

The Barlow Roman Catholic High School

URN: 105581

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Salford

30 April – 01 May 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

- The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference and 10% of curriculum time is devoted to religious education.
- The school is fully compliant with the additional requirements of the diocesan bishop in relation to the GCSE offered.
- The school has responded fully to areas of improvement identified in the last inspection.

What the school does well

- There is a strong sense of family and community that is evident in the quality of relationships across the school. Pupils have a real sense of belonging and are proud members of the 'The Barlow Family'.
- The culture of Catholic life and mission is deeply embedded and lived out across all aspects of school life. The school has developed a culture of welcome and family for all pupils which has created a safe and purposeful environment faithful to its Catholic mission.
- School leaders and governors are passionate about meeting the needs of all pupils and go above and beyond for the most vulnerable pupils. The work of the *Resourced Provision* and *The Hive* for pupils with additional needs, is outstanding.
- The leadership of religious education is a strength of the school. The curriculum leader has created a united and ambitious team, determined to achieve the best for every pupil.
- The quality of teaching in religious education, as evidenced in lesson visits, work scrutiny and pupil voice, is excellent.

What the school needs to improve

- To improve GCSE outcomes in religious education so that they are in line with or better than other core subjects.
- To continue implementing the *Religious Education Directory* at Key Stage 3, ensuring it is adapted and planned imaginatively and thoughtfully to meet the needs of all pupils, using carefully planned assessment so that pupils learn extremely well.

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

1

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

1

Pupils demonstrate a strong understanding and sense of belonging to this inclusive Catholic community, enriched by its diversity and the high-quality relationships between staff and pupils. This is underpinned by an excellent pastoral provision embedded in gospel values. Pupils are active in their commitment to the school's mission to serve, pray, achieve and respect, which is evident in their engagement with a wide range of charities linked to the demands of Catholic social teaching, including Cafod, Mary's Meals and local food banks. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes in lessons and around school are excellent. They have a strong sense of self-worth and demonstrate respect and care for others as well as themselves. Pupils are positive about the leadership opportunities that exist in the school and there are a high number involved, serving as leaders in faith, excellence, and respect. The chaplaincy team comprises prayer and liturgy leaders, Caritas ambassadors and eco-warriors and is well represented across the school.

The school's values are at the heart of its mission to serve, pray, achieve and respect. There is a deeply embedded culture of an inclusive welcome, and leaders are proactive in ensuring that all groups represented in the school are recognised and celebrated. The quality of care shown to all members of the community is outstanding. The pastoral team is highly skilled in providing bespoke support for vulnerable pupils and their families. The resourced provision and Hive centre meet the needs of the most vulnerable pupils of the school, allowing them to access a full and varied curriculum. The school is very attentive to staff needs and has effective systems in place to support them. They feel valued and supported, especially new staff who are fully inducted into all aspects of school life with a focus on the Catholic life of the school. The *Rainbow Bereavement Garden* provides a quiet place for the pupils to reflect and pray and is spoken of highly by the pupils.

Pupils are extremely proud of world culture day when they celebrate different faiths and cultures led by pupils and supported by teachers.

The headteacher, leaders and governors of the school are committed to the school's Catholic life and mission of the school and exercise their duty as its guardians. They know the school well and regularly visit to monitor the Catholic life, religious education and collective worship within the school. They promote the bishop's vision for his diocese, ensuring that the whole curriculum contributes to pupils' spiritual and moral development and that the school's mission is explicit in all its policies and key documentation. Leaders of all curriculum areas map the contribution made by their subjects to the key areas of Catholic social teaching, resulting in the provision of a fully rounded Catholic curriculum. This was demonstrated in the sharing of good practice in staff briefing, evident in the work pupils have completed, and in the lessons seen across the school. Leaders and governors continually strive to build on the school's strong Catholic tradition and have good links with the local parish of St Catherine's. The school is committed to supporting and working closely with parents and continues to explore ways to increase parental engagement in the Catholic life of the school. Professional development opportunities are valued by staff, and training days are prioritised for Catholic ethos training, including outside speakers from the diocese.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

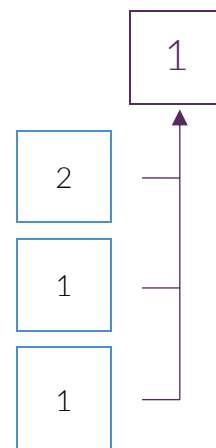
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 and can explain its importance as a subject in the school curriculum. One pupil said: 'learning about world religions helps us understand our differences.' As a consequence of a new and consistent approach to retrieval and recall, pupils are growing in their religious knowledge and understanding, using carefully planned hinge questions to deepen understanding. They also show confidence in using accurate religious literacy when speaking about their learning. Pupils settle quickly to work as soon as they arrive in their lessons. Across learning in religious education, pupils enjoy excellent relationships with their teachers. This helps create a secure place for pupils to express their views and participate in their learning. Progress in learning in lessons is good. In most lessons, there is a good level of challenge and learning is accelerated, with pupils demonstrating high levels of engagement. Attainment in religious education is improving but not yet in line with the strongest core subjects.

Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and teach with passion and commitment, including the non-specialist and unqualified teachers in the department. They plan learning collaboratively, sharing resources and approaches to teaching, especially at Key Stage 3. There has been a significant amount of work on the *Religious Education Directory* with Year 7 and 8 being fully implemented and adapted to meet the needs of the pupils. Teachers foster positive relationships with their pupils who value the support they give. As one pupil commented, 'they are always there to help you if you don't understand something fully.' Teachers are skilled at ensuring that pupils build up their knowledge through their use of retrieval tasks and targeted questioning focusing on cold calling to check understanding. In the best learning observed, teachers used a variety of techniques to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding. In one lesson, the teacher asked questions with escalating difficulty and was skilful in ensuring pupils gave longer and more detailed answers and gave thinking time before expecting an answer.

Books are well presented and show progress in pupils' learning. Structured feedback in books provides steps for pupils to improve upon their work alongside verbal and individual feedback within lesson time which ensures that most pupils understand what they need to do to make further progress in their learning.

There is a clear vision for religious education in the school following the appointment of the curriculum leader in September 2023, who has secured the improvements that were needed. Some strategies are in their infancy and need time to be fully embedded to see their impact. Leaders have ensured that the new curriculum adheres to the requirements of the *Religious Education Directory* and offers a well-considered pathway appropriate to the needs of the pupils. Teachers have worked closely with the diocese as they collaboratively assemble their new programmes of study. The department meets regularly to share resources and best practice in teaching. This has helped to create an effective and cohesive team. The curriculum leader conducts quality assurance of the teaching and learning within the department, providing support and training which has made a significant impact in a relatively short time. Strong systems are in place to improve the quality of education in religious education and thus improve GCSE outcomes. The department has introduced a wide variety of enrichment activities such as residential to Savio House, visits to a Jewish synagogue, holocaust workshops and many other well-planned activities that develop the spiritual, moral and cultural needs of the pupils.

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 routinely experience opportunities for prayer each day either in family time, chapel time or in carefully planned assemblies. In the assembly observed, pupils were extremely well-behaved and respectful. The message was led with passion and linked appropriately to gospel values, scripture and Catholic social teaching. In family time, pupils were engaged and responded well to moments of silence and reflection. Through a range of liturgical and paraliturgical activities, there is a growing understanding of the spiritual importance of prayer. The Year 11 leavers' Mass, holy days of obligation and the Year 7 welcome Mass were well-attended. The well-equipped chapel is used daily in family time and in non-structured times with collective worship led by pupils. For example, the nine days of mourning for Pope Francis and the rosary sessions in October and May.

Prayer and liturgy occupy a central place in the daily life of the school. Prayer and liturgy are well planned by pupils and the prayer and liturgy leader and are faithful to the liturgical year. Provision for prayer beyond family time, chapel time and assemblies is also extensive and varied. This includes the rosary, stations of the cross, the sacrament of reconciliation, lectio divina and the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. In most classrooms sacred spaces demonstrate imagination and personalisation and are used well in family time. Family time is well planned and follows thematic weeks that flow through every aspect of collective worship which leads to pupils understanding how prayer can affect their life. Well chosen scripture is linked to the planned themes and explained by staff. Prayer and liturgy would benefit from communal singing to further enhance the overall atmosphere of collective worship in the school.

The headteacher and prayer and liturgy leader make a significant contribution to the leadership of prayer and liturgy across the school. They ensure that prayer and liturgy follow the liturgical

calendar of the Church as well as being responsive to local, national and global events as they occur. The school has a chapel that is well resourced and used in family time and for other aspects of prayer and liturgy. Leaders and governors have recognised that a larger facility may allow for larger gatherings for liturgy. Governors have invested generously in staffing resources to support the Catholic life of the school and governors prioritise Catholic life and mission, religious education and collective worship in governors' meetings. Challenge is provided to develop the school further in these areas. Professional development for staff on collective worship is excellent within school. This is led by the prayer and liturgy leader and quality assured by senior leaders offering an extensive model for sharing of good practice and support when needed, which allows for collaboration and sharing of good practice in a supportive manner for all staff.

Information about the school

Full name of school	The Barlow Roman Catholic High School
School unique reference number (URN)	105581
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3524768
Full postal address of the school	The Barlow Roman Catholic High School, Parrs Wood Road, East Didsbury, Manchester, M20 6BX
School phone number	01614458053
Headteacher	Claire Wallace
Chair of governors	Catherine Redford
School Website	http://www.thebarlowrchigh.co.uk/
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	27 September 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The inspection team

Helen Hall	Lead
Xavier Bowers	Team
Fiona Robinson	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