

Our Lady's Catholic Academy

URN: 140287

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Birmingham

25–26 June 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

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 any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

1

Compliance statement

- This school fully complies with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- This school is fully compliant with the additional requirements of His Grace.
- This school has fully addressed all previous areas for improvement.

What the school does well

- Every member of the Our Lady's community is valued as a unique individual, deeply loved by God.
- Our Lady's shows an exceptionally high level of genuine care, belonging, and unwavering support, which is modelled by all.
- There is a steadfast commitment to inclusion, ensuring that every child is fully supported and valued.
- Parents feel exceptionally well-supported thanks to the school's genuine commitment to working in partnership on their child's education, including prayer.
- It has excellent monitoring systems that ensure rigorous tracking of student progress in religious education and swift identification of any additional support needs.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop pupils' ownership of Catholic social teaching, including gaining the LiveSimply Award.
- Develop teachers' skilful questioning to maximise religious education learning for all pupils, resulting in increased independence.
- Develop staff and pupils' understanding of the proclamation of the Good News in prayer and liturgy.

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community in service to the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

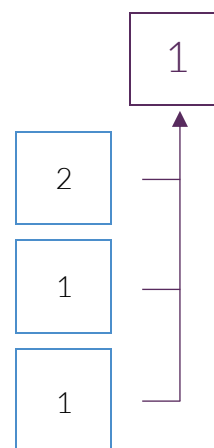
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



Our Lady's Catholic Academy is positively influenced by its mission statement, 'With God, all things are possible,' which guides all actions within the school community. Pupils demonstrate exceptional understanding and commitment to this mission. One pupil explained, 'It is true, if you try and do something hard, Jesus will be right beside you helping you achieve.' Pupils actively engage in Catholic life and mission through various leadership roles, including those in different subject areas and mental health initiatives. They recognise they have a voice that will be heard and can make a positive difference in the world, starting with their school. This is reflected in their exemplary behaviour and concern for one another. The self-evaluation document written by pupils is impressive and reflective, exemplifying the school's genuine belief in enacting pupils' views. Pupils take pride in guided charitable actions, including litter picking in local parks and supporting families in need, thereby demonstrating the principles of Catholic social teaching in action. The strong sense of community and inclusivity is evident in pupils' welcoming attitudes and respect for diversity. Pupils articulate that 'God will be with you at all times'. They demonstrate this through supporting pupils new to the school and respectfully discussing different religions. Pupils speak confidently about the Church's Jubilee Year, typically saying, 'We can use hope to light up the world and inspire others to be great.'

Staff demonstrate exceptional commitment to the school's Catholic mission, actively participating in sacramental celebrations and initiating charitable work that meets local community needs. The partnership with Queen Elizabeth II Court retirement home exemplifies the school's profound commitment to serving the local community. The strong pastoral team provides outstanding support for the most vulnerable families through high-quality mental health provision and partnerships that have achieved external accreditation. Many staff shared

personal stories about the impact of their actively lived mission, with one staff member explaining: 'Our Lady's changes lives for both pupils and staff.' Achievements are celebrated and shared throughout the school community. Pupils are encouraged to share their hopes on a central display that focuses on the virtues being celebrated each half term. The Little Learners group is warmly welcomed by parents, who appreciate the much-needed pastoral support. Parents recognise the impact and support demonstrated through the consistently embedded culture of welcome and support they experience.

