

# Our Lady's Catholic High School

URN: 100282

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster

23–24 May 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

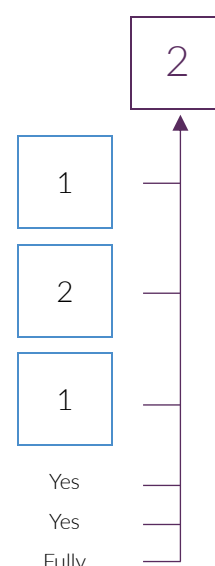
#### Collective worship (p.7)

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

- Students have a clear understanding of the principles of Catholic social teaching and how they relate to Servite values.
- The generosity of students and their families towards the numerous charitable causes is truly humbling.
- The enthusiasm and joy which students display during communal singing significantly enhances the experience for all.
- The Servite leaders are excellent role models for the rest of the school.
- The provision of two weekly Masses in school highlights the strong links between the school and local parish.

## What the school needs to improve

- Ensure feedback across the religious education department enables students to know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Further develop form time prayer so that students become familiar with a variety of prayerful experiences.
- Review the levels of pace, challenge and rigour in lessons so that students maximise their potential.

## 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



Our Lady's Catholic High School is an inclusive, welcoming community where students are nurtured and cared for. The Servite values and charism are visible everywhere; not just through the displays and images all around the modern building but also in the kindness, compassion and respect shown by students and staff towards each other. Sixth form students were able to contextualise the mission statement, 'Shaping tomorrow inspired by faith', when they explained that the opportunities for success in the future are laid now within the Catholic ethos of the school. Students are happy and safe, knowing they are loved and cared for as unique individuals. They are exceptionally proud to attend Our Lady's. They feel a part of the school's rich history and have a deep desire to be part of its future. Sixth formers help run an EAL (English as an additional language) reading club every Friday morning during form time and one commented, 'I had barriers to my learning when I was younger and now I want to help students overcome their barriers'. The promotion of the principles of Catholic social teaching and how they relate to the students' lives is a real strength of the school. Students live out their understanding of Catholic social teaching through their enthusiastic participation in fundraising events to support local, national and international charities including: a Year 7 disco organised by the sixth form for St Joseph's Hospice, donating over 300kg of food to the Hackney Food Bank, a thousand items of food to the Social Apostolate at St Ignatius Church, a talent show to raise money for Young Minds, donations from own clothes days towards Save The Children and The Hope foundation, along with a talent show/culture day to raise funds for and highlight the work of Missio. Students also embrace their personal responsibility to the environment through their stewardship work which includes a gardening club and a project which raised awareness of the effects of plastics and the importance of recycling schemes. As a result, students flourish as they seek to grow in virtue.

Loving attention has been given to the school's Catholic character which has created a culture of welcome to all who step through its doors - every pupil matters at Our Lady's. Students of other faiths have a sacred space available when they wish to spend time in prayer and reflection. Pastoral care is of the highest quality. Leaders are relentless in the pursuit of the best care for their students, striving to provide holistic support for all. The staff don't just know the students by name, they know their personalities, talents and needs. Particular attention is paid to ensure a deep commitment to young people whose circumstances have made them hard to reach. Staff are exemplary role models who consistently strive to make a difference to enrich students' life experiences. As one teacher commented, 'This school is my second family and my second home'. The provision for relationships and sex education meets both statutory and diocesan requirements. Students appreciate the opportunities to ask questions both publicly and privately in relation to sensitive topics.

Leaders and governors can articulate the Church's mission and they ensure that it is at the heart of this school. There are strong and effective links with the local parish as witnessed by the provision of two weekly Masses and the use of the parish centre for retreats. Governors have high levels of expertise and provide effective challenge and support to the school. All staff interviewed, including early careers teachers, were very positive about working at Our Lady's. They were eager to explain how the leadership team has supported them in times of sickness and bereavement, and they spoke with enthusiasm about the contributions various departments have made to the whole school approach to Catholic social teaching this year. The school is in a privileged position, having two part-time religious sisters as chaplains, providing various opportunities for the spiritual development of students and staff.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

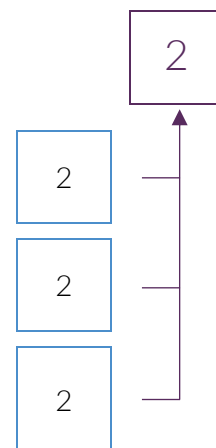
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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 provision for religious education is good. Students are developing secure knowledge, understanding and skills that reflect the learning required for the *Religious Education Directory*. They make good progress when measured against the planned curriculum for each year. Consequently, students, including disadvantaged and SEND, make good progress when compared with other core subjects and have achieved above the national average for religious studies at GCSE. Students enjoy religious education lessons and are both enthusiastic and actively engaged. The strong behaviour for learning is fostered through extremely positive teacher-student relationships which, in turn, allows students to feel comfortable and confident in lessons. They enjoy their learning, particularly the study of world religions because they believe it is important to respect and understand others. This was confirmed when a student was asked to choose a piece of work that she was proud of and selected a detailed written piece on Hinduism. Another student spoke about a piece of work on 'The Calming of The Storm' as told from the perspective of a disciple while another was proud of artwork produced on the Stations of the Cross.

