

Saint Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy

URN: 139009

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Nottingham

19–20 March 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

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

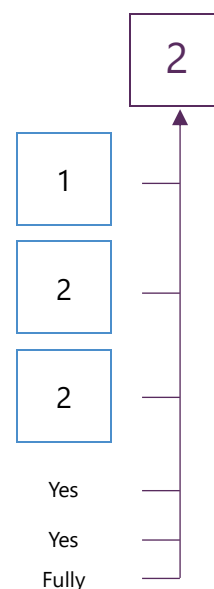
Collective worship (p.7)

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



Compliance statement

- The school ensures that a minimum of 10% of the timetable is allocated to the teaching of religious education and follows a programme of study aligned with the requirements of the bishops' conference.
- The school follows all additional requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- The school has ensured that all areas of improvement from the previous inspection have been addressed.

What the school does well

- Pupils feel secure and valued within the school community. Pupils describe Saint Mary's as a joyful place to be.
- Leaders and governors demonstrate a deep and unwavering commitment to the school's Catholic mission. They ensure that Christ is at the heart of every policy and decision, with the Catholic ethos reflected clearly in all aspects of school life.
- The school's pastoral care is exemplary, providing unwavering support to all pupils, especially the most vulnerable.
- The school makes exceptional use of sacred spaces, creating an environment that fosters reverence and reflection.
- The school celebrates the liturgical calendar with creativity and reverence, fostering a strong sense of spiritual connection and community within the school and parish.

What the school needs to improve

- Make explicit the links between Catholic social teaching and learning across the school curriculum.
- Ensure that feedback in religious education is consistently clear and constructive, providing pupils with specific guidance on how to improve and deepen their learning.
- Support pupils to evaluate liturgical celebrations independently, informing future planning so that worship remains meaningful and reflective of pupils' spiritual needs.

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

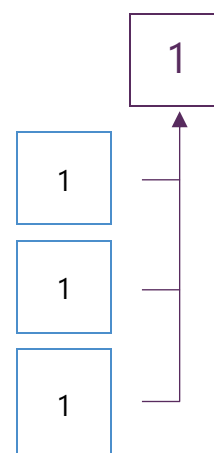
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 mission statement, 'We value all in the name of Jesus Christ', is well known and understood by the school community at Saint Mary's. Pupils and staff reflect on the mission at the start of each year and live it out in their daily interactions. Their participation in liturgical and charitable activities, such as the school food bank 'Give what you can, take what you need' and the Shoe Box Appeal, reflect a genuine commitment to the school's mission. Pupils feel secure and valued within the school community: 'Joy is spread through Jesus in this school'. Their confidence and positive self-image are evident. Pupils display a strong moral compass, rooted in the teachings of Jesus Christ and Catholic social teaching. They demonstrate a clear understanding of the principles behind their actions, such as fundraising for Harbour Place and Cafod's Big Lent Walk. A Year 3 pupil remarked, 'Catholic social teaching is all about the service of others'. Pupils recognise the dignity of each person and show respect for others. Their thoughtful behaviour creates a calm and harmonious environment.

A nurturing atmosphere ensures that every pupil feels valued and supported. Staff consistently exemplify gospel values in their interactions, serving as positive role models. One staff member noted, 'Faith draws staff back to work in the school'. Staff actively promote the school's Catholic ethos through initiatives which enhance pupils' spiritual and moral development, such as preparation for Mass and regular pastoral 'check-ins'. Pastoral care is exemplary, providing unwavering support, particularly to the most vulnerable. Practical support for families reflects the school's commitment to inclusivity and social justice. Parents praise staff for knowing their children 'inside out' and describe this as 'very special'. The chaplaincy provision is highly valued, with pupils actively leading and participating in chaplaincy activities, enhancing their spiritual formation. The chaplaincy provision is vibrant and integral, with pupils taking active leadership

roles. The school environment reflects its Catholic identity through sacred spaces and religious symbols which invite prayer and reflection. The curriculum for relationships, sex and health education aligns with Catholic teaching, helping pupils understand the value of human relationships and personal dignity.

