



St John Henry Newman

URN: 137895

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster

29 January 2026 – 30 January 2026

## 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

#### Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education RE

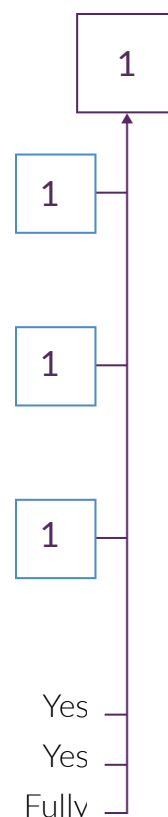
#### Collective worship (p.7)

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

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



## What the school does well

- The school has a clear Catholic identity, rooted in Gospel values, which lives out the mission statement and the words of St John Henry Newman, 'Heart speaks unto heart'.
- This is an inclusive community that values the dignity of every person and ensures that staff and pupils feel valued, well known and loved.
- Prayer and liturgy are at the heart of the school, reflecting the liturgical year and fostering reverence, belonging and personal growth.
- There is an exceptional commitment to Catholic social teaching by the whole community, which results in pupils being inspired to live out their faith through social justice, charitable action and service to others.
- The exceptional provision for religious education derives from an inspired and holistic vision for Catholic education.

## What the school needs to improve

- The programme of formation for student ministry should be further developed by formalising this into a structured programme.
- Enhance religious education enrichment provision beyond retreat opportunities, to further broaden pupils' experience of the Catholic faith and tradition.

## 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

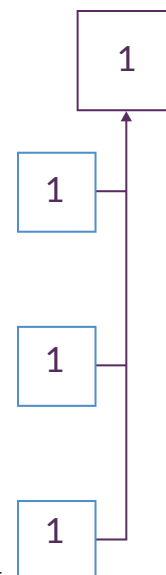
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### 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 school's Catholic identity and mission are deeply embedded and joyfully lived by all members of the community. The school is a beacon of Catholic education, where faith, learning and life are united in joyful witness to the lived-out Gospel. Pupils speak confidently of belonging to a Christ-centred family where faith is not only taught but visibly witnessed. Pupils demonstrate a deep understanding of the school's mission statement, recognising their distinctive Catholic identity as evidenced in their daily conduct, language and leadership. They embrace their role in the mission of the school, taking pride in serving others through a wide variety of fundraising activities, including raising money for 'KISS Uganda' as well as individual year group charities. Inclusivity is exemplary, particularly in the sixth form. New pupils joining describe exceptional guidance and support; one student described her sense of belonging to being 'the link in the chain' to living out the faith in the school. Pupils show a mature and reflective understanding of Catholic social teaching, particularly in relation to solidarity and human dignity. They willingly undertake a wide range of leadership roles, including chaplaincy and pupil parliament, demonstrating how responsibility and service are understood as expressions of faith in action.

The school places Christ at the centre of all that it does. The Catholic ethos permeates every aspect of school life. The mission statement, 'we build an inclusive Catholic community', is front and centre of all that goes on in the school. Provision for Catholic life is exceptional. It is dynamically planned so that it is inclusive and promotes both personal growth and pupil leadership. It would be beneficial for the formation of pupils to be formally structured so that it is progressive in nature. The school's chaplaincy provision is deeply valued. It enriches the

prayer life of the community and provides meaningful opportunities for pupils to discern vocation and engage with Catholic social teaching. The pastoral system is a distinctive expression of community and care. Each tutor group is rooted in the school's Catholic heritage and named after a key saint whose virtues are actively promoted. Across the school, focal points of prayer and faith are coherent and purposeful, ensuring that the school environment visibly witnesses to its strong Catholic identity. The Catholic curriculum is taught by exemplary role models who consistently go above and beyond in their commitment to pupils, thereby inspiring them to do the same. The provision for relationships, sex and health education is comprehensive and responsive to the emerging needs both for the community and the wider context.

