



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE INSPECTION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND ACADEMIES



Finchley Catholic High School

URN: 101362

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster

19 March 2026 – 20 March 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

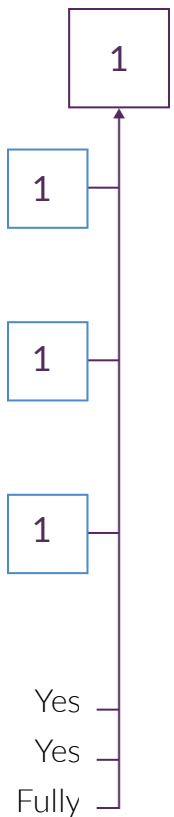
Collective worship (p.7)

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



Yes

Yes

Fully

What the school does well

- The Catholic ethos of the school is exemplary and pervades all aspects of school life.
- The staff are fully committed to the students and ensure they are known and loved.
- The behaviour of students is excellent, reflecting the high expectations from staff and leaders.
- Teachers are passionate about teaching religious education and have been well supported in implementing the new Religious Education Directory.
- Prayer and liturgy are woven into the daily life of the school, and the prayer spaces and displays demonstrate the lived commitment to Catholic life.

What the school needs to improve

- Revisit and re-evaluate the school mission statement so that it is known and shared by all members of the school community.
- Adapt learning strategies particularly at Key Stage 3, to ensure consistent good practice, and provide challenge for students of all abilities.
- Introduce a wider variety of prayer experiences in prayer and liturgy activities.

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

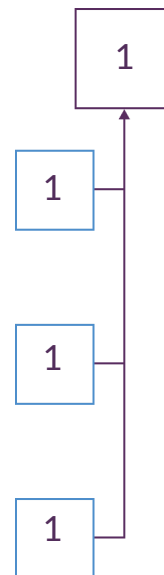
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



Finchley Catholic High School is a community where students are known and loved. The family feel to the school means students are happy, safe and secure, and staff feel valued and trusted. The Catholic ethos is deeply embedded and lived out by students and staff who show a mutual respect for each other, and they work together in demonstrating a strong faith and commitment to the needs of the poor. During the inspection sixth form students and some staff were involved in 'Brave the Shave' which raised a substantial amount of money for Noah's Ark Hospice. This is just one of the many Catholic social teaching events that happen during the school year. One student said, 'we learn at Finchley Catholic High School the importance to not be a by-stander, but rather an up-stander'. The behaviour of students is exemplary and one of the priests who serve the school remarked, 'the staff are very attentive to student needs which encourages good behaviour in Mass but also around school'. Students are actively engaged in working with the lay chaplain in planning and evaluating prayer and liturgy in school and there is a broad range of extra-curricular Catholic life and mission activities which support and deepen student understanding of the common good and justice and peace issues.

The provision for Catholic life and mission is outstanding, and the Catholic ethos is a lived experience across the school. Staff are excellent role models to students and excel at being witnesses to Catholic tradition and practice. The pastoral care of students is extremely strong, and the most vulnerable students are supported and monitored daily. The school is a fully inclusive and welcoming community, and the dignity of each individual is recognised and celebrated, rooted in the values of love, respect and service. Chaplaincy is well established

and students and staff welcome the support they receive. The physical environment powerfully reflects the vibrant Catholic atmosphere with its buildings named after saints, the chapel being at the centre of the school and the peace garden being well used and cared for. Catholic social teaching is explicitly promoted and actively lived, forming compassionate, just and outward-looking young people. Relationships, sex, and health education is carefully planned and taught across the school in line with diocesan requirements.

The leadership of Catholic life and mission at the school is inspirational and coherent and the new headteacher has a charismatic vision for the school, which means that Christ is at the heart of the school. The school has a very positive link with the diocese and receives the strong support of several priests from the local parishes. Parents are very complimentary about the school and welcome the high-quality pastoral care the school delivers. One parent commented 'religious education and Catholic life are a priority for the school, and this supports my family too'. Staff enjoy working at the school and feel leaders and governors have their welfare at the front of their decisions. Governors wholeheartedly support the Catholic nature of the school and are very aware of the school's strengths and areas of development. The school's mission statement needs to be revisited so that it is understood and shared by all members of the school community. The quality of the school's self-evaluation by leaders and governors demonstrates they know their school well and this is supported by comments from students, staff and parents.

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

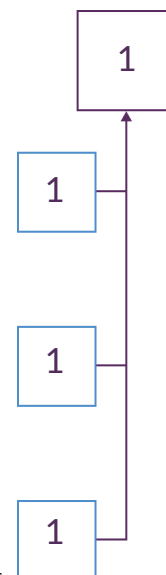
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Students at Finchley Catholic High School are developing excellent knowledge and skills and speak confidently about their enjoyment and learning in religious education. Student outcomes in religious education are very strong and reflect exceptional engagement and a rich understanding of the Catholic faith. GCSE results are consistently above national and local averages, and the department is performing at least on a par with other core subjects such as English and Maths. Religious literacy is robust and the implementation of the Directory is enhancing students' knowledge and love of this subject. Students ask incisive and challenging questions of teachers in their quest to know more and to develop their own faith further. A Year 12 student in core religious education said, 'religious education has helped me to understand Jesus better and how he is relevant to my life.' Students produce work of a high quality and take pride in their books; they have a very good understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Sixth Form students praise the core religious education programme, recognising the impact it has on their understanding of key philosophical and ethical issues as well as developing their critical thinking skills.