Leaders and governors demonstrate a deep commitment to the school's Catholic mission, ensuring that Christ is at the heart of every policy and decision. The school's leadership team articulates a clear vision guiding the community effectively and fostering a deep sense of belonging. Leaders and governors actively promote the bishop's vision for the diocese, maintaining a strong partnership with the diocese and local parishes. This collaboration extends beyond participation, with the school actively contributing to diocesan initiatives. The parish priest plays a central and valued role in the life of the school, providing spiritual guidance and strengthening the school's Catholic identity. As a result, pupils are actively involved in parish life. Leaders and governors have also established strong and effective partnerships with parents. Parents are actively involved in school life, including Christmas wreath-making, nativity plays, carol services, and coffee mornings. One parent remarked, 'My child taught me how to pray'. A strong commitment to Catholic social teaching ensures that decisions and resources are directed towards supporting the most vulnerable. Leaders demonstrate respect for staff dignity through a supportive environment which values their well-being. The wider curriculum reflects Catholic values, with religious education at its core, though pupils are not always aware of the Catholic values to be found within and across different subjects in their learning. Leaders and governors' strategic vision ensures the spiritual, moral, and personal development of pupils, creating a vibrant and faith-filled community.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

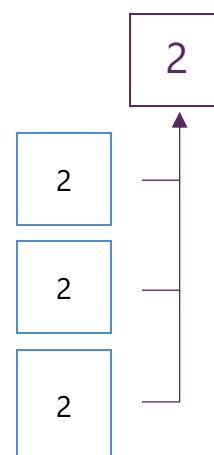
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 demonstrate a secure understanding of religious concepts and apply their knowledge confidently in different contexts. They engage positively with the curriculum, developing a solid foundation in scripture, doctrine, and Catholic teaching. Progress in religious education is consistent, with clear evidence of pupils building on prior knowledge and deepening their understanding over time. Pupils are confident in using religious language and articulating key theological concepts. They reflect thoughtfully on issues of faith and morality, applying Catholic teaching to their daily lives. They respond well to questioning, recalling key learning and engaging critically with religious topics. Lessons are purposeful and reflective, with pupils working independently and collaboratively to explore religious themes. They engage enthusiastically with tasks and demonstrate perseverance when faced with challenges. Their work reflects effort, understanding, and a growing ability to engage with complex theological ideas. Pupils actively participate in discussions and group activities, fostering a positive and respectful classroom atmosphere. They value the opportunity to explore their faith, which enhances their spiritual and moral development. Pupils are becoming more aware of their progress and show a willingness to reflect and improve. Their attainment in religious education is rapidly improving, reflecting the quality of teaching and the well-structured curriculum.

Teachers demonstrate a secure understanding of Catholic teaching and confidently deliver the religious education curriculum. Their strong subject knowledge enables them to explain theological ideas clearly, supporting pupils' understanding and engagement. High expectations for pupils' engagement and progress are evident in well-structured lessons that challenge pupils to think deeply. Lessons are thoughtfully sequenced, ensuring pupils build on prior knowledge and deepen their understanding over time. Planning reflects the needs of different groups of pupils, enabling all to access and succeed in religious education. Teachers use questioning

effectively to assess understanding and promote deeper thinking. Pupils respond confidently, developing their ability to articulate thoughtful and reflective answers. Feedback from teachers, though helpful and positive, does not focus sharply on helping pupils to understand how to improve and deepen their learning. Pupils' work and effort are regularly celebrated, contributing to a positive and motivating learning environment. Religious education lessons provide meaningful opportunities for pupils to explore moral and spiritual issues. Pupils reflect on their learning and consider how it applies to their own lives and relationships. A range of resources and teaching approaches, including discussion, creative expression, and independent research, enrich pupils' experience and deepen their understanding of religious education. Visits to places of worship, guest speakers, and themed events enhance pupils' understanding of faith. For example, Jewish visitors supported learning about Judaism, and Year 6 pupils visited the Nottingham Diocesan Catholic Youth Service at The Briars to experience faith beyond the school setting.

