



St John Wall Catholic School

URN: 103534

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Birmingham

07–08 February 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

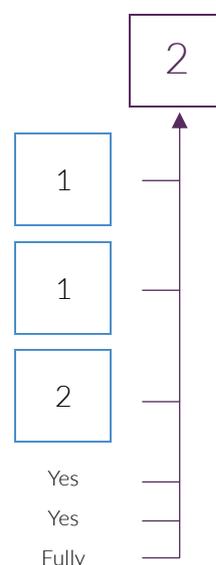
Collective worship (p.7)

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



What the school does well

- The mission statement and values are central to the school's life. They are owned and valued by all members of the community.
- Leaders and governors are passionate in their commitment to the school. They have created an inclusive culture where the diversity and uniqueness of every person are valued and celebrated.
- Students demonstrate a deep sense of belonging to this welcoming, friendly community. They feel safe, behave exceptionally well, and appreciate all the school offers.
- High-quality, ambitious leadership and teaching in religious education enable students to be confident, successful learners.
- Students and staff are provided with regular opportunities to participate in thoughtful prayer and liturgy, with the whole school community coming together in worship at the end of each school day.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase opportunities for all students to plan, lead and evaluate a wider range of prayer and liturgy reflective of their age and capacity.
- Provide Key Stage 3 students with opportunities to access their learning in religious education in a wide range of creative ways.
- Strengthen students' understanding of Catholic social teaching so they can link it to the teachings of Christ, and the school mission statement.

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

1

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

1

The school's mission statement, 'To educate each and every unique child in our care to hear and respond to what God calls them to be,' is central to its life. Students demonstrate a strong understanding of it and are incredibly proud to belong to the school. They value the school's inclusive ethos, which welcomes diversity and inclusion, celebrates it, and speaks of the importance of events such as 'Cultural Heritage Day' and the 'values@SJW' days. Students have a deep sense of self-worth and demonstrate respect and care for those of their faith and other faiths and backgrounds. Relationships between staff and students are highly positive, affirming, and supportive; student behaviour is excellent. Students are enthusiastic about their involvement in whole school initiatives, such as becoming a School of Sanctuary last academic year and working towards the LiveSimply Award this year. They participate in house competitions and activities to help others, such as Cafod, St Chad's Sanctuary, Stories of Hope and Home, and SIFA Fireside. They benefit from opportunities to participate in retreats. Students embrace the numerous leadership opportunities that exist and readily serve on the liturgy, well-being, Cafod, Saint Vincent de Paul, and sanctuary teams.

The mission statement is a clear and inspiring expression of the school's Catholic life. The head teacher and the assistant head teacher in charge of Catholic life (PICCL) are inspirational role models in ensuring that the school's Catholic identity underpins every aspect of school life and that every young person is welcome, provided for, and not just included but celebrated. Staff embrace this approach and are strong role models actively contributing to the school's faith life. The extensive pastoral team is highly skilled in working with students and their families, especially the most vulnerable. Leaders are also highly attentive to the needs of staff and have effective systems in place to support staff, who feel valued. The school environment and the

student house system effectively reflect its Catholic identity, and the school chapel is a calm, welcoming space. Two lay chaplains ably lead chaplaincy provision and offer a high-quality experience that genuinely empowers the students involved. Relationship, sex, and health education (RSHE) is carefully planned to reflect Catholic teachings and principles. Great care has been taken to ensure that what is taught is shared and understood by all parents.

Leaders and governors are passionate in their commitment to the mission statement and the school's Catholic character, seeing it as 'a Catholic school for all.' They ensure this is at the heart of every decision and is explicit in school policies and key documentation, which include appropriate passages from scripture. Leaders of all curriculum areas overtly link the contribution made by their subjects to the school's mission, and this is being extended to incorporate Catholic social teaching. Leaders and governors undertake thorough, regular monitoring of the Catholic life of the school and reference it in school improvement plans. Subsequent priorities for development are identified in an action plan. Leaders are proactive in working with parents, the parish and other schools and colleges to support the provision for every student and develop appropriate expertise. The school website and newsletter are vibrant and informative. High numbers of parents are appreciative of the school, saying it is a supportive and joyful community. High-quality induction and training opportunities are regular and valued by staff, who also appreciate the provision of well-being sessions.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

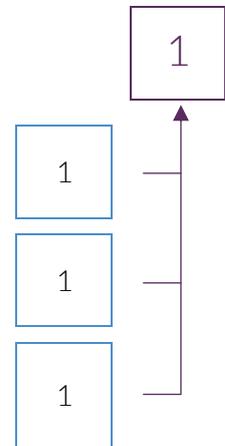
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Students consistently achieve exceptionally well in their learning in religious education, which is one of the school's most successful subjects. All groups of learners develop secure knowledge and understanding from their varied starting points and make excellent progress in each key stage. Student outcomes in GCSE Religious Studies are consistently amongst the highest in the diocese and continue to improve. Students enjoy their learning in religious education. They respond well to the structure of their lessons and regular opportunities to recall prior learning and make links in their learning. Students' religious literacy is strong. They confidently use and understand progressively more complex subject-specific vocabulary. Students show high levels of focus and concentration in their religious education lessons. Their attitudes are consistently positive, and their behaviour is excellent. They are fully committed to doing well, and the work in their exercise and assessment books is well presented. Students are proud of their progress and confidently speak about their learning. They clearly understand how well they are doing and, through the purple pen system, enhance and improve the work they have completed. They are confident in assessing their work and that of their peers.