Teachers are becoming more confident in their subject knowledge and have a good understanding of how students learn. They are committed to the value of religious education and communicate this effectively to students. Questioning is used to identify where pupils are in their learning. As a result, teachers adapt explanations and tasks, thus improving learning for most students. Examples of good practice witnessed included active learning around a mind map exploring identity in a Year 8 lesson on Hinduism and a thought-provoking question, 'Is selfless love realistic?' in a Year 8 lesson linking Catholic social teaching to the Beatitudes. However, the levels of pace, rigour and challenge need to be consistent and developed in order for students to maximise their potential. Teachers recognise the impact religious education has

on the moral and spiritual development of students. Important times in the liturgical calendar are marked during religious education lessons; learning about the Rosary in October and the Stations of the Cross during Lent with a procession through the school building, stopping at certain points to acknowledge each station. Many students stated that prayer at the start of lessons was something they valued deeply. The efforts of students are regularly celebrated, and this leads to good levels of motivation. However, not all students have an understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. This is an area that the department needs to develop so that students can articulate more clearly how they have made progress.

Leaders and governors view religious education as the 'core of the core' with parity between the subject and the rest of the core subjects in relation to resourcing, timetabling and accommodation. Staffing has been an issue this academic year, but leaders and governors have ensured that the department is fully staffed for September with the appointment of a director of cultural formation. Religious education has 10% curriculum time at Key Stages 3 and 4 while the sixth form allocation is 5% as required. The senior leadership team ensures that attendance and punctuality are excellent with the school receiving a national schools attendance award for the autumn term, which puts it in the top 25% of similar secondary schools in England. Enrichment activities have included trips to a local synagogue and mosque, enabling the students to experience religion as real and alive. Professional development is seen as a key priority for the department. Early careers teachers were positive about the support they had received from school colleagues. The religious education curriculum is planned to provide sufficient opportunities for learners to make progress sequentially. Consequently, the curriculum meets the needs of students across all year groups.

## 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

1

#### 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

1

1

The school engages students deeply and leads them to full participation in the prayer life of the school. They are respectful and attentive when prayers are said in form time, religious assemblies and at the start of RE lessons. The Servite leaders play a leading role in the promotion of prayer and liturgy and are excellent role models for the rest of the school. The Latin proverb, (Bis orat qui bene cantat) 'he who sings well prays twice', would imply that Our Lady's is a truly prayerful school as students and staff sing with confidence and joy during liturgical services and assemblies. The school choir and communal singing are a real strength of the school. An observed assembly on the theme of Pentecost made links to the 55 languages spoken within the school, the universality of the Catholic Church and the diversity of the school community. The atmosphere was joyful, musical and reverential. A wide range of services are offered including the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Lent and Advent, the Rosary during October, the Stations of the Cross around the inside of the school building in a special service during Lent and Mass several times each term as well as a weekly lunchtime Mass. The chaplains have a lunchtime prayer group where students are helped to create their own prayers. The newly formed chaplaincy committee now has the perfect opportunity to expand and develop form time prayer so that students can become familiar with a variety of prayer experiences.

The centrality of prayer and liturgy is very well evident. There is a carefully planned programme that ensures students experience the richness and breadth of the Catholic tradition. Servite leaders attended a liturgy at Westminster Cathedral promoting racial diversity. Up until last year sixth formers led a liturgical service of remembrance at the Hackney war memorial. Members of the public commented on how impressed they were to see students leading the service. Staff are role models for students in their respectful presence and active participation in prayer and liturgy. They are fully committed to the school's prayer life and the school has provided a great

deal of support for teachers to help them to pray with students in form time. Liturgical singing now takes place at Masses and the liturgical assemblies. The carol concert included a variety of songs and music to celebrate the talents of the students and to raise their hearts and minds to God in prayer. A Year 7 retreat at St Ignatius parish focused on transition and change while the Year 8 retreat involved a pilgrimage style exploration of two local Servite sites reflecting the history of the school in the community.

Leaders, including governors, have ensured that prayer and liturgy have a high-profile in the school. Staff value the support and guidance provided by the chaplaincy team. Governors take an active interest in the prayer and liturgy activities and were involved in the formation of the policy. The Eucharist is celebrated on holy days of obligation and key feast days. There is a Mass of Welcome for new students and parents at the start of each academic year. Every Year group has a Mass in school each half term and the whole school community attends Mass at the local church every term. Mass is celebrated twice weekly, with a voluntary Mass for staff before school and a Mass for students at lunchtime. The leadership team strives to provide an experience of worship for students which is relevant to their daily lives and embraces the key elements of the Catholic tradition. The voice of students and other relevant stakeholders is an integral and valued part of the school's evaluation of prayer and liturgy. With the support of the chaplaincy committee the school now needs to encourage and guide all form groups to prepare, present and evaluate their own liturgy assemblies.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	Our Lady's Catholic High School
School unique reference number (URN)	100282
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	2044641
Full postal address of the school	Our Lady's Catholic High School, 6-16 Amhurst Park, Stamford Hill, London, N16 5AF
School phone number	02088002158
Headteacher	Andy English
Chair of Governors	Andrew Carrick
School Website	<a href="http://www.ourladys.hackney.sch.uk/">http://www.ourladys.hackney.sch.uk/</a>
Trusteeship	Servite Sisters
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	11-18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Date of last denominational inspection	April 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

## The inspection team

Dermot O'Neill  
Brian Finnegan

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