

Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School

URN: 141992

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Birmingham

03–04 July 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

1

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

2

Collective worship (p.7)

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

2

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

2

Compliance statement

- This school fully complies with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- This school is fully compliant with the additional requirements of His Grace.
- This school has fully addressed all previous areas for improvement.

What the school does well

- Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School offers an inclusive welcome to all, where students feel valued and supported.
- The level of pastoral care provided is a stand-out strength.
- Members of the religious education department are knowledgeable, enthusiastic, and dedicated to helping students succeed.
- The whole school community highly values the work of the Chaplaincy team.
- Prayer is central to school life, and students can participate in various activities that reflect both traditional and contemporary aspects of prayer and worship.

What the school needs to improve

- Teach Catholic social teaching principles in all subject areas so that the entire taught curriculum provides opportunities to explore these issues.
- Ensure the feedback policy in religious education enables all students to be confident in knowing what they need to improve upon.
- Ensure that strategies used within religious education promote engagement and enable students, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), to make consistently good progress.

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

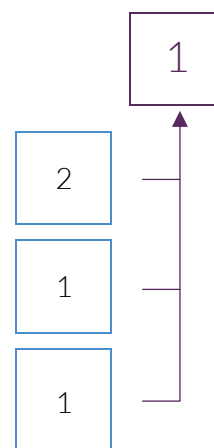
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 demonstrate an understanding and sense of belonging to this inclusive, welcoming Catholic community. They show respect for each other and a willingness to embrace differences. They know the mission statement, 'Everything for Christ,' and understand that this is a lived reality. Students value the strong pastoral care provision that the school provides. They are encouraged to show respect for each other and reflect on the dignity of each person, valuing the opportunities to learn about those from different cultures and faiths. They willingly take part in opportunities that support both others and the environment, through their eco club and charity work, which includes supporting a local food bank, local homeless charities, and international charities. However, their ability to articulate the theology behind their actions, linked to Catholic social teaching, is not yet fully developed. Students in the sixth form play a full part in the school's Catholic life, including, for example, organising a St Vincent de Paul group (SVP).

The school's mission statement has a significantly positive effect on school life. It is embraced by all staff who seek to live out the Gospel in the way they respond to the needs of others, particularly those who are most vulnerable. The school is a 'School of Sanctuary' which aims to create a culture of welcome, understanding, and belonging for those forced to flee their homes. Resources are strategically utilised in a way that enables the school to go the extra mile in supporting the most vulnerable. The physical environment effectively witnesses to the school's Catholic mission. For instance, the chapel is a vibrant, prayerful space well used by students, while imagery around the school, including the sixth form areas, reflects a distinctively Catholic identity, with each building being named after a specific saint. There is also a garden space dedicated to Our Lady. The outdoor space also allows students to live out the ideals of stewardship, for example, by planting trees. The chaplaincy team witnesses to the school's desire

to see every individual flourish. Their work supports both this school and the feeder primary schools, helping to forge connections for the students with the broader life of the Church. For example, they have developed a series of events connected to the Jubilee Year. The relationships, sex, and health education programme (RHSE) is carefully planned to fully meet diocesan requirements and reviewed to ensure it reflects the needs of students.

Leaders and governors can clearly articulate the Church's mission in education and are passionate and inspirational in ensuring this finds expression in the lived reality of the school. This is perceived as a key leadership priority. The school maintains a strong dynamic partnership with the local feeder primary schools and has close connections with the local parish, with one of the lay chaplains leading a youth group. The school regularly organises and promotes activities which support both the diocesan and wider life of the Church; for example, by taking students to the annual Flame Congress and the annual diocesan commissioning Mass for chaplaincy. Catholic social teaching is in the early stages of being embedded in the curriculum. The school recently organised a 'vocations day', where students were empowered to reflect on how work can reflect the principles of social justice. Training is provided to increase staff understanding of Catholic life, with one member of staff commenting, 'Training has helped me understand and embrace the school's mission and for our motto "Everything for Christ" to be at the heart of my role.' Leaders and governors also seek to promote the well-being of staff, regularly seeking their views to ensure their strategies are effective.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

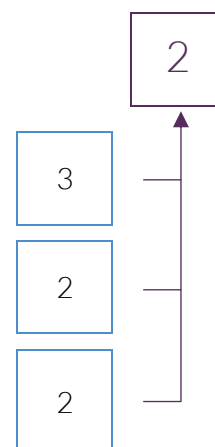
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 value religious education and believe it is essential for gaining a deeper understanding of their own faith and that of others. They have a positive relationship with staff and believe that staff are trying to help them improve their work. Older students in Key Stage 4 recognise that staff are implementing strategies to help them perform well in their exams. Students can use subject-specific vocabulary to improve their writing and develop as religiously literate young adults. Whilst most students can speak confidently about what they are learning at any given moment, they are less secure about relating this to larger theological concepts and how these issues might affect the life of a believer. Occasionally, students' work reflects a misunderstanding of some ideas or knowledge. Because students spend a significant amount of time using their knowledge books, there are limited opportunities for them to work independently or creatively and, for some students, this affects their enjoyment and engagement with the subject. Behaviour in class, however, is good. The standard of work produced by students is variable. Although students recognise that staff provide feedback on their work, for many students, this has a limited effect on their progress or their ability to improve their work. Recent attainment in religious education is below the diocesan and national averages in Key Stage 5 and significantly lower than them in Key Stage 4, reflecting the department's context over recent years. Sixth formers enjoy their core religious education course and speak positively about how it encourages them to be reflective.

