



Our Lady's Catholic High School, Preston

URN: 119779

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Lancaster

27–28 November 2024

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

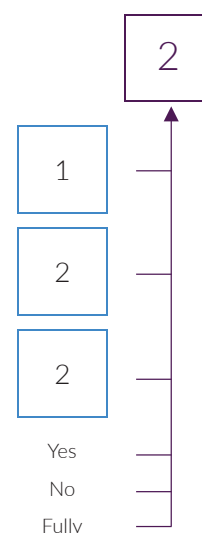
Collective worship (p.7)

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

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

The school is fully compliant with all 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 not fully compliant with any additional requirements laid down by the Bishop of Lancaster regarding governance.
- The school has responded fully to the areas for improvement from the previous Catholic school inspection.

What the school does well

- Christ is clearly at the centre of the school and his presence is recognised throughout its daily life and work.
- There is a strong culture of welcome, evident in the warmth of relationships and respect for all.
- A Jesuit model for teaching the virtues has been successfully introduced and is fully embraced by the whole community.
- Outcomes at Key Stage 4 (in GCSE Religious Education) are strong and consistent.

What the school needs to improve

- The mission statement, with its 'principles and virtues', should be further unified in dialogue with staff and students, to ensure it expresses the school's unique charism more clearly and succinctly.
- Further work should be done to explore the concept of the Catholic curriculum and embed links with the mission and ethos across all subjects.
- Catholic self-evaluation should be more realistically related to the new inspection framework and better evidenced by leaders and governors.

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

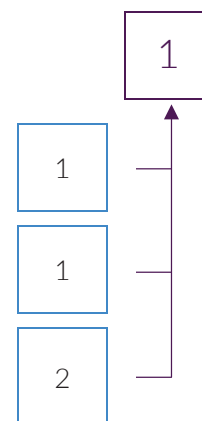
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



Students strongly value the Catholic ethos at Our Lady's. The 'One of Ours' virtues – drawn from a Jesuit model – help them articulate the school's caring charism and are deeply embedded and well understood. Not only can they talk about them they can also apply them in very practical ways. In fact, it is very clear that students feel valued and cared for in the supportive atmosphere of Our Lady's, which they describe as 'a special school for everyone' where 'we are safe and loved'. Equally clear is their understanding that the school is committed to following Jesus and his example in the Gospels; this is anchored in the values and virtues they seek to live by, and their moral development is exceptional. Some students have a clear understanding of aspects of Catholic social teaching and can discuss them. Others find it more difficult to articulate these, though there is a widespread living out of the underlying principles. As a result, there is very little poor behaviour in the school; attitudes are almost always positive and, in many cases, exemplary. Students are clear that this is a Catholic school with a welcome for all, including those of other faiths, and appreciate its ethos, opportunities and chaplaincy.

The 'One of Ours' virtues are well known and lived out, but their relationship with wider aspects of the mission statement could be more clearly developed, drawing on the Word of God and historical links to the Jesuit story. Nonetheless, staff and students enthusiastically embrace the school's mission, and there is a real sense of community at Our Lady's – a genuine 'School of Sanctuary' – particularly for those who are most vulnerable. Students say: 'it doesn't matter who you are or where you come from, you are welcome here'. That welcome extends to those of other faiths or those who are questioning. Inspiring staff foster warm relationships and high expectations: pastoral care is of the highest quality, bespoke to student need and expert in approach. The school environment also speaks clearly of its Catholic identity, not least through

the beautiful chapel at its heart. Displays in every area underline the school's values. Though the lay chaplain could not be present during our visit, there is strong evidence that chaplaincy is central and provides many opportunities to all for religious development. The provision for relationships, sex and health education meets statutory and diocesan requirements, uses resources consistent with the Catholic faith, and has been well planned.

Leaders and governors are committed in their role as guardians of Catholic life and mission, ensuring it is reflected in policies and procedures. Differences, however, remain between the bishop's vision for Catholic education in the diocese and the school's own vision for the future, and the number of foundation governors has fallen below what it should be. Our Lady's does, however, serve the diocesan family of schools, not least through the Catholic Teaching Alliance and other examples of collaboration and support. Leaders and governors work closely with parents, bearing particular witness to the preferential option for the poor in Catholic social teaching. The overall curriculum at Our Lady's goes some way towards reflecting the Catholic understanding of reality, but the coherence of this could be further developed. In the same way, while the mission and ethos takes precedence in governing board meetings and strategic planning, self-assessment could be more robust, along with the recording of interventions that lead to improvement. While there is some student participation in the evaluation of Catholic life, this is also an area which could be further developed. Professional development on Catholic life and mission is well-resourced and scheduled, with new staff feeling well supported. They say that the head teacher and other leaders are always 'more than happy to spend time explaining different parts of Catholic teaching'.

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

2

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education

2

2

Students develop strong understanding, knowledge and skills in religious education, not least because the department is working in a timely way to introduce the new *Religious Education Directory*. Progress is consistent, well supported and monitored by teachers, who make it a priority - not least for those who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Students are generally religiously literate, and many can think theologically and ethically, connecting their learning to the demands of everyday life. When given opportunity, they express themselves confidently about what they have learned in religious education and more particularly from their virtues training. Independent working is good and evidenced in books. Taking advantage of strong scaffolding from teachers, students can produce work that shows signs of emerging individuality and creativity. In most lessons there is good engagement and, in a good number, evidence of enjoyment and enthusiasm. Behaviour is invariably good, and students are usually engaged. Peer and self-assessment is embedded, and students know what they need to do to improve. They largely achieve above the levels of other core subjects and national comparators at Key Stage 4, and this has been sustained over the last three years.

Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and pedagogy, and all have high expectations. There is consistency across all classes, although achieved within a certain freedom of materials and teaching styles. Good quality resources are a feature of lessons, and there is the opportunity for staff to share these, although there could be benefits in further coordination and shared development. Planning is good, and the staff work very hard to ensure that a variety of materials and approaches are used in each lesson, including close reading. Within every lesson, and in books, a particular strength is the way that new work is related to prior learning and specialist vocabulary is reinforced. Questioning is generally good, and in the best examples, opportunities are taken to use variety and maximise and extend

students' knowledge. Pupil effort is recognised by feedback both in their books and after tests, and more prominently celebrated if exceptional. As has been noted, moral development is strong in the school, and this is particularly so within religious education. More opportunity could perhaps be given to embed reflection in lessons, though it is recognised that we did not see lessons for all year groups, as Year 11 were undertaking their mock examinations and could not be observed.

Leaders, including the new acting principal teacher for religious education, are ensuring that the new Directory is being faithfully expressed in the curriculum, in a creative way. Religious education also enjoys parity of resources, based on a formula which takes into account the number of lessons. The subject is a priority for leaders, and the headteacher and his team take a strong interest in it. There is excellent CPD for practitioners and this is both varied and frequent with regard both to subject knowledge and teaching techniques. The acting principal teacher has made a good start in her role, has already innovated and has maintained strong features in the department. There is a firm focus on improving teaching and learning and this could be further nurtured as the wider vision for the department develops. The curriculum in religious education is very clearly sequential, increasingly demanding as students move through the school and their courses, and well planned. Engaging enrichment activities are provided that enhance learning. Self-evaluation however needs further rigour and sharper focus, in line with the inspection framework.

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	↑	2
Provision The quality of collective worship provided by the school	1		2
Leadership How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship	2		2

Students are very respectful of the many opportunities they are given to engage with prayer and liturgy, and most participate in quiet but positive ways. Some take the opportunities to read or lead intercessions, and those involved in the Chaplaincy and Faith in Action groups take more of a planning role, or even prepare creative PowerPoints, supported by the lay chaplain. The major seasons of the Church's year are well understood, and students encounter a variety of ways of praying during the different occasions of prayer and liturgy that punctuate the school term. The lay chaplain and others prepare students (and staff) well to lead specific aspects of prayer and liturgy. This suggests that there is capacity for more general liturgical formation that could further promote initiative and creativity. Some students and staff find it challenging, however, to make links between prayer and liturgy and the religious education curriculum. Students are also given general opportunities to reflect on their experiences of prayer and liturgy, but these could be developed in further detail for those directly involved in leadership, in order to ensure that prayer and liturgy fit well with student capacities and needs, and to secure a culture of continuous improvement.

Opportunities for varied prayer, liturgy and reflection are central to daily life at Our Lady's and occur whenever staff and students gather. More of the breadth and richness of Catholic tradition could now be incorporated. The use of seasonal and Sunday gospels is firmly embedded, but other riches from Scripture (from the Old Testament, Psalms or Epistles) could profitably be explored. Senior leaders and other staff embrace opportunities the leadership of prayer and liturgy, assisted by the lay chaplain who has been encouraged to provide creative materials to support staff and students in leading prayer and liturgy. The school is fortunate to enjoy the ministries of a deacon, a religious sister and committed lay people in its midst. A number of staff who lead assemblies and reflections do so in a deeply engaging and

theological way. The musical, dramatic and artistic gifts of students are included in liturgies, although this could be further nurtured. The beautiful chapel, chaplaincy room and public spaces bear witness to the importance they are accorded. Parents are invited to take part in liturgies as appropriate and the headteacher explained that there were good links with parish priests, although none was available for a meeting during our visit. Inspectors were, however, able to join in Mass celebrated by a local priest. The close proximity of the parish church is a resource (already used) which could perhaps be further developed.

While the school's policy on prayer and liturgy needs further detail and concrete guidance, it is well supplemented by the practical guidance given to staff and students in person, allowing progression appropriate to age and experience. There is a well-planned school calendar covering holy days of obligation and seasons, which could be further enriched by including other diocesan, local partnership feasts and occasions. Mass is regularly offered and access to the sacrament of reconciliation is offered at key times. Professional development in the area of leading prayer and liturgy is taken seriously, and staff are strongly supported by the lay chaplain and leaders in this area, who understand the range of ways that prayer and liturgy can form part of a school's life and its sources. Resources are effectively directed to this area, and those engaged in chaplaincy are well guided and supported. While leaders and governors do review prayer and liturgy, these could be evaluated in a more consistent and accurate way, in line with the guidance in the framework for inspection, and a more detailed record of this kept. Nonetheless, they clearly support and celebrate the liturgical life of the school.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Our Lady's Catholic High School
School unique reference number (URN)	119779
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8884606
Full postal address of the school	St Anthony's Drive, Fulwood, Preston, PR2 3SQ
School phone number	01772326900
Headteacher	Richard Charnock
Chair of Governors	Mark Murray
School Website	http://www.olchs.lancs.sch.uk/
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	January 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	1 - outstanding

The inspection team

Daveth Frost	Lead
Louise Byrne	Team
Louise Lavery	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