

# St Nicholas Catholic Academy

URN: 149132

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Liverpool

19–20 March 2025

## 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

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

2

## Compliance statement

- St Nicholas Academy is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' conference.
- St Nicholas Academy is fully compliant any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- St Nicholas Academy is compliant in relation to previous areas for improvement, namely the consistent use of the skills words to drive progress.

## What the school does well

- Pupils are the best ambassadors for St Nicholas in their welcome, behaviour, kindness and acceptance of each other.
- St Nicholas' daily work at inclusivity and its genuine welcome for all its families, diverse in culture and faith.
- A clear vision for Catholic life and mission led passionately by the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- A shared understanding of service in a community which is highly transient yet manifestly united in being outward-looking.
- The Governors and Trust are highly skilled and provide decisive direction and support. They are passionate in their role as guardians of the mission.

## What the school needs to improve

- Use the skills words consistently across school to better drive progress in pupils' work.
- Further develop staff skills in leading meaningful liturgies allowing for more silence and reflection.
- Support pupils with greater responsibility for planning and evaluating prayer and liturgy as they progress through 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

#### 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



The sense of welcome is evident as you enter St Nicholas Catholic Academy. Whilst the school community is a mix of faiths and cultures, the Catholic culture is evident in the planned environment and the atmosphere lived by all. The Mission Statement is at the heart of the community and is reviewed regularly as the school recognises its particular mission to a constantly changing community. It is diverse, dynamic, welcoming and very much, nurturing. At St Nicholas, all work hard for the flourishing of all. Families are welcomed and pupils are soon integrated into the school's life. The CAFOD and Eco clubs demonstrate a desire by pupils to serve others and care for our common home. This is further evidenced by the generosity of pupils willing to support others through being stewards and their many charities, including Wear Blue for Bobby, the NSPCC, and Zoe's place. Staff too, support charities and are personally generous in their support for families in need in the school community. Pupils feel valued and are extremely well behaved and proud of their school. They recognise that they are made in the image and likeness of God.

The mission is at the heart of all that the academy provides. It challenges pupils to have, 'an appetite to make a difference.' The unique charism is expressed by all members of this community; whether adult or child. Staff share this commitment and are proud of their role. They feel, 'called to be here'. Termly mission reviews, reinforce the sense of belonging in this 'diverse, nurturing and dynamic community, faithful to Jesus.' St Nicholas Academy goes the extra mile to welcome and value each member of the community. This includes daily acts of kindness but also provides practical support, particularly in times of the greatest need. Pupils spoke about how all are welcome here and 'just be who you are.' Consideration is given to all pupils to ensure that they have what they need to flourish. Relationships in this unique family

are key to its success. There are close connections to local clergy, including the chaplain, who relishes his service to the academy. Relationships, sex and health education follows diocesan requirements and is faithful to Church teaching.

Leaders at all levels clearly articulate the Church's mission in education and are fastidious in exercising their duty as guardians of the Catholic life and mission of the academy. Christ is at the heart of the academy. Leaders follow the example of Jesus. Governors expressed their belief that the headteacher and deputy headteacher are examples of 'leadership with humility'. One governor commented that 'The Mission Statement is not so much formulated as lived: a living document.' Leaders engage with the archdiocese for professional development but also providing their services. The headteacher actively promotes ways to involve parents in the life of the school both through formal events and informal invitations. He provides a daily welcome each morning and is available to parents. Catholic social teaching is woven into the fabric of school life and expressed by pupils of different faiths. The academy is part of St Joseph's Catholic Multi-Academy Trust. This Trust is part of a national project, Building the Kingdom, aimed at weaving Catholic teaching throughout the curriculum. This is innovative. The wellbeing and dignity of staff is a priority of leaders and staff know that they are valued. They know the 'door is always open' to them. Governors, supported by the Trust, are highly ambitious and knowledgeable as evidenced in their passion and dedication to aspire to the very best for the pupils. Leaders are actively involved in self-evaluation and are rigorous in their pursuit of progress. Governors shared that the academy is a 'shining example of an inclusive community.'

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

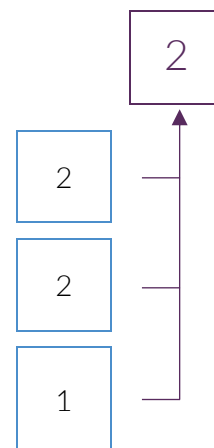
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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 enjoy religious education lessons and make good progress from their varying starting points. They engage readily in answering questions about the subject. Behaviour is very good across the school both in class and at breaktimes. Pupils are considerate of each other's needs and celebrate their diversity. Pupils, supported by strategies such as 'paired talk', can share their ideas. For the most part, their books are well presented and show variety in activities getting to the heart of the desired learning. Pupils are proud of their work and they find religious education lessons enjoyable, 'I'm Muslim and I like RE, I like learning about God and other religions.' And from another child, 'RE helps us not to hurt each other's feelings and do better in society.' Pupils understanding of how to improve would be further enhanced with feedback which reflects the intended skills word. This is evident in some classes in both the teacher input and in the pupils' work, but a more consistent approach would be beneficial to all.

