

Our Lady's Catholic Primary School

URN: 148673

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Northampton

06–07 February 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

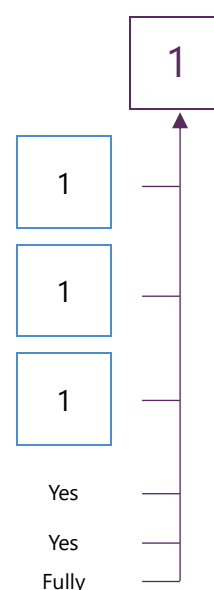
Collective worship (p.7)

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 is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' conference.
- The school is fully compliant with the additional requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- All areas for improvement outlined in the previous diocesan inspection report have been addressed in full.

What the school does well

- The mission of Our Lady's as a 'A place of learning - A community of Christ', is lived with authenticity throughout the whole school community.
- A culture of high expectations and outstanding collaboration by leaders and governors ensures excellent outcomes in religious education.
- Pupils are outstanding ambassadors for the school, embodying a culture of empathy, kindness and respect through the ideals of Catholic social teaching.
- The school has high expectations and provides excellent opportunities for pupils to put their faith into practice.
- The many and varied opportunities for prayer and liturgy encourage strong links between home, school and local parishes.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop an effective system which enables pupils to play an active role in evaluating all areas of their Catholic school.
- Work systematically with other schools in the Trust to develop robust moderation and assessment as the new *Religious Education Directory* becomes increasingly established.
- Provide more frequent opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their curiosity and understanding of religious education through asking incisive questions of adults.

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

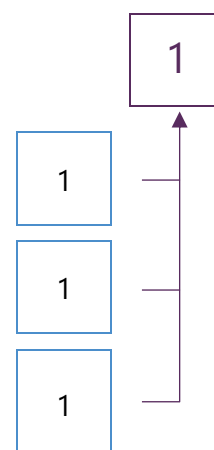
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 Catholic life and mission at Our Lady's is outstanding. Pupils flourish as a result of the numerous opportunities provided for them and play an active role in the school which significantly enhances their lived experience. Through their thorough understanding of Catholic social teaching, pupils are able to live out their faith and know what they need to do to make a difference in the world. The influence of Catholic social teaching is inspirational and enables pupils to speak without hesitation about the common good. In discussions with pupils, they were able to talk at length about how their learning has taught them to put their faith into action. One pupil spoke about how they realised that they were using paper worksheets unnecessarily in Maths and, in order to be 'stewards of creation,' decided to use their laptops instead to reduce paper waste. Another mentioned the influence of their current class book, 'The Arrival,' based around refugees and immigration which they linked to the theme around 'preferential options for the poor and vulnerable'. Their leadership roles across all areas of the school support them in the understanding that they are loved and valued. They show the utmost care and respect for one another in their learning both in and out of the classroom.

Comments from the parent survey support the strong provision for pupils at Our Lady's: 'When I see what it means to my children, and I see what they are being taught, kindness, community, hope, faith... it makes me remember what it means to me as an adult too! The school's mission isn't just about academic achievement; it's about shaping well-rounded individuals with strong values'. The school's mission, based on the founding 'Poor Sisters of the Mother of God', is clear and unambiguous. Staff embrace the mission readily and, in discussion with the inspection team, spoke passionately about their focus on inclusion for each pupil. Roles in the school, based on the theme of 'Leadership - leading with love', include the pupil leadership team, OLS Parliament committees for the environment, arts, sports and wellbeing, mini-Vinnies, faith ambassadors, soul beats band leaders, house captains and subject leaders. Chaplaincy provision is a real strength of the school, and the leadership team have

been visionary in appointing a lay chaplain who encourages and inspires the children with an array of creative, high-quality opportunities for the spiritual and moral development of pupils and staff. The provision for relationships and health education is robust and rooted in the teaching of the Church.

The self-evaluation document is a coherent, honest evaluation of the school and it is evident that this is shared by all relevant stakeholders. Inspired by the headteacher's ambitious vision of success for every pupil in the school, governors, leaders and staff support this vision through a relentless commitment to empowering every pupil to value and contribute to the school's mission. Policy and practice show extraordinary commitment to the well-being of all staff. This was reflected in the many staff wanting to speak to the inspection team, the outstanding response in the staff survey and during more formal discussions with staff. Caring for the most vulnerable pupils and families is at the heart of this school. They know the pupils exceptionally well and go above and beyond to celebrate all their achievements. This was evident in the gratitude assembly where each member of staff was able to celebrate and congratulate individual pupils. Governors are very much involved in school life and express their admiration for the leadership team, most notably in how articulate the pupils are in linking Catholic social teaching to their learning across the curriculum. The chair of governors accurately describes the school as 'a place of learning and a community in Christ.'

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

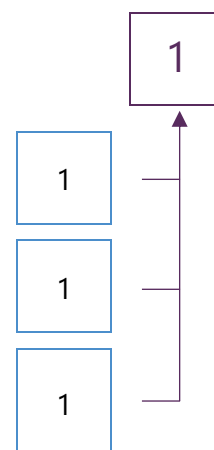
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



The religious literacy of the pupils at Our Lady's is exemplary; from the youngest pupils in Reception, who are able to articulate that 'Jesus is the son of God' to Year 6 pupils who are able to confidently articulate their learning with links to Catholic social teaching. Learning about 'stewardship,' one pupil expressed, 'our planet is not ours to use, it is a treasure to behold'. The consistent use of the end of topic 'going forth' reflections show the depth of their understanding and how they are able to adapt what they have learnt to real life situations. An example of this was pupils making relevant links to their learning about Our Lady saying 'yes' to God and explaining the importance of women in the world and potential gender inequality. Pupils spoke with passion around their learning during Black History month which focused on 'rights and responsibilities' and the lack of rights of black people throughout history. Pupils can explain that their learning in religious education inspires them to take action and are fully involved in charitable activities such as the Eco Café, where they serve parents and fellow pupils in order to raise money for the school garden, as well as raising money for a variety of charities locally, nationally and internationally.