Leaders and governors promote Catholic life and mission exceptionally well. The executive headteacher, school leaders, and governing body demonstrate clear faith leadership that underpins all policies and decisions. Strong diocesan engagement is evident through enthusiastic participation in initiatives and high-quality training, with leaders supporting other schools across the multi-academy company (MAC). Governors recognise that pupils are offered meaningful opportunities to flourish, with precise alignment to the school's mission statement. Consequently, they recognise Our Lady's as 'a place where they can succeed' and feel empowered by the regularly celebrated virtues, which are visibly promoted and lived out across the school community. Leaders demonstrate exceptional respect for the dignity of staff, maintaining consistently high staff attendance (98%) and achieving external recognition through the National Wellbeing Award for Schools for the second time. Chaplaincy provision is robust and enhanced by the MAC's lay chaplain. Pupils talk passionately about vocation, asking the lead inspector, 'Which saint do you think influenced your vocation?' and confidently sharing their answers. A strength across the school is how leaders actively live the Emmaus story by meeting people where they are, walking with them and building on this foundation. Governors are proud that all members of the school staff consciously live out the Catholic faith, and this is evidenced by the support they provide to one another.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

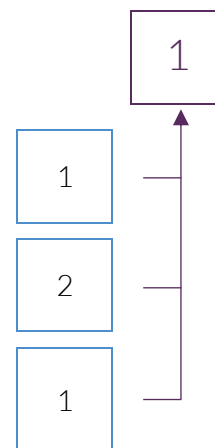
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 achieve exceptionally well from their starting points and demonstrate a genuine enjoyment of religious education. The school understands the needs of all pupils, including those who join for limited periods, those with additional needs, and those facing challenging circumstances. This ensures everyone achieves the best possible outcomes. Pupils show substantial progress through vocabulary checks and revision of prior learning, confidently using key terminology in their written work. They exhibit high levels of engagement in lessons. Their excellent subject knowledge develops consistently over time, showing strong recall of previous learning and the ability to relate new concepts to what they already know. Pupils value religious education highly, typically stating, 'We understand RE a lot because the teacher asks questions which everyone wants to answer.' Achievement is celebrated through displays of each child's writing in classrooms, with pupils taking pride in their work and their ability to discuss their learning beyond school. Pupils demonstrate the ability to empathise with key figures in the Bible, explaining how this influences their daily lives and decision-making. The importance of the subject is reflected in the care and attention pupils give to their exercise books.

Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and a high level of teaching skills, with high expectations evident across all year groups. The effective use of the 'big question' approach enables pupils to reflect deeply and connect their learning to their lived experiences and Catholic social teaching. Teachers are passionate and committed to sharing their personal faith journey. These real-life examples have a substantial impact on pupils of all ages who often recall them in subsequent lessons. Planning is detailed and thorough, ensuring that all pupils' needs are met. Creative approaches are employed to engage all learners, providing everyone with an opportunity to succeed. Pupils with needs that are not formally identified are supported with a bespoke curriculum and adaptations to enable them to be fully engaged and have full access to

the religious education curriculum. Additional adults are used effectively to support learning. The provision of religious education is not yet outstanding, as not all teachers use skilful questioning to maximise learning for all pupils, including independent learning.

Subject leadership team members at all levels are wholly dedicated to securing the best outcomes for all pupils. Leadership succession in the subject is carefully planned and well-developed, ensuring high standards are maintained through a smooth transition when the previous subject leader was seconded to lead another school within the MAC to share her expertise beyond Our Lady's. Both schools, guided by the executive headteacher, work exceptionally well together, providing both challenge and support. Subject leaders have a strong vision, ensuring that all teaching is consistently of a high standard, with examples of outstanding quality. Religious education is a top priority, as demonstrated by a greater allocation of curriculum time than diocesan guidelines, significant budget investment, and assessment procedures comparable to those for English and mathematics. Monitoring is frequent and thorough, with clear follow-up actions that are regularly reviewed and updated. Clear guidelines and routines for monitoring are welcomed by staff who value the feedback and support in continually improving to ensure all pupils achieve their very best. There is an unwavering commitment to inclusion, ensuring every child is fully supported and valued, exemplified by the dedicated St. Catherine of Siena transition room, which provides tailored assistance to meet individual needs. Link governors are well-informed about the school and actively participate in monitoring through reports and staff surveys, meaning they have accurate and firsthand knowledge of the subject's performance. Governors provide appropriate challenge and support, and they invest in staff training for religious education.

