

St Polycarps Catholic Primary School

URN: 147429

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Diocesan Administrator of Arundel & Brighton

25 February 2026 – 26 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

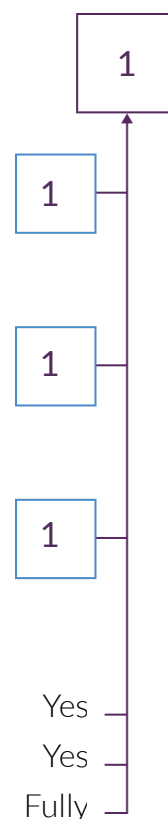
Collective worship (p.7)

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



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Yes

Yes

Fully

What the school does well

- This is a deeply inclusive school where all pupils are highly valued, known and loved.
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- This school is a family and all members treasure belonging to it.
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- Leaders and staff set consistently high expectations, fostering a culture of hard work and perseverance.
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- Leaders communicate and embed clear, effective approaches to teaching and learning, resulting in strong outcomes in most classes and high levels of religious literacy.
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- St Polycarp's is a beautiful place to 'play, pray and learn together.' All members of the community value the school, its grounds and its special places to pray.
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What the school needs to improve

- Ensure consistently high-quality religious education provision across all year groups so that expectations, challenge and outcomes are consistently strong in every class.
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- Strengthen the provision for prayer and collective worship, modelling and staff training to ensure consistently high- quality experiences that include scripture and opportunity for reflection.
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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

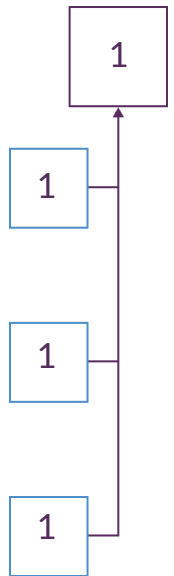
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



St Polycarp's is an inclusive school, built on authentic kindness. Pupils are confident and articulate in expressing their school's mission. They understand and live the mission statement, 'We play, pray, love and learn together.' This is a school community where everyone is welcomed and made to feel valued. Pupils are happy and feel safe within a loving environment that is carefully fostered for them. The mission is visible in daily routines and relationships. Pupils readily explain how 'play, pray, love and learn together' shapes the way they speak to one another, resolve friendship issues, and include those who may feel unsure. Pastoral care is a significant strength and a lived experience which is visible in the daily actions of this school. Prayer is a natural part of the rhythm of the day, and pupils engage with it reverently. They talk with sincerity about how prayer and acts of kindness help them to grow in virtue and to become the people God calls them to be. Pupils, according to their age, have an awareness of the demands of Catholic social teaching. Pupils actively participate in charitable giving. Each year group supports a chosen charity, and pupils are involved in deciding how they will help.

The school is beautifully inclusive: all pupils, whether Catholic or not, are encouraged and supported on their faith journey through prayer, liturgy, and acts of service. One pupil shared, 'this is a Catholic school, but everyone's religion is cared for, I enjoy it here.' All pupils participate respectfully in prayer and liturgy, and they are confident that their own beliefs are treated with dignity. The school ensures that everyone can take part meaningfully, while maintaining a clear Catholic identity. Wider charity work includes support for Mary's Meals and the Catholic Children's Society, the latter of which has been undertaken to support

families within the school community. Parents value this, with one commenting, 'the children are encouraged and shown that they have a place to do good in the wider community.' Pupils see it as their responsibility to serve others and relish opportunities to do so. Pupils recognise that this is not only the right thing to do, but also part of what God calls them to live out in their daily lives. The Pupil Chaplain is a superb role model. He takes great pride in his responsibilities, demonstrating exemplary pupil leadership. He supports prayer and liturgy with confidence and helps other pupils to take on leadership roles with enthusiasm.