The teaching of religious education exemplifies consistently high standards across the school. As a result of excellent subject knowledge, teachers engage pupils in lessons that are creative and demonstrate the high level of confidence teachers have in teaching RE. Teaching is adapted skilfully to meet the needs of all learners. Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities achieve well with clearly planned scaffolding to support them. Teachers have an excellent understanding of the impact religious education has on the moral and spiritual development of pupils. In a lesson on the 'Beatitudes,' pupils were able to discuss 'how we can transform our communities if we love our neighbours', using Blessed Carlo Acutis as an example. Pupils in Year 6 were skilful at linking the message of scripture to their own lives. For example, they studied Jesus healing a blind man and explained that 'being blind doesn't just mean you can't see, it can mean you don't feel Jesus' love'.

Leaders are ambitious in ensuring the curriculum for religious education is a faithful expression of the *Directory*. Leaders are innovative in using the best examples of planning from various diocese to ensure the progression of skills.

Religious education is central to the curriculum and has full parity with other core curriculum subjects. There is a systematic approach to the teaching of religious education which allows for consistency across the school. The school now needs to adopt more robust systems of moderation and assessment in order to more accurately track pupils' progress. Given the pupils' outstanding religious literacy, they also need to lessen the amount of teacher direction in lessons and provide ample time for pupils to share their curiosity and to ask incisive questions. Governors, with leaders, regularly monitor and evaluate the teaching of religious education across the school and this results in strategic action and forward planning which leads to outstanding outcomes.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

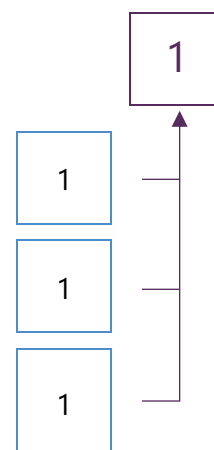
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

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



Pupils highly value the many and varied experiences of prayer and liturgy at Our Lady's. Innovative initiatives such as the 'Soul Beats Band', inspire pupils to participate fully during whole school celebrations of the word. Pupils contribute to assemblies by playing guitars, percussion instruments and conducting the band, and the school excels at ensuring the inclusion of all pupils during collective worship. Patterns of prayer are embedded in the daily life of the school with pupils demonstrating confidence in articulating the ways in which prayer and liturgy influences their lives. Pupil worship encompasses both traditional Catholic prayers and more spontaneous and varied types of prayer. During the assembly observed during the inspection, pupils prayed spontaneously when invited to by the headteacher. Scripture, linked to the appropriate liturgical season, is an integral part of all prayer in the school. During a pupil interview, one pupil explained that with the help of the school's artist in residence, they were making silk paintings for the Jubilee Year of Hope, and these would be displayed in the prayer area to help them reflect on this special jubilee year. During celebrations of the word observed during the inspection, pupils were confident in leading in both their own year groups and others. The school now needs to develop opportunities for pupils to evaluate routines within the school and to develop their evaluation skills in order to keep developing excellent practice. Pupils take turns in leading collective worship and greatly value the collaboration with their peers. They are reverent in moments of silence and reflective in their responses.

Our Lady's ensures outstanding provision for prayer and liturgy which has a strong influence on the school community and supports their faith formation. In the staff survey, a member of staff shared, 'My own faith is nurtured here'. This was also confirmed in a discussion with the parish priest who shared his gratitude for the school's outstanding links with the local parishes. Pupils and families are encouraged to attend Mass, and the times of Masses are advertised on displays around the school and in weekly newsletters. Our Lady's prides itself on the consistency of pupil-led collective worship

which is truly authentic. Pupils choose prepared resources to support them in leading prayer and liturgy and use a range of spaces around the school to gather and pray together. The school's prayer area is used effectively as a place for both quiet reflection and joyful praise.

Leaders, including Governors are keen to prioritise the evaluation of the quality of prayer and liturgy and this is reflective in their self-evaluation. The headteacher is an outstanding role model for the whole school community, leading prayer and liturgy with humility and authenticity. The leadership team work collaboratively with outstanding commitment to encourage excellent practices which are worthy of sharing. Examples observed during the inspection include the connection of the whole school community during assemblies and in class prayer by holding hands during the Our Father, and the ringing of the school bell to indicate a time to gather for celebrations of the word in their respective classrooms. The school also offers a wide range of opportunities for pupils to participate in prayer during the school day, such as 'adoration' and staff are highly skilled in helping pupils to confidently plan well-constructed prayer and liturgy. Parents are invited to attend whole school Masses, and the sacrament of Reconciliation is offered during Advent and Lent. The school chaplain, with the school's leadership team, inspire the community through their commitment to local parishes. Ongoing professional development opportunities for staff ensure consistency in the outstanding outcomes of prayer and liturgy.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Our Lady's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	148673
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8253375
Full postal address of the school	Our Lady's Catholic Primary School, Amersham Road, Chesham Bois, Amersham, HP6 5PL
School phone number	001494726390
Headteacher	Mark Holdsworth
Chair of local governing body	Mark Haines
School Website	www.olschesham.co.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	June 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

Monica McCarthy
Katie Linnane

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