



Our Lady of Grace Catholic Academy

URN: 140129

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Birmingham

11 December 2025

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

1

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

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 mission statement of the school is known, understood, and lived by all members of the school community.
- Leadership at all levels, including pupils, is outstanding. The religious education subject leader is passionate about her subject and is an inspiration to all.
- The behaviour of pupils is always exemplary; they show great respect for others.
- The school has placed the highest priority on the liturgical and spiritual formation of staff and pupils.
- Teachers' questioning in religious education lessons is a strength, ensuring that pupils' knowledge is consistently deepened beyond a superficial level.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure clear and consistent connections between the Catholic faith and all subjects are planned and taught, so that the curriculum reflects how Catholic belief has shaped culture.
- Ensure pupils regularly reflect on their learning in religious education using agreed self-assessment approaches, so they can clearly understand what they have learnt and how they have improved.

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 are rightly proud to belong to Our Lady of Grace Academy and can clearly explain it, having been involved in its recent review. They fully embrace the school's Catholic ethos and describe how the motto 'Do whatever He tells you,' which they know is taken from Our Lady's words at the wedding feast in Cana, shapes their attitudes and behaviour throughout the day; one pupil explained, 'We spread the Good News like Jesus wants us to.' Pupils are given a wealth of leadership experiences that enable them to participate in and contribute to the school's Catholic life and mission through a wide range of opportunities, which they approach with seriousness and commitment; these include becoming Catholic social teaching ambassadors and joining a discipleship team, for example. They are confident that adults value their views and respond to them. Pupils demonstrate a secure, age-appropriate understanding of Catholic social teaching. They can explain how they have used this to make a positive difference in their local community, taking on leadership roles. They value the school's chaplaincy provision highly and can describe how it influences their words and actions. Pupils' behaviour is consistently exemplary.

There is a strong sense of welcome, community and belonging in this inclusive school. This is reflected in parental feedback, with one parent commenting, 'A wonderful school. The Catholic ethos shines through in all the opportunities our daughter has there.' Staff are deeply committed to the school's Catholic life and mission, and, having been fully involved in the review of the mission statement, they ensure it is known, lived, and witnessed. Staff are united in their view that Our Lady of Grace is a special place, as one staff member typically said, 'I feel incredibly privileged to be a part of the Our Lady of Grace family and am honoured to serve the children in our community.' Staff are exemplary role models for the pupils, and relationships at all levels are strong. As a result, pupils feel supported and flourish within the school community. Pastoral care

of pupils is given a clear priority by staff, enabling pupils to thrive and feel valued as unique individuals. The school's physical environment, including meaningful displays, clearly and beautifully celebrates its Catholic identity. Relationships, sex, and health education (RSHE) fully meets diocesan requirements, and its importance in the curriculum is reflected in the way it is taught.

Leaders, including governors, are passionate about promoting the school's Catholic life and mission and demonstrate clear ambition for its development. The executive principal, supported by the head of school, provides compassionate leadership and keeps Christ at the heart of the school's life. Leaders and governors know the school exceptionally well, supported by regular and rigorous self-evaluation activities that contribute to an accurate understanding of strengths and priorities. They ensure that close links with the school's sister school bring mutual benefit. As a result of these flourishing links, the school plays an active role in the life of the parish. Leaders and governors give clear priority to the induction of new staff into the school's Catholic life. However, although some links have been made between Catholic social teaching and individual subjects, the curriculum has not yet been refined to ensure explicit and consistent connections to the Catholic faith.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

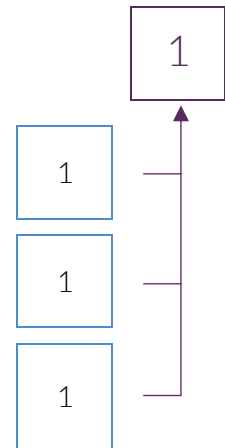
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 say they love their religious education lessons, and demonstrate excellent knowledge, understanding, and skills which they are very keen to share. All groups of pupils make substantial progress in lessons and over time, and their attainment is high, as evidenced in the consistently high quality of work in books across the school and in the school's own assessment systems. Pupils work diligently in lessons and are fully engaged in their learning. Routinely, pupils work with a designated partner, enabling them to rehearse answers and consolidate their learning. Pupils are developing a rich religious literacy which builds progressively as they move through the school. Pupils ask insightful questions and show mature, thoughtful reflection in response to teachers' questions. For example, pupils reflect on the words in the carol, 'O Come, O Come Emmanuel', and one linked the phrase 'ransom captive Israel' to the experience of being separated from a loved one. Pupils can talk confidently and fluently about their learning and accurately recall prior learning, supported by regular recap at the start of lessons. Pupil behaviour is exemplary, allowing learning to move at a fast pace. Attainment is high and compares very favourably with other core subjects. Whilst pupils understand feedback and what they have done well, they are not yet consistently able to articulate clearly how this feedback has helped them make progress.