The religious education department has been experiencing significant staffing challenges. The department is now positioned to move forward, and teachers are confident in their subject knowledge, imparting it with confidence. They are committed to the subject's value and communicate this to students. Teachers incorporate questioning into their lessons, and in the best examples, this is effective in helping students make links between different areas of the

curriculum. Questioning is also used to identify where students are in their understanding. Teachers celebrate success by encouraging students to do well and recognising the importance that religious education can play in developing students' spiritual and moral development; however, the time for purposeful reflection or response in religious education lessons is often limited. While teachers implement strategies to provide feedback, the effective impact of these strategies is not always evident.

The curriculum accurately reflects the requirements of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. The resourcing of religious education is comparable to that of other core subjects in terms of curriculum time, staffing, and accommodation. The subject leader has a clear vision for the subject and has identified through monitoring, including book trawls, student voice, and lesson observations, the areas in need of improvement and the strategies required to bring about improvement. They are effectively supported by senior leaders in their desire to bring about improvement. The department's self-evaluation is supported by governors, who conduct triangulation activities during their visits, enabling them to gain a precise understanding of what the department is doing well and the next steps it needs to take. The school is committed to providing high-quality staff training in religious education, which focuses on both subject knowledge and teaching strategies. Some of the religious education staff serve as examiners for GCSE courses and share their expertise with others, which is well-received. One member of staff commented that, 'As a non-Catholic, I felt supported to teach effectively in a Catholic school and received training to support the delivery of this when I first started, which helped develop my confidence'. Allocated planning, preparation, and assessment time helps build expertise and aids staff in designing lessons.

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

1

Leadership

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

2

2

Students respond well to experiences of prayer and liturgy provided by the school. They participate in the school prayers and can reflect silently on the themes presented to them. They are willing to join in the opportunities presented to them and often take the lead in organising activities. For example, a group of students planned and led retreat experiences for primary school pupils. The choir and the Gospel choir are actively involved in serving both the school and local parishes through their services. Some students undertake liturgical ministries. Sixth formers confidently lead and plan their own prayer, skilfully incorporating aspects of Catholic social teaching and the school values, along with personal reflection on the impact this might have on them. The sixth form Gospel choir also helps develop the reflective aspect of prayer through their music. In other key stages, students can participate by reading or writing their own prayers, including using different languages. Pupils' experience of day-to-day prayer provision can be variable, and although they are occasionally asked to evaluate prayer, this practice is not yet systematically implemented.

Prayer is central to life at Cardinal Wiseman, and the school has a daily pattern of worship which includes scripture and links to Catholic social teaching. Prayer takes place at the start of every lesson, in tutor time, and at the end of the day. Staff and governor meetings also regularly begin with prayer, meaning the school's expectations are frequently modelled to the broader community. The end-of-day prayer is planned by students working with the chaplain; this is live-streamed to all classes, facilitating a universal experience of encounter with Christ. The school also has its own YouTube channel, which enables others, including parents, to access prayer. Retreats are organised for students. Relevant staff are skilled in supporting and providing resources, and staff speak of how valuable they have found the input of the chaplains. The Blessed Sacrament is reserved in the chapel, and students recognise the importance of this as a

place of reflection and prayer. The chaplains are enthusiastic and tireless in their work of connecting students to the broader life of the Church and enriching their worship experience. Students and staff utilise their talents to enhance the liturgy, particularly through music, which includes an orchestra and a choir. Students from various cultures are encouraged to share prayer in their own language, and those from other faiths are supported in their spiritual life.

The school calendar is designed to align with the liturgical year, offering students opportunities to attend Mass and participate in the Church's liturgical seasons. The local parish priest is very supportive of the school and feels the students enrich the life of the parish that the school serves. Training opportunities are provided for staff to develop their understanding of how to lead and participate in prayer and liturgy. Staff recently participated in a narrative Mass, for example, and this was exceptionally well received, with staff commenting on how it helped develop their understanding of the Eucharist. The chaplains' work with the GIFT and student leadership teams to help students plan and lead experiences of prayer and liturgy. Leaders and governors recognise the importance of prayer and liturgy and provide resources to support this. Governors are actively involved in evaluating prayer and liturgy, offering support and challenge. However, although student voice is sought; this is not yet on a routine, structured basis, and the school is in the process of developing a strategy to formalise the building of skills in participation and leadership as students progress through school.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School
School unique reference number (URN)	141992
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	331 4007
Full postal address of the school	Potters Green Road, Walsgrave, Coventry, CV2 2AJ
School phone number	02476 617231
Headteacher	Laura Burtonwood
Chair of governing board	Brendan Fawcett
School Website	www.cardinalwiseman.coventry.sch.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	The Romero Catholic Academy
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	November 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Ann Fowler	Lead
Elizabeth Bryant	Team
Caroline Cirino	Team
Geraldine McCauley	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