Leaders demonstrate a profound understanding of the mission of Catholic education, placing this at the heart of the school. They ensure coherence in their strategic planning so that the Catholic curriculum and the school's mission underpin all decision making. Self-evaluation is rigorous, honest and sharply focused, leading to targeted improvements, informed by evidence from the wider community. Professional development is well planned, resulting in staff having a deep and shared understanding of the school's mission and their role within it. New staff and pupil induction is comprehensive and mission-focused, ensuring all staff are confident in contributing to prayer, pastoral care and faith in action from the outset. Leaders are exceptional role models and visibly embody the mission of the school. They are inspirational witnesses, particularly in their commitment to Catholic social teaching and inclusivity. The school has a strong partnership with parents who are appreciative of the exceptional provision with one stating: 'The school is a beacon of excellence... young people are encouraged to live the Gospel values ... through a strong focus on the common good'.

## Religious education

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

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

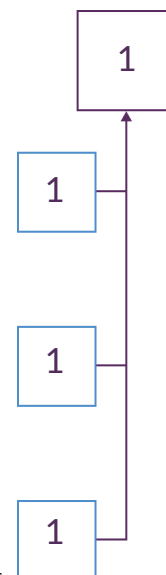
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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



The curriculum has been expertly planned to incorporate engaging and challenging learning opportunities. Consequently, pupils are actively engaged in lessons and they make rapid progress. They are thriving in lessons and meet the high expectations they are presented with in an enthusiastic and committed way. Behaviour is exemplary and high levels of independence were observed during lessons. A departmental focus on developing oracy and increasing the level of challenge in lessons has resulted in pupils who are confident in their recall of knowledge and who can justify their deep thinking with specific examples from sources of wisdom and authority. This was evident in a Year 11 lesson on the concept of forgiveness. Pupils were confident in their discussion about how Christians can struggle to forgive and were readily able to draw on scripture and other sources of wisdom to exemplify their key arguments. Teachers expect pupils to use subject-specific terminology throughout the lesson, and pupils respond to this by recalling key words and using them in a dynamic way. Outcomes are excellent, above the national average and, at GCSE, above the outcomes in all other core subjects. Pupils take great pride in their work, with exercise books presented exceptionally well.

Teaching observed was inspirational. Teachers are experts who use excellent subject knowledge with flexibility and flair in the classroom in order to respond to the specific needs of each individual pupil. Vulnerable learners are well known, and teaching is adapted skilfully to meet their learning needs. Consequently, classrooms are inclusive, purposeful environments in which every pupil thrives. Teachers' questions make pupils think deeply. This

was particularly evident in a Year 7 lesson on the person of Jesus. Teachers make specific use of praise to model and exemplify their expectations. This results in pupils being clear about what is needed to be successful. Teachers' planning goes beyond what is required to be successful in examinations. They present highly complex situations and pose challenging questions that demand that pupils think about and make sense of their own experience of the world around them. This was evident in Year 10 lessons on abortion and euthanasia. In a Year 11 lesson, pupils were presented with a challenge question, given time to think independently and record initial ideas on the whiteboard. This meant that all pupils were able to articulate ideas about complex issues in discussions with their peers. Core RE is thoroughly planned and promotes excellent discussion. Leaders and governors ensure that the creative and engaging religious education curriculum enhances the faithful expression of the Religious Education Directory. The holistic and inspiring vision of the subject leader ensures that teaching and learning are outstanding and leads to a shared culture of excellence.

Leaders and governors prioritise religious education within the context of the school's wider mission, informed and nurtured by the principles of Catholic social teaching. The needs of different pupils are met, and the dynamic and flexible attention to assessment ensures that systems are at the service of the learner. The religious education team is a highly respected department in the school and receives full parity with other core subjects. Departmental accommodation is well-presented and maintained. Staff are highly qualified experts who are actively sharing their expertise across the school with the subject leader leading the development of oracy across the school. Leaders and governors know the strengths of the department extremely well. They are not complacent with the quality of teaching and the outcomes that are achieved but are sharply focused on the next steps which have been appropriately identified. Pupils would benefit from further opportunities for enrichment activities linked to religious education.

## Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.

### Collective worship key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

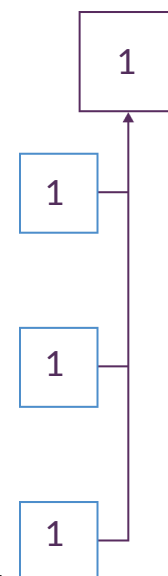
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

#### Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

#### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship



Prayer and liturgy are at the heart of the school's ethos and mission. There are regular and meaningful opportunities for prayer, reflection and reverence, fostering the pupils' spiritual growth. Pupils are entirely engaged in the prayer life of the school, demonstrating a deep appreciation for what it adds to their personal growth. Morning prayer time provides opportunity for prayer, reflection, discussions and music. Pupils are actively involved in planning and preparing resources for these sessions and take great pride in this. This was seen in morning prayers focusing on Racial Justice Sunday. The weekly themes enable pupils to engage on a deeper level within the context of the prayer. This was evident in all form group prayer each morning. Pupils are involved in the preparation and celebration of Masses held in the beautiful chapel, serving the community as altar servers and lectors. Pupils regularly plan and prepare liturgy opportunities and take a lead in these activities, demonstrating confidence, respect and a growing sense of service. Many examples of pupil leadership were seen, such as a pupil led assembly on St Brigid and the chaplaincy team preparing for Lent with the chosen theme of a digital detox to promote learning and listening. Chaplaincy teams play a crucial role as a link between the school and chaplaincy because they make sure that everyone has opportunities to contribute to the school's prayer life. Pupils are proud of the school chapel and play an active role in maintaining it as 'chapel carers' as a weekly act of service.

Provision for prayer and liturgy is varied and wide ranging. It promotes a strong sense of community, dignity of the person and mutual respect, underpinned by Catholic social teaching. This focus ensures that pupils are able to engage with prayer opportunities and

reflect on the relevance to their daily lives. The chaplain provides a rich variety of prayer and liturgy opportunities such as a Rosary group, Stations of the Cross during Lent, termly opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and an Alpha group for the Sixth Form. Many of these opportunities are supported by clergy from the deanery and there are very close school-parish links which pupils are rightly proud of. The school follows the liturgical cycle throughout the year, including holy days of obligation and the feast days of tutor group saints as well as the patron saint. Mass for new pupils and parents strengthens the connection between pupils, school and their wider families. Worship connects the Gospel message to everyday life, encouraging pupils to live out Catholic social teaching through action, justice and compassion. Scripture is a prominent feature of daily prayer which results in pupils reflecting on its messages with confidence.

Prayer and liturgy make a significant contribution to the school's Catholic identity, shaping its culture, ethos and daily life. School leaders are committed to prayer and liturgy, and they ensure that pupils are not only participants but active leaders in their faith and spiritual development. School leadership is highly effective in ensuring strong provision and continuing improvement for prayer and liturgy through careful feedback and support for staff. Leadership of prayer and liturgy is strong and visionary, supported by the chaplain and committed staff who model faith in action. Staff formation is a priority for leaders and governors. Evaluation of impact is always a focus for the school, and there is good reporting to governors who regularly visit the school to monitor provision. This enables them to triangulate the reporting that they receive from leaders. Strong leadership at all levels ensures that prayer and liturgy are always a focus for the school and remain part of an ongoing cycle of improvement and renewal.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	St John Henry Newman
School unique reference number (URN)	137895
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9195413
Full postal address of the school	Hitchin Road, Stevenage, SG1 4AE
School phone number	01438 314643
Headteacher or Head of School	Mr David Carrasco-Morley
Chair of Governors	Mr Philip Farr
School Website	<a href="http://www.jhn.herts.sch.uk">www.jhn.herts.sch.uk</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non Selective
Age-range of pupils	11 - 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	07 November 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

## The Inspection Team

Jo-Anne Hoarty Lead

Gerard Devlin

John Adams

Paul Mccahill

## 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