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

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

1

Pupils participate exceptionally well in prayer and demonstrate a deep understanding of its purpose. They show strong independent leadership skills, with one pupil explaining, 'Prayer leaders prepare prayer themselves, with other children included' and 'Teachers let us do it on our own and we can ask for help.' Pupils collaborate effectively in planning worship and evaluate their own experiences, levying challenges against themselves with a view to further improving their provision. The quality of prayer is enhanced by pupils' reverent engagement and understanding of liturgical seasons. They confidently state that they take prayer seriously and demonstrate a thorough knowledge of Catholic traditions, including praying the Rosary, the Stations of the Cross, and meditation. Pupils demonstrate excellent understanding of the 'Go Forth' message from prayer and can articulate how worship influences their actions to make a difference. They understand the critical connection between prayer and action, recognising that times of extended prayer share messages that 'challenge us to do something.' This impact extends to families, with pupils sharing their faith at home and encouraging family participation in school Masses. Pupils are proud to honour Mary and celebrate that they crown her in May. They view Our Lady as a role model, explaining that she had complete trust in God, and we should all follow her example.

Prayer and liturgy are central to school life, with a rich variety of Catholic traditions incorporated throughout the liturgical year. Strong use of scripture is evident in all worship, with leaders adapting and enriching resources to ensure age-appropriate, meaningful, and impactful experiences for all. Pupils confidently recall traditional prayers. Teachers value the input of pupils when planning opportunities for adult-led prayer, using their ideas and promoting their contributions. Pupils reflect the openness and passion for Jesus Christ that is modelled by staff through heartfelt personal responses. Parent feedback shows very high satisfaction with the

school's support for their children. Parents value the opportunities provided for active participation in the school's prayer life, sharing this has a positive impact on their children's spiritual discussions at home. The lay chaplain leads prayers with pupils within the St Catherine of Siena room, ensuring devoted time for prayer for all pupils. Pupils are inspired by seeing a young staff member altar serving. The recently formed Prayer Club is flourishing.

Leaders have identified the support needed to ensure all staff are fully confident in supporting pupil-prepared prayer and in developing pupils' understanding of the prayer and liturgy policy. The school offers excellent staff training and robust self-evaluation processes, which include regular pupil and adult evaluations of worship experiences. Pupils and staff praise the input from the worship leader, sharing how it has had a positive impact way beyond the confines of school. Catholic social teaching messages are woven throughout prayer opportunities. Despite the closure of the local parish church in 2024, school leaders' resourcefulness ensures a comprehensive celebration of holy days through whole-school celebrations, creative liturgical planning, and clear signposting to other local parishes for Sunday Mass attendance. Mass is celebrated in school each fortnight and is particularly valued by the local community. Worship through music and song is valued by the entire school community and is excellently modelled and nurtured to ensure all can participate joyfully. Ensuring pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are fully involved and understand how much God loves them is central to all. There is truly humbling engagement in prayer and joy in Jesus Christ at Our Lady's; monitoring shows that this is the everyday culture of Our Lady's.

Information about the school

| | |
|--|--|
| Full name of school | Our Lady's Catholic Academy |
| School unique reference number (URN) | 140287 |
| School DfE Number (LAESTAB) | 861 3411 |
| Full postal address of the school | Watkin Street, Fenton, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 4NP |
| School phone number | 01782 254832 |
| Headteacher | Karyn Oakley (executive) |
| Chair of governing board | Anne Middleton-Hill |
| School Website | www.ourladysca.org.uk |
| Trusteeship | Diocesan |
| Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable) | All Saints Catholic Collegiate |
| Phase | Primary |
| Type of school | Academy |
| Admissions policy | Non-selective |
| Age-range of pupils | 3 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Date of last denominational inspection | November 2018 |
| Previous denominational inspection grade | 2 |

The inspection team

Julie-Anne Tallon
Sarah Laskey

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 |