Teachers are fully committed to the teaching of religious education and recognise its importance as central to the curriculum. This understanding is clearly communicated to their pupils who speak about how much they enjoy their lessons. Lessons are planned to meet the needs of all learners, understanding the diversity of the community in which they serve. This is evident from the youngest children in the early years who happily engaged in learning and demonstrated sound subject knowledge because their teachers put much thought into their plans. Pupils are empowered to celebrate their own faith and experiences and all learn from each other. For example, a Muslim family was invited to share their experiences of Ramadan. Inclusivity is at the heart of all lessons and learning. Questioning is effective but, in some lessons, there were missed opportunities to develop further understanding and correct misconceptions. Feedback is in line with school policy. Pupils make strong links between religious education and moral decision making because their teachers make explicit reference to living out their faith.

Leaders, governors and the Trust are dedicated to religious education and communicate the understanding that this is core to the curriculum. All teaching is faithful to the Religious Education Directory. The teaching of religious education holds an extremely high profile in the attention of all leaders. Governors and members of the Trust are actively involved in school visits and monitoring. There is a clear commitment to the teaching of religious education in St Nicholas by all leaders and in all aspects of resourcing. Professional development is ongoing and systematically organised both internally, at Trust level and by engagement with the archdiocese. The subject leader has an inspiring vision for continued improvement. He is relentless but mindful that improvements are planned in a timely fashion in order to ensure that new developments are fully embedded before moving on. Leaders at all levels, fully conscious of the pupils at St Nicholas, ensure that lessons are thoughtfully planned to meet the needs of each pupil. There are many opportunities for enrichment, particularly with the proximity of the cathedral, which is relished by parish and school. Additionally, St Nicholas make use of being in the city to visit other places of worship including the Greek Orthodox church, the mosque and synagogue. Self-evaluation is a shared focus for leaders at all levels, and challenge is evident and leads to effective action.

## 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

Across all classes, pupils are respectful and reverent during prayer and liturgy experiences provided by the school. In the best examples, they can reflect in silence and join in the responses confidently. They readily join in with communal prayer and it is of note that pupils respond according to the way they choose to participate. In class celebrations, pupils show pride in supporting prayer and liturgy experiences by taking part in preparing the focus table and showing reverence for the word of God. When invited, pupils further engage by adding items of importance to the focus tables. Pupils participate in preparing whole school liturgies and are keen to have active roles. They enjoy prayer time together and are keen to contribute by sharing their reflections. Pupils enjoy using creative spaces such as the prayer garden to engage in personal prayer. A Muslim child was happy to share how she felt supported to pray during lunch times. Pupils' knowledge and skills could be further developed by being given greater responsibility for planning and evaluating prayer and liturgy as they progress through the school. Additionally, the increased space for sacred silence would further the prayerful experience for all.

Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of St Nicholas Academy. Throughout the day, moments of prayer are planned allowing each school member time to reflect on their relationship with God and with each other. This time is enjoyed by all members of the school community and enhanced further by the rhythm of prayer throughout the school day. Appropriate scripture is selected by the subject leader in line with the liturgical year, and due reverence is given by all to the word of God. Teachers are able to use the scripture to lead the pupils in prayer and reflection. Good links are made encouraging all to go forth, renewed in their actions for the common good. Teachers make good use of recorded music to enhance liturgies. Enabling pupils to sing during prayer and liturgies would further benefit the experience. The development of the prayer garden

will be of great benefit in encouraging personal prayer. The priest chaplain is very supportive of the school and regularly celebrates Mass in school. Additionally, classes visit the cathedral half termly to celebrate Mass with parishioners who relish this time of communal worship. Likewise, the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is a highlight of the school calendar.

Leaders and governors have reviewed the school's policy for prayer and liturgy, and this is fit for purpose. Leaders at all levels, including the Trust, regularly review the school's provision and governors participate in school Masses, liturgies and celebration assemblies. The headteacher and religious education leader provide ongoing support for teachers, in providing meaningful prayer and liturgy which reflects the liturgical year. This is clearly a priority for senior leaders in school. Through further evaluation by school leaders, additional support for teachers on how to lead prayer for the pupils, would further enhance their provision. Staff will increasingly join prayer and liturgy as participants rather than teachers. Staff receive professional development from the archdiocese and work in collaboration with each other as well as within the Trust to further develop their knowledge and skills. St Nicholas academy works well with the parish to provide quality sacramental preparation for its pupils. The headteacher, governors and Trust ensure that the school has the resources and budget necessary to facilitate quality and meaningful experiences.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Nicholas Catholic Primary Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	149132
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3412044
Full postal address of the school	St Nicholas Catholic Primary Academy, Orthes Street, Liverpool, L3 5XF
School phone number	0151 709 5532
Headteacher	Paul Ackers
Choose an item.	Maureen McDaid
School Website	<a href="http://www.stnicholasliverpool.co.uk">www.stnicholasliverpool.co.uk</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Joseph Catholic Multi Academy Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	24 <sup>th</sup> May 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

## The inspection team

Alan Saunders  
Louise Byrne

Lead  
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