Religious education provision at Finchley Catholic High School is outstanding, driven by a passionate, deeply committed and unified team of teachers who teach high quality and engaging lessons. Staff have high expectations and know their students very well, making good use of class context and data information in order to focus on the needs of individual students. Staff questioning is robust and effective in deepening students' learning, and consistent routines across the department enable effective learning to take place. There is still

the need to adapt some learning activities so that all students are challenged, particularly at Key Stage 3. Staff feedback to students in a variety of ways, and students' achievements are celebrated through merit and discipleship house points. The department has introduced assessment sheets to assist in their implementation of the Directory, to ensure students receive effective diagnostic feedback. Lessons are characterised by a strong emphasis on oracy, allowing students to articulate their ideas clearly, engage in thoughtful discussion, and develop critical thinking skills. Therefore, students are not only achieving excellent academic outcomes but are also developing the knowledge, skills and confidence to live out their faith with understanding, purpose and commitment.

The leadership of the department is very strategic and supportive of colleagues, and this ensures consistent high quality religious education. The department leader has a passion for religious education, and her vision for developing religiously literate young people who can reflect spiritually, ethically and theologically on their own lives is shared in all classrooms. The introduction of the Directory has been carefully planned and is already showing significant impact on students' religious literacy. Religious education is the core of the core curriculum, and the dignity of each individual student is the main focus of each teacher. The core religious education at Key Stage 5 is exemplary in terms of planning and pedagogy, resulting in engaging lessons that students want to attend. Governors are fully engaged in monitoring and sustaining high standards through rigorous questioning and detailed reports. Through strong faith driven leadership, religious education at Finchley Catholic High School thrives as an academically challenging subject which helps students to be spiritually enriched. The self-evaluation of religious education by leaders and governors is very accurate and has resulted in the department continuing to improve.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

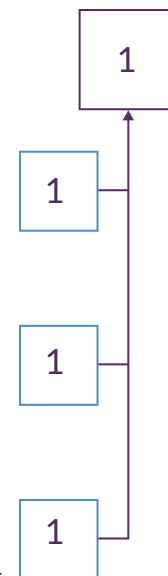
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

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 punctuate the daily life of the school and students play a significant role in planning and leading prayer. Every tutor period and religious education lesson begins with prayer. The Liturgy leaders, with the support of the lay chaplain, meet regularly to confidently plan and lead prayer across the school. Every classroom has a prayer space and there is the opportunity for students to attend the Rosary Club every week. During the inspection, Year 13 students led the stations of the cross, and read reflections written by students for each station, reflecting on what happened to Jesus and applying it to their own life. The experience was profound, and all students participated with respect and reverence. Celebrations of the word have a clear structure, and student participation and leadership are encouraged and valued. A Year 9 student playing the piano as students entered the assembly both enhanced and created a spiritual atmosphere. Students value highly the liturgical provision that is provided for them and participate actively in prayer and worship. Students take part in liturgical ministries in Mass, such as being readers and musicians.

Provision for prayer and liturgy at Finchley Catholic High School is outstanding, offering a rich and varied programme of prayers from the Catholic tradition. The range of prayer and liturgy provided by the school is very full, but there is still scope for a wider experience of creative prayer and opportunities for silent reflection. The use of scripture is embedded in the liturgical life of the school and is linked to the weekly theme. The beautiful chapel at the heart of the school and the oratory are available for students and staff to use when they wish. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is available to students during Advent and Lent and a significant number of students in all Year groups attend. The chaplaincy team play a pivotal role in

coordinating and enhancing worship and encouraging students to write their own prayers and intentions which are then displayed on prayer boards around school. Students also have the opportunity to download a link on the school website so they can write their petitions. Staff are very skilful at modelling prayer to students, and liturgy leaders are good examples of the impact this formation training has had. The school also has a prayer room for members of the school who are from other faiths, so they can fulfil their own prayer commitments. Through these comprehensive and varied opportunities, students experience prayer and worship as meaningful, relevant and central to their spiritual development and daily life.

Finchley Catholic High School has a clear and effective prayer and liturgy policy, and leaders have planned a coherent annual plan of provision which guides prayer and liturgy throughout the year. Every prayer and liturgy event has a named person or group of students who are responsible for planning and leading it. Leaders are passionate about the importance of prayer and liturgy and understand it is vital in underpinning the Catholic ethos of the school as well as strengthening its Catholic identity. The training and formation of students and staff is very good, and staff appreciate the support they have been given in leading prayer during tutor time. The school uses a wide variety of approaches to monitor and evaluate prayer, and students form an integral part of this process. The senior leadership team lead with integrity and a lived expression of faith, fostering a culture where students actively plan and lead prayer, providing an outstanding experience of prayer and worship.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Finchley Catholic High School
School unique reference number (URN)	101362
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3025405
Full postal address of the school	Woodside Lane, London, N12 8TA
School phone number	0208 445 0105
Headteacher or Head of School	Mr Ciran Stapleton
Chair of Governors	Mrs Jane Inzani
School Website	www.finchleycatholic.org.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non Selective
Age-range of pupils	11 - 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Date of last denominational inspection	13 March 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The Inspection Team

Tom Reilly Lead

Susan Grace

Winnie Greer

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