Staff are highly committed to the Catholic life and mission of the school. This is reflected in their commitment to Catholic social teaching. They are mindful of their responsibilities to pupils and to the wider community, including St Joan of Arc parish in which the school is situated. Relationships across the school community are strong. Parents comment on how easy it is to settle into this welcoming school and how readily they can speak to a member of staff about any concerns as soon as they arise. Staff work as a cohesive team and support one another well. They speak positively about working at the school and live out the mission in their daily practice, their overarching aim being to help raise pupils who are 'proud, kind and inclusive Catholics.' Staff know pupils exceptionally well and understand how best to support individual needs. All pupils are shown love and respect, and this is reflected in the way pupils treat others. Personal, social, health and economic education and relationships and sex education are highly effective in keeping pupils safe and are rooted in the teachings of the Church and undertaken with a rich understanding of the school's context and support of the parental community. Leaders ensure that provision is sensitive, age-appropriate, and consistent with the school's mission.

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

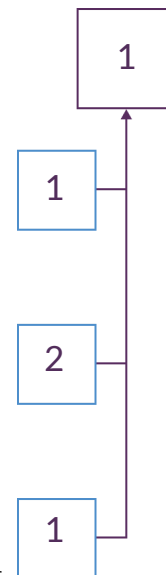
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



The *Religious Education Directory* is taught across the school. Pupil outcomes in most year groups are excellent. Pupils demonstrate a deep understanding of religious education through their lesson contributions and the work in their books. Pupils are religiously literate and make links to prior learning. They confidently retell and reference stories from the Bible and apply this knowledge to their own lives. For example, one pupil explained that the ashes used on Ash Wednesday reminded him that Adam was created from dust. The consistent use of 'I wonder...' questions, from the youngest to the oldest pupils, enables pupils to explore learning more deeply. This also helps them to speak confidently about their ideas. Pupils are supported and challenged at all levels. Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils participate actively in lessons and make good progress. They talk with pride about their learning in religious education and describe these lessons as special. Many pupils spoke about feeling calm during religious education lessons. They value the opportunity to share their thoughts and opinions. Pupils demonstrate strong retention of knowledge through the assessment for learning tasks built into each lesson. As a result, pupils build securely on prior learning and make sustained progress over time. Religious education for all pupils is planned and resourced well. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is a shining example of inclusive practice. These pupils are valued members of the school community and are thriving.

The majority of teachers demonstrate a high level of confidence in the teaching of religious education, appropriate to the phase in which they are working. They are committed to providing lessons that are engaging and inspiring, and they are supported well by leaders

within the school. There is a clear culture of sharing best practice and celebrating success. Most teachers use questioning effectively to move pupils on in their learning and to deepen their understanding. The school should ensure that this strong practice is consistent across all year groups. There is a clear and consistent strategy for retrieval that is embedded across the school. Live feedback is used well to help pupils understand what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve. This approach motivates pupils to try harder and to make further progress in their learning. Teachers are fully aware of the impact they can have on their pupils' spiritual and moral development. They take this responsibility seriously and create meaningful opportunities that enable pupils to flourish. Resources across the school are of a high standard and are used effectively by all members of staff.

Leaders and governors work cohesively and share a clear vision for religious education at St Polycarp's. They operate effectively as a strong team and strive to improve. Implementation of the *Religious Education Directory* is well advanced and effective, making it the heart of the school curriculum. Leaders have established clear and robust arrangements for ongoing monitoring and evaluation. Religious education has full parity with other core subjects in timetabling, staffing and resourcing. Governors provide robust strategic support and challenge, ensuring that religious education is well resourced and rigorously monitored. Professional development for staff is wide-ranging, regular and effective. A variety of training opportunities take place at school, Trust and diocesan level. Staff speak highly of its quality and relevance, and the impact of high-quality training is evident in classroom practice. The curriculum is enriched thoughtfully. Opportunities such as liturgical dance and liturgical art deepen pupils' learning and engagement. Strong links with the Xavier Catholic Education Trust and other Catholic schools help pupils to live out what they learn in religious education through well-planned enrichment and partnership activity.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

