

# Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic First School

URN: 141058

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Birmingham

04–05 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

- The beautifully, well-cared-for environment reflects the school's Catholic mission, ethos, and identity. It provides a place of welcome, safety, inclusion, and aspiration for all.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary, and all relationships are rooted in respect, as they follow the teachings of the Gospels.
- Teachers make effective use of assessment to plan religious education lessons that are both exceptional and creative. This ensures that pupils not only deepen their knowledge and understanding but also grow in their spiritual formation, living out the teachings of Christ in meaningful ways.
- The principal and staff are inspiring models of exemplary practice for pupils, serving as participants in and leaders of prayer and liturgy. Staff feel well supported by all leaders and governors in their mission to teach within Catholic education.

## What the school needs to improve

- Ensure all pupils know what they need to do to improve their work in religious education.
- Provide opportunities for the chaplaincy team to take the initiative in planning and leading charity and outreach work.
- Enhance pupil-prepared prayer and liturgy so that they regularly provide opportunities for pupils to engage in meaningful spiritual encounters with God.

## 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

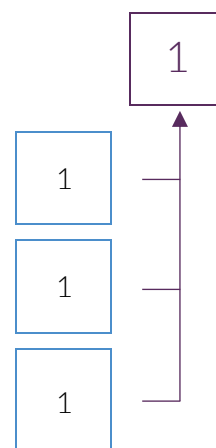
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### 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



Pupils clearly understand and express eloquently the school's Catholic life and mission, 'Love God, love one another,' which is rooted, embedded, and actively lived out throughout the school. This is because leaders, staff, and subsequently pupils, embrace the mission and are dedicated to promoting it in all aspects of school life. Pupils truly embrace the opportunities to care for our common home and serve those in need through many of the school's charitable activities, including singing to residents at Brambles Care Home at Christmas and donating food to the Batchley Food Bank. Whilst pupils are engaged in responding to the needs of others, they have not yet had the opportunity to take a leading role in doing so or understand the theology that underpins their actions. There is a strong sense of belonging to a joyful community. Everyone contributes to this, actively witnessing their faith through daily interactions with others, which enables pupils to grow and learn in a faith-filled atmosphere. Pupils are confident and recognise that everyone is a unique person made in God's image and likeness. Deep mutual respect is evidenced in their exemplary behaviour. Pupils enjoy and hold in the highest regard their chaplaincy roles, actively participating and contributing to opportunities provided by the school.

Christ is consciously at the centre of the school's aims and ethos. Its work to help others, particularly those who need additional support, is exemplary. Staff are excellent role models for pupils, encouraging them to bear witness to the school's mission and be joyful disciples of Christ. Consequently, pupils are happy and confident, feeling safe in their school environment. The quality of relationships, Catholic pastoral care, and support for the most vulnerable demonstrate how the school goes the extra mile for all, offering bereavement support through the Rainbow and Thrive programmes. The beautifully stimulating environment fully reflects the school's Catholic identity. Chaplaincy provision, whilst being held in high esteem, is limited to a small

number of pupils who would benefit from being provided with opportunities to plan and lead charity and outreach work independently. The provision for relationships, sex, and health education (RSHE) is carefully planned, and pupils discuss their learning confidently and its application to their lives.

Leaders and governors are unwavering in their commitment to their school's Catholic life and mission, resulting in a genuine dedication to all the families they serve. Governors provide rigorous and robust challenge and support. Collectively, they demonstrate ambition for the school because they are fully involved in its development and evaluation. Dedicated leaders demonstrate exemplary commitment to caring for their community, putting themselves at the service of others. They successfully engage with parents to develop their understanding of the school's mission. All staff effectively extend their culture of welcome to all. The principal and senior leadership team are inspiring role models of their faith and continually identify opportunities for the school community to witness Gospel values through their support for staff and the inclusion of Catholic social teaching in the school's daily life. The strong and flourishing partnership with the local parish is a particular strength of the school community, rooted in service to one another. Routine visits from the local assistant priest reinforce the school's mission, demonstrating that 'love God, love one another' is firmly embodied at every level. Pastoral support for staff is of great importance to leaders, and there is a planned investment and a commitment to staff well-being. Staff training is meticulously planned through in-service training, diocesan and multi-academy company (MAC) events. Leaders recognise that they are on a journey to ensure a Catholic lens is present throughout the whole curriculum.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

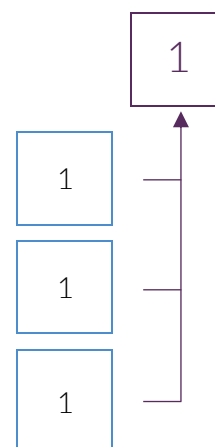
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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 develop excellent knowledge, understanding, and skills in religious education because teachers have secure subject knowledge and use a range of creative approaches to impart it confidently. Pupils eloquently answer questions, make effective and appropriate use of religious vocabulary, and are reflective in their thoughts and written work. In Year 3, for example, pupils confidently enact the roles of Saul and Paul, answering searching questions from their peers. Pupils show great interest in their learning, demonstrate excellent concentration, and fully engage in their lessons. They are curious learners, readily asking their teachers questions to consolidate and deepen their understanding of the material being taught. Their behaviour in lessons is notably exceptional. Pupils' knowledge of the liturgical year is deeply embedded through reinforcement throughout the school's life. Pupil progress in religious education is consistently strong across all year groups. This is due to the forensic analysis of religious education data and actions taken by the senior leadership team, meaning there is a constant drive to continue improving outcomes for all. Pupils' work is generally well presented, but lacks a consistently high standard across the school. Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are well supported by teaching assistants and through carefully-crafted tasks to ensure they achieve the best possible outcomes.