Leaders and governors ensure that the religious education curriculum provides a coherent programme which supports pupils' spiritual and academic growth. Religious education is given parity with other core subjects in terms of time, staffing, and resources, reflecting its status as a priority in whole-school improvement planning. Professional development for staff is effective, enhancing both subject knowledge and pedagogy. The religious education leader provides effective support and guidance to colleagues. This strong subject leadership focuses on improving pupil outcomes and maintaining the integrity of the curriculum. The curriculum is carefully designed to ensure that pupils make clear progress in their knowledge and understanding. The curriculum is responsive to the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities and higher-attaining pupils, with adapted tasks and targeted support enabling all to engage meaningfully. Leaders and governors regularly evaluate the quality of religious education through monitoring and analysis of outcomes. Feedback from pupils and staff informs strategic improvements, ensuring the curriculum remains effective.

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

2

Leadership

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

2

2

Pupils engage wholeheartedly in the prayer and liturgical life of the school, participating actively and confidently. Their thoughtful responses and the respectful atmosphere they help to create reflect a genuine understanding of the significance of prayer and reflection in their lives. The school provides a variety of opportunities for pupils to experience different forms of prayer and worship throughout the liturgical year. Pupils demonstrate an awareness of the changing seasons within the Church and engage meaningfully in a range of liturgy and prayer styles which reflect the richness of Catholic tradition. Pupils take an active role in preparing and leading aspects of prayer and liturgy, supported by staff who nurture their confidence and understanding. They are at an early stage of evaluating liturgical celebrations more independently, although this feedback is rarely used to inform and shape future celebrations. Pupils make meaningful connections between their learning and their faith, understanding how prayer informs their daily lives and decisions. This deepens their sense of responsibility and encourages them to act with compassion and integrity in their relationships with others.

Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school. Opportunities for prayer are woven into the school day, with staff and pupils engaging naturally and reverently in these moments of reflection. Significant moments in the school year are marked by well-prepared liturgical celebrations. Pupils value moments of silence, describing them as important for reflection and connection with their faith. Pupils experience a range of prayer styles, including scripture, music, silence, and spontaneous prayer, which deepens their understanding of Catholic worship. Scripture is thoughtfully incorporated into celebrations of the word, helping pupils reflect on how messages relate to their lives and faith journey. Staff demonstrate a strong commitment to leading and participating in prayer and liturgy. They model reverence and attentiveness, encouraging pupils to engage fully. Staff are confident in leading these times, guiding pupils

effectively in preparing and delivering celebrations of the word, though they do not consistently ensure that pupils have the opportunity to independently evaluate in order to plan ahead for future improvements. The school makes exceptional use of sacred spaces, such as prayer corners and the chapel, fostering reverence and reflection. Strong partnerships with families and the parish community enhance the school's Catholic identity, with parents and parishioners actively involved in key liturgical events and celebrations.

School policies reflect a clear commitment to the importance of prayer and liturgy. The school has a structured strategy for developing staff and pupil skills in leading prayer and reflection. Training is provided to build staff confidence in planning and delivering celebrations of the word, while pupils are supported in taking on leadership roles. Staff have access to regular professional development, which combines theological understanding with practical skills for leading prayer and liturgy. The school celebrates the liturgical calendar with creativity and reverence. School leaders, including governors, demonstrate a secure understanding of Catholic worship and provide clear guidance and support to staff in planning and delivering high-quality celebrations of the word. They are committed to enhancing the quality of prayer and liturgy, regularly monitoring its impact on pupils' spiritual development. The school invests thoughtfully in resources to support this important aspect of school life. Sacred spaces are well-maintained, and a wide range of approaches and materials are used, including music, art, and scripture, to enhance the worship experiences of all.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Saint Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	139009
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8122010
Full postal address of the school	Saint Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy, Wellington Street, Grimsby, DN32 7JX
School phone number	01472 357982
Headteacher	Joseph O'Connor
Chair of local governing body	Graham Purdue
School Website	www.saintmarysprimarygrimsby.co.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Our Lady Of Lourdes Catholic Multi-Academy Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	28 March 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	2 - Good

The inspection team

Rachael Snowdon-Poole
Bernadette Grimley

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