Teachers demonstrate strong and secure subject knowledge in religious education and are well supported by teaching assistants, enabling pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to achieve well. All staff share a deep commitment to high expectations, evident in detailed planning that builds carefully on previous learning and consistently provides appropriate adaptation and challenge. Homework is used purposefully to prepare pupils effectively for future learning. Open-ended questioning is a consistent strength in lessons and enables pupils to reflect meaningfully and deepen their understanding. The school's feedback

policy is applied consistently and understood by pupils, which means that pupils know when they have done well and the next steps to further their learning. Parents recognise the high quality of religious education provision, reflected in comments such as, 'Our children are always talking about what they learn in religious education, and it is instilling them with good morals and values.'

Leaders and governors are highly ambitious for religious education, and they ensure that it has full parity with other core subjects in standards, timetabling, resourcing, homework and policy. They work together cohesively to ensure that teaching is consistently strong, resulting in high outcomes in religious education. The religious education subject leader has a clear and ambitious vision for the subject, and her leadership is highly effective. This is reflected in feedback from the religious education link governor, who described her leadership as highly influential. Leaders and governors ensure that staff benefit from high-quality training from within the school, across the trust, through the diocese and beyond, including access to national expertise. Coaching is a clear strength of the school and is used strategically to support the teaching of religious education, reflecting the high status the subject holds with leaders and governors.

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 embrace opportunities for prayer and liturgy; they engage and participate fully and consciously in the school's prayer life. This is evidenced by the confidence and maturity with which pupils independently prepare and minister meaningful celebrations of the word independently by the time they reach upper Key Stage 2. All pupils have opportunities to prepare prayers and, in doing so, 'spread the Good News like Jesus wants us to do', as one pupil explained. The chaplaincy team confidently share what they have prepared with younger pupils through the weekly 'pray and praise' lunchtime sessions. One older pupil explained that this 'turns us into teachers', while another commented, 'I'd happily do this every day.' Pupils are consistently reverent and respectful and can clearly articulate the impact the school's prayer life has on their daily experience. Pupils have frequent opportunities to write their own prayers, which are meaningful and heartfelt. Pupils describe frequent opportunities throughout the day and in lessons to pray spontaneously, which was evident during the inspection. Pupils have a secure understanding of the Church's liturgical year and regularly make perceptive evaluations of celebrations of the word prepared by other pupils or staff. Their knowledge of Scripture is exceptional, enabling pupils to select appropriate passages closely related to the chosen theme.

Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of Our Lady of Grace, evidenced through a complete and carefully structured annual plan of provision. This is reflected in pupil voice, with one pupil commenting, 'We pray whenever we want.' Staff are fully committed to modelling exemplary practice, and they engage and participate fully in all prayer and liturgical gatherings. Faith class books and class prayer journals provide clear evidence of the central place of worship at Our Lady of Grace. Parents are united in their praise of the school's provision for prayer and value the regular opportunities they are given to engage and participate. One parent typically commented that her daughter has been 'inspired to create a prayer table at home,'

demonstrating the depth of the pupils' response to the school's provision. The school's physical environment makes creative and purposeful use of the available spaces to support prayer and reflection for pupils and staff.

Leaders and governors give a high priority to the liturgical and spiritual formation of all staff. As a result, staff are highly competent and confident in leading prayer. The parish priest plays a significant part in the formation of pupils and staff, including a ten-week programme of 'prayer and life' workshops for older pupils. The school's revised prayer and liturgy policy clearly sets out how pupils' participation skills are developed as they move through the school. Mass is celebrated regularly in school and in the parish, including on class saints' days and holy days of obligation. The parish priest and catechists lead sacramental preparation, supported by school staff, and welcome children from the parish who are Catholic but do not attend Our Lady of Grace. Weekly gospel reflection sessions for staff, led by leaders, contribute significantly to staff formation and promote thoughtful and reflective discussion. Leaders are highly skilled in enabling others to lead prayer and liturgy, resulting in meaningful and high-quality opportunities for pupils and staff. Leaders and governors ensure that funding is available for high-quality resources for prayer and liturgy, including Bibles. Leaders' and governors' self-evaluation of prayer and liturgy is robust and accurate.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Our Lady of Grace Catholic Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	140129
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	860 3477
Full postal address of the school	Woodland Street, Biddulph, Stoke-On-Trent, ST8 6LW
School phone number	01782 512644
Executive headteacher	Sarah Rathbone
Head of school	Jessica Davis
Chair of governing board	Julia Bridgewater
School Website	www.ourladyofgraceacademy.co.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company	St Gabriel the Archangel Catholic Multi-Academy Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	June 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Julie Johnson

Carl Spackman

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