Teachers demonstrate a strong commitment and high expectations for religious education. Planning is meticulously linked to pupils' current assessment; as a result, lessons consolidate and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding, enabling them to know, remember, and apply more about the planned curriculum. Lessons are imaginatively and creatively planned, including using art and role-play. There is a consistency in the use of knowledge retrieval questions at the start of lessons so that pupils are always primed to build upon prior learning. Teachers use paired talk regularly, with short activities spaced throughout to ensure the pace of lessons is

always brisk. This leads to enhanced pupils' engagement in their religious education lessons. Teachers have a profound understanding of the impact of religious education on pupils' moral and spiritual development. Time is crafted into lessons for meaningful reflection so pupils can make sense of their world experience, such as 'My RE lessons help me to live like Jesus and follow his example in my life.' Feedback and challenging questions in books allow pupils to think more deeply. Whilst teachers regularly celebrate pupils' work in a range of ways, feedback does not always make pupils aware of how to improve the quality of their work.

The creative delivery of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* is a real strength of the school. Resources are used imaginatively to enhance learning. The curriculum is thoughtfully and creatively designed, thoroughly monitored, and rigorously evaluated. It is exceptionally well-resourced, especially in comparison to other core subjects. The subject leader for religious education brings a compelling and inspiring vision, fostering excellence through supportive leadership and forensic and robust evaluation processes. The school's inclusive ethos ensures that the needs of every pupil are met, enabling all learners to achieve success in religious education. This leadership ensures consistently high standards of teaching across the school. The subject leader also plays a vital role in broader professional networks, contributing effectively and promoting collaboration within the MAC. Ongoing training is highly valued, with leaders committed to providing diverse training opportunities through the MAC and the diocese. The school offers excellent enrichment activities to promote pupils' learning and engagement with religious education, including retreats and visits to Harvington Hall. Governors are passionate about religious education and regularly challenge the principal, seeking evidence to support her evaluations. Ultimately, this means they can be confident in leaders' assessments because they are very familiar with their 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

2

#### 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

Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school. Praying together is part of the daily rhythm and pattern for all pupils and staff. Pupils show high reverence and respect, participating wholeheartedly and singing joyfully. Prayer begins with all pupils using actions and reciting, 'We open our hearts and minds to God,' Preparing them for active participation. They have a clear understanding of the wide variety of ways to pray, as witnessed in 'Holy Time,' with opportunities for silent reflection and the excellent use of scripture. The liturgical year is intrinsically linked to all aspects of school life; as a result, pupils know it exceptionally well. Pupils have the opportunity to work with the school lay chaplain to prepare, plan, and lead prayers, in addition to evaluating the quality of the prayers they have planned. When responding to prayer, however, there is a tendency for this to become a question-and-answer session rather than a time of spiritual encounter with God. Whilst pupils can recognise how prayer and liturgy influence the curriculum and wider life of the school, they lack confidence and true independence in doing so.

Prayer and liturgy at Our Lady of Mount Carmel are lived out authentically. It is exceptionally well planned with a monthly whole-school prayer focus for all pupils. Significant moments in school and parish lives are identified, planned for, and then celebrated in prayer. The detailed plans created by the senior leadership team at the start of the year ensure that a variety of prayer and liturgy experiences are offered to the school community. This enables pupils to participate in a range of faith-enriching prayerful activities, such as retreats, as well as liturgy and worship events provided by the MAC. The principal and staff are inspiring models of exemplary practice for pupils, serving as participants in and leaders of prayer and liturgy. The use of Scripture is powerful, as seen in 'Holy Time,' and is linked expertly to what the pupils are learning in their religious education lessons. Staff have a good understanding of the Church's liturgical norms and can support pupils in their prayer and liturgy planning. However, some staff require further training because they do not always feel confident in delivering high-quality prayer and liturgy.

Whilst scripture and art are used well in Holy Time, the opportunity to respond detracts from a rich spiritual encounter with God. The use of space is a strength of the school, with effective use made of areas to enhance the school's prayer life. The chaplaincy team has yet to take ownership of evaluating these areas to subsequently enhance them further. Initiatives, such as prayer bags, further embed the concept of effective, strong, and flourishing relationships with parents.

The school has a clear and comprehensive policy for prayer and liturgy, along with a thorough understanding of the progression of skills required for pupils to take on a more significant role in planning, delivering, and evaluating prayer and liturgy. The school timetable and calendar include all aspects of the Church's liturgical year, including the appropriate sacraments, a 'buddy Mass', and a service of light at Candlemas. Staff formation is given the highest priority, with input from governors and the MAC. Leaders and governors are ambitious for prayer at Our Lady of Mount Carmel and are fully involved in the school's self-evaluation. Staff would value utilising expertise within the MAC to develop and broaden the pupils' experience. Leaders and governors know the school's strengths and what it needs to improve because their self-evaluation processes are robust. They are fully immersed and committed to the school in its mission of 'Love God, love one another.'



## Information about the school

Full name of school	Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic First School
School unique reference number (URN)	141058
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	885 5200
Full postal address of the school	Downsell Road, Webheath, Redditch, B97 5RR
School phone number	01527 546398
Headteacher	Michelle Woods
Chair of governing board	Yvonne Brennan
School Website	<a href="http://www.olmc.magnificat.org.uk">www.olmc.magnificat.org.uk</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Our Lady of the Magnificat Catholic MAC
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	4 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	June 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

## The inspection team

Rebecca Nash  
Jon Clinton

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