care for staff wellbeing is outstanding, as a result staff state that they 'love working here', 'it is a family' and that they 'feel appreciated'. Staff retention is admirable. Self-evaluation systems are rigorous and purposeful, which has led to rapid improvement in the Catholic life and mission of the school.

## 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

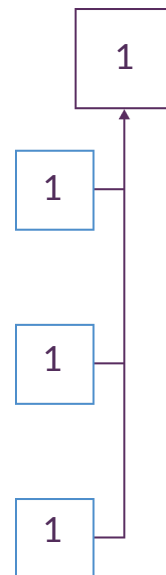
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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



Students love their religious education lessons. They feel 'appreciated, respected and welcomed' by their teachers. Students state that the support from their religious education teachers is outstanding commenting 'nothing is ever too much for their teachers'. Religious education lessons are vibrant because they are creative, engaging and stimulating. Teachers use a wide-array of activities including drama, freeze frames, music, multi-media and debates which leads to students being passionate, fully engaged and inspired to study this subject onto A Level and beyond. The new *Religious Education Directory* has been thoughtfully and imaginatively embedded with challenge, creativity and relevance at its heart. Students understand their attainment, know how to improve and receive excellent verbal and written feedback from teachers. As a result, students make strong progress in relation to other core curriculum subjects in the school. Exceptional engagement in religious education lessons leads to a climate for learning across all lessons that is outstanding and purposeful. Students are enthused to learn and behave excellently. They demonstrate high levels of theological literacy and appreciate the space for spiritual and moral development commenting that they particularly love their 'chapel lessons' which enhance the spiritual formation of all students.

Teachers in religious education demonstrate exceptional pedagogical and subject knowledge. They are a team of outstanding subject specialists who work cohesively to inspire and challenge all of their students. Therefore, all lessons are well-structured, well-resourced and stimulating. Teachers in the department demonstrate an infectious passion for their subject,

this helps to foster a love of religious education amongst their students. The holistic development of every student is at the forefront of curriculum planning. As a result, opportunities are regularly sought out to provide moments for spiritually enriching students such as through the wide variety of guest speakers that they have the opportunity to meet as part of the curriculum. Examples of this include prison chaplains, Royal Navy chaplains through to members of other faith communities such as Buddhism. These experiences give students the opportunity to explore a wide-range of vocations and engage in inter-faith dialogue. Teachers of religious education demonstrate exceptional questioning skill, this leads students to develop deeper answers and respond with well-justified answers rooted in scripture. Assessment in religious education is well-planned, strategic and helps students to identify their own progress and how to improve. Feedback is purposeful, informative and relevant.

The subject leader has an ambitious and inspiring vision for the subject; this motivates her team who share her vision for exceptional teaching and learning. The department has been on a rapid journey of improvement, one that has been guided and supported by the Senior Leadership Team who provide regular support to ensure the highest standards across the subject. This is reflected in the improving examination results and has led to impressive uptake at A Level. Religious education truly is the 'core of the core curriculum' at this school, it receives full parity with other core subjects in terms of staffing, capitation and timetabling. Teachers in the department have access to regular diocesan-level and trust-level professional development, this ensures that their staff continue to demonstrate exceptional subject and pedagogical knowledge and skill. Leaders have carefully planned a sequential curriculum that is both theologically challenging, engaging and also deeply relevant to the needs and context of the students in the school. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum inspires students to live out their faith and demonstrate the Gospel values that they study which is evident through students' eagerness to engage in a wealth of social action initiatives offered by the school.

## Collective worship

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

### Collective worship key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

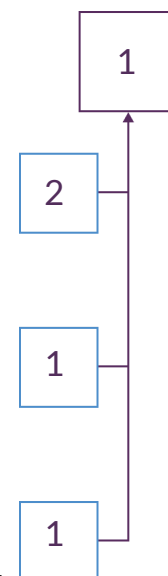
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

#### 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



Students respond with great enthusiasm to opportunities for prayer and liturgy. They enjoy the opportunity to work with the spirituality co-ordinator to plan, create and lead interesting and thought-provoking celebrations of the word. Students spoke with enthusiasm about leading other tutor groups in their year group in these celebrations and there was an impressive number of students who were eager to take on leadership roles. Students of all faiths recognise the importance of prayer and embrace the opportunity for quiet reflection stating that it 'inspires them for the day ahead'. Through prayer and liturgy, students grow in understanding and appreciation for key issues around the world and can link their daily prayers to the school's RISE values which lie at the heart of everything that goes on here. Students speak with great enthusiasm about the variety of prayer at St. Benet Biscop such as Motivational Mondays and Tuesday Choosedays. As a result, students feel invigorated by the prayers they engage in and the variety of ways they get to pray. Whilst some students can articulate key times in the liturgical year, this is not consistent across all key stages.

At St Benet Biscop prayer and liturgy is truly central to the daily life of all students and staff. Prayer is enshrined at both the start and end of every day. Every morning begins with one of five different styles of prayer and ends with a 3:13pm prayer. This leads to students and staff experiencing regular moments of reverence and having the opportunity to grow in their faith and understanding of a variety of types of Catholic prayer. The new *Prayer and Liturgy Directory* is beginning to be embedded currently; however, this must be rolled out across all

key stages. Staff are very creative in their approach to prayer, encouraging students to engage in the creation of prayer doves, lenten butterfly prayers and prayer planes. This leads to staff and students being enthused and excited to engage in prayer. Students spoke with great pride about the opportunity to work as a form group to plan and deliver student-led celebrations of the word. Staff ensure that students and staff of all faith traditions and none, have the opportunity to participate whilst being respectful to the differing faith needs of their community.

Leaders including governors, place the highest emphasis on the development of prayer and liturgy. Rigorous self-evaluation has ensured rapid improvement in the school's outcomes and provision of collective worship. The prayer and liturgy policy of the school is meaningful, well-formulated, regularly reviewed and relevant to the school's context. They have ensured that prayer and liturgy is central, authentic, inspiring and engaging. For example, leaders have enshrined a termly spirituality day, this allows the entire school community to come together to worship every term and demonstrates the school's exemplary commitment to ensuring that all students have regular opportunities to engage in prayer and liturgy. The new leadership team have invigorated the prayer and liturgy of the school using their masterful skill. For example, the quality of professional development offered to staff is exceptional and this support is offered constantly throughout the year. As a result, staff feel very supported in being able to deliver high-quality, opportunities of prayer within form time. Resourcing and timetabling for prayer and liturgy are outstanding, ensuring that there are no barriers for any students or staff to engage in prayer and liturgy.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Benet Biscop Catholic Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	141814
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9294632
Full postal address of the school	Ridge Terrace, Bedlington, Northumberland, NE22 6ED
School phone number	01670 822795
Headteacher or Head of School	Mrs Suzanne Lewis-Dale
Chair of Governors	Mrs Christine Mills
School Website	<a href="http://www.st-benetbiscop.org.uk">www.st-benetbiscop.org.uk</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust
Phase	Academy
Type of school	Non Selective
Admissions policy	11 - 18
Age-range of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	29 March 2023
Previous denominational inspection grade	Requires Improvement

## The Inspection Team

Andrew James Young Lead

Thomas Gillingham

Rose-Marie Rochester

## 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