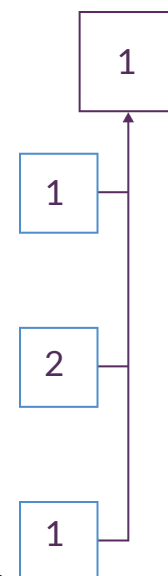
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

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



Pupils' responses to collective worship demonstrate value and understanding. They engage in the experience of worship and are prayerful and respectful. This is an embedded and highly valued feature of school life. Pupils have a secure knowledge of the liturgical year and talk with confidence about its meaning. They participate wholeheartedly in singing, and they appreciate opportunities for quiet reflection within a varied programme of collective worship. Pupils contribute confidently to the prayer life of the school. For example, during a Key Stage 2 celebration of the word, pupils created Lenten promises and fashioned them into a class rosary for the season of Lent. In worship through song, pupils spontaneously composed thoughtful new lyrics to a familiar hymn. Acts of collective worship have a positive impact on those taking part. Pupils articulate that prayer helps them feel calm. In Key Stage 1, pupils composed spontaneous prayers in response to their Lenten promises. There is a strong emphasis on how faith informs action, evident in collective worship and lived out in the respectful way pupils treat and value one another.

There is a planned daily pattern of prayer rooted in the Catholic tradition. Scripture is used well and, where this is strongest, pupils not only reflect on the passage but relate it meaningfully to their own lives. The school should ensure that scripture is always central to collective worship and that leaders consistently help pupils to connect the Word of God to daily choices. Music and singing enhance the carefully created prayerful atmosphere. The most skilled leaders use questioning that prompts reflection and inspires pupils to put faith into action. To secure consistency, this strong practice should be shared across the school. Pupils increasingly take responsibility for planning and leading prayer. They select music,

write prayers of the faithful and choose symbols that support the theme. Staff ensure worship is accessible for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that everyone can participate with dignity and joy. Prayer spaces are beautiful and well resourced. Pupils know where they can go for quiet prayer and many expressed confidently that they can pray 'wherever we want—even in our head.' Families feel welcomed and are invited to participate in liturgical celebrations. The partnership with the parish is excellent and valued by pupils, staff, parents and the parish priest. The school sits at the heart of the parish's mission to form the next generation.

St Polycarp's has a well-written policy for prayer and liturgy. Supported by leaders, staff are confident in leading acts of worship that engage pupils and invite genuine reflection. There is a clear progression of skills from early years to Year 6, where pupils, guided by their teachers, confidently prepare, plan and lead their own acts of worship. The programme for collective worship is comprehensive and provides a varied calendar of celebrations across the year. Key moments, including holy days of obligation and the celebration of sacraments such as First Holy Communion, are integral to school life. Leaders prioritise these experiences, which contribute significantly to pupils' spiritual formation. Leaders have a strong understanding of the place of prayer in the Christian life and how it shapes daily choices. This understanding is central to school practice and rooted in the Catholic tradition. The high value placed on prayer and liturgy fosters a sense of belonging and family among pupils, staff, parents and governors. Self-evaluation is clear and effective. Strengths and areas for development are accurately identified and acted upon promptly. St Polycarp's keeps Christ at the centre; this is evident in the quality of relationships throughout the community.

Information about the school

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| Full name of school | St Polycarps Catholic Primary School |
| School unique reference number (URN) | 147429 |
| School DfE Number (LAESTAB) | 9363424 |
| Full postal address of the school | Waverley Lane, Farnham, GU9 8BQ |
| School phone number | 01252 716307 |
| Headteacher or Head of School | Martyn Peebles |
| Chair of Governors | Martin Parr |
| School Website | www.stpolycarps.surrey.sch.uk |
| Trusteeship | Diocesan |
| Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable) | Xavier |
| Phase | Primary |
| Type of school | Academy |
| Admissions policy | Non Selective |
| Age-range of pupils | 4 - 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Date of last denominational inspection | 09 July 2019 |
| Previous denominational inspection grade | Outstanding |

The Inspection Team

Sarah Norville Lead

Paul Barber

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 |