Teachers display high levels of authentic subject knowledge and confidence in delivering religious education. They are ambitious for their students and create a positive, purposeful learning environment in which students are empowered to participate fully, and their questions are welcomed and valued. There is a tangible commitment to the subject amongst staff, with ongoing dialogue, collaboration, and reflection, ensuring a constant and successful strive for the highest standards. Teachers have a clear framework for planning and delivery, which enables them to work together to ensure that lessons are ambitious, well-sequenced, resourced, and linked to schemes of work. They structure lessons to check and consolidate prior learning before new content is modelled and shared. Teachers are incredibly skillful in using questioning, which

is carefully considered and personalised for each learner. Teachers expertly use a range of assessment methods, robustly analysing the impact of their teaching on each learner. In examination classes, there is an additional focus on developing exam techniques alongside securing subject knowledge. This results in students approaching exam questions with confidence and precision. Work is assessed regularly, and clear feedback is given to check students' understanding and move their learning forward. Planned 'PIT stops' in lessons provide additional challenges linked to individual learner targets.

Leaders and governors ensure the curriculum meets the *requirements of the Religious Education Directory (RED)*. They have been proactive in introducing the new RED to the Year 7 curriculum early. An enthusiastic and committed subject leadership team of the head of religious education, the subject senior middle leader, and the assistant head responsible for teaching and learning lead religious education exceptionally well. The head of religious education articulates high expectations while creating supportive structures and modelling best practices. The intent and implementation of the curriculum have been carefully considered, and learning is effectively sequenced. Students learn about other faiths and recognise how this adds to the richness of the school community. Leaders understand the importance of monitoring and assessment. There are strong, well-embedded systems for tracking the delivery of religious education. These include lesson visits, scrutiny of teachers' folders, student surveys, and analysis of assessment data. This information ensures accurate monitoring, with findings regularly reported to the leadership team and governors. The link governor is subsequently well-informed, regularly meeting with the head of religious education and contributing to the department's work. Therefore, the development plan for religious education is well-targeted and demonstrates ambition for the subject, teachers, and students.

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

Students respond respectfully to the experience of prayer and liturgy the school provides. They are aware of the Church's liturgical year and festivals celebrated by various faiths. Students understand the importance of prayer for the school as a Catholic community. They participate in morning prayer in their form rooms. Individuals are invited to read a prayer, which they do willingly. Teachers encourage discussion of prayer themes linked to the liturgical calendar, school values, and national events such as Child Mental Health Week. Students are not routinely invited to write or share their own prayers or to plan prayer for their class. Students speak positively of the unifying value of the recently introduced daily afternoon prayer, which the whole school listens to from their classrooms. Each week, a different class attends Mass in the parish church, where individuals have the opportunity to be readers. All students are invited to reflect upon their experience of the Mass, and these are routinely shared in the school newsletter. The student liturgy team comprises sixteen students who have several quality opportunities to plan and lead weekly worship for other students; individual team members always monitor their weekly worship and share their findings. Whilst the wider student body reflects on its experience of attending Mass, evaluation of worship that has been student-planned and led is limited to members of the liturgy team.

Liturgy and prayer are inclusive and form part of all routine school gatherings. Key dates and holy days are observed; each school day begins and ends with prayer. The same daily prayer is used with all year groups. Passages from scripture are central to worship, informed by the current liturgical season, and linked to the calendar of themes for the school year. The head teacher inspires staff to be active in their support of the school's prayer life. A growing range of staff are becoming involved in planning prayer, with music and drama becoming increasingly involved. Hymn singing has been introduced in Year 7. The lay chaplains are highly skilled and

confident in leading worship and helping students in the liturgy team do so. The chapel is an inviting space accessible to all school community members. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place every Tuesday, and form groups take turns attending. The parish priest provides valued support. Classrooms have a prayer wall or a small prayer table, although the quality of these is variable. A quiet room is made available to support the prayer life of those of other faiths.

Leaders and governors clearly understand the importance of prayer and liturgy to the school community's life. Together with the lay chaplains, they are committed to developing the school's prayer life and ensuring it is presented to students and staff in an accessible and inclusive way. They have compiled a whole school calendar, which ensures that the themes chosen for worship are relevant and reflect the liturgical season and the school's values and priorities. A strategy for building up different participation skills for students as they progress through the school has not yet been established. Leaders offer staff regular opportunities to deepen their understanding and experience of prayer, especially in the Catholic tradition. Staff speak of the powerful impact this has on them, with one staff member saying their faith had been reborn since working at the school. Parents and students have frequent opportunities to share their views through feedback sheets and questionnaires. Their opinions are scrutinised and shared with governors. The evaluation of prayer and liturgy and the subsequent improvement planning are not developed to the same extent as they are for other priority areas in the school.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St John Wall Catholic Secondary School
School unique reference number (URN)	103534
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3304625
Full postal address of the school	Oxhill Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, B21 8HH
School phone number	0121 554 1825
Headteacher	Katherine Marston
Chair of governing board	Martin Jones
School Website	www.sjw.bham.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 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	November 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Basia McLaughlin	Lead
Jai El'Habid	Team
Maggie Hazeldine	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