



# St Damian's Catholic Science College

URN: 106270

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Salford

16–17 May 2024

## Summary of key findings

### Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

1

#### 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

1

#### Collective worship (p.7)

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

1

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

Yes

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

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

Fully

## What the school does well

- St Damian's is distinguished by the exceptionally tranquil environment allowing students and teachers to flourish in their roles. All recognise this as a special quality and are extremely protective in maintaining the high standards.
- Outcomes for attainment and progress in religious education are exceptional. This reflects student efforts but says much about the quality of teaching and commitment from staff in the department.
- In spite of the strong performance of students in religious education, team members are continually striving to improve further so that all students get the best deal.
- Leaders and governors are great witnesses to the concept of servant leadership in the way they look after students and staff. As a result, relationships are of the highest quality and the community is compassionate and caring.

- The strategic focus on Catholic social teaching is explicitly designed to educate students and staff. Because of this, the school's preferential option for the poor is highly developed.

### What the school needs to improve

- Although relationships, sex and health education has been externally evaluated and meets recommended guidelines, provision could be strengthened by the addition of a commercially sourced resource. The school should explore options for this.
- Leaders and governors should formally evaluate the structure of the provision for chaplaincy to ensure that student experiences are the best they could be.

## 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**

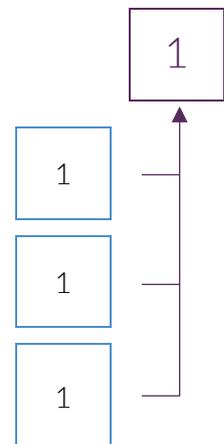
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

**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 contribute pro-actively to the school's Catholic life and mission, and they are proud of the school's Catholic identity. The recently reviewed mission statement, encapsulated in 'St Damian's Way', helps them understand their place in this remarkable community. Because students feel secure, they show confidence in fulfilling the scriptural message, 'If we love others, we live in the light (1 John 2:1)'. Moral guidance for students is sourced to the acronym 'DAMIANS' and students are encouraged to be 'faithful in all things'. There are extensive leadership opportunities at all stages and the vast array of charitable activities contribute to students' formation and their concepts of service and care. Among numerous highlights, the work of three Key Stage 3 'Growing in Faith Together' (GIFT) teams, is supportive to the development of the liturgical life of the school and attracts positive attention in the wider community. The school is an extraordinarily calm and purposeful place allowing all students to prosper and develop trusting relationships with each other and with adults. Large numbers of students benefit from St Damian's thriving chaplaincy provision. The Faith in Action and Live Simply projects are two examples but there are many others including Eco Club, Bully Busters and Caritas ambassadors.

St Damian's Catholic identity is proclaimed on the website, visible in the proximity to the centre of the school of the chapel, illustrated in display and evident in all interactions with staff and students. There is an energy about the school mission. This is derived from leaders' systematic and explicit focus on the distinguishing features of the school's foundation status. Staff understand the concept of 'In Omnibus Fidelis', showing dedication to their roles as Catholic educators. The tangible sense of community in the school is deliberately nurtured by leaders and a scheme to recognise staff acts of kindness is a model of humility and equality. Opportunities exist for students to voice their opinions such as in the inter faith forum. The

standard of pastoral care is especially high and it is hard to discern which, if any, students have greater needs. Iconography and display contribute strongly to the beautiful learning environment – itself a model of good stewardship. Chaplaincy is strategically led by members of the religious education teaching team and the ‘United in Faith’ committee. The absence of a figurehead lay chaplain in no way diminishes what is provided. Provision for relationships, sex and health education is secure. Nevertheless, the adoption of a core resource is likely to strengthen what is delivered to students.

Leaders and governors show great commitment to the school. In particular, the foresight and energy of the headteacher is an inspiration to the whole community. Relationships with Salford Diocese are harmonious, mutually beneficial and include support for other schools. The regular school presence of Father Jude and Sister Roseline facilitate good parish links and strong partnerships with families are sought. The school website has many supportive articles and the headteacher gives Catholic mission updates via the school newsletter. There is a wealth of evidence, visible at practical and strategic levels, illustrating a commitment to Catholic social teaching. St Damian’s ‘BeeWell’ initiative is a key indicator of the cultivated ethos of support for staff and is built around a genuine concern for the well-being of all. Governors are very active, seek ever higher standards, and use effective strategies to ensure the quality of what is delivered. One governor aptly described the way that St Damian’s ‘plants seeds of goodness and hope in its students’. The opinions of students are sought and contributors write confidently trusting that teachers listen. Training on Catholic life is regularly provided targeting the development of expertise among staff and addressing school priorities. This includes bespoke training for staff new to the school.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

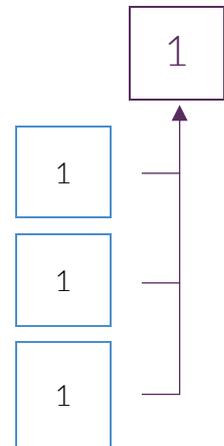
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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



In religious education, all students, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. They are developing excellent knowledge, understanding, and skills in line with the robust and inclusive curriculum. Commitment to developing religious literacy is exemplary. Strategies such as 'Think like a Theologian' and dedicated literacy tasks give students confidence when using complex religious terminology and using reasoning and argument. Students have a developed awareness of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life and can make links between what they have learnt in lessons and their wider school experiences. Exemplary behaviour in all observed learning and evident enjoyment and engagement from students is reflected in the excellent quality of work produced by the majority. Very few instances of incomplete activities and assessments exist. The attainment of boys at Key Stage 4 has been a particular focus and there has been cleverly targeted intervention to help them make progress. Retrieval activities are embedded within classroom routines, illustrated by students' ability to think, and act independently when choosing their own 'do now' tasks. There is some evidence of skilful use of self-assessment, though the frequency and effectiveness can vary.

All religious education teachers are subject specialists, show confidence in their subject knowledge, have high expectations, and deliver effective teaching and learning. The team is committed to research as part of the drive to improve the curriculum and develop rigorous quality assurance. There is variety and creativity in high-quality learning opportunities, such as the interview with 'Doris', where the teacher role-played an older member of the Catholic community sharing their memories of Mass before Vatican II. Teachers foster trusting relationships with students. Consequently, students feel safe and this helps them in sensitive topics like euthanasia, or life after death, when moments of reflection are important. This last aspect could be further developed when reviewing and planning lessons. Assessment tasks, 'live

marking' and the use of green pen to correct and improve work, informs planning and strategies are in place to address misconceptions. Streamlining some of this may be beneficial to student progress. Effective questioning is a distinguishing feature with the curriculum framed around big questions where students are coaxed into a deeper understanding of the content taught. This is most effective in Year 7 when using the new *Religious Education Directory*. St Damian's has a culture of praise and celebration which is echoed in the religious education department.

The religious education subject leader is hard working, passionate and inspirational and has a clear vision. This 'Christ-centred and highly academic' vision is known and understood by the team who collaborate in creating resources and planning. There is an openness that celebrates individual strengths but also supports development. Curriculum enrichment includes an interfaith dialogue with King David School and visits to a Hindu temple. The curriculum is a faithful expression of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* with the Year 7 now reflecting the demands of the *Religious Education Directory*. Implementation of the new model curriculum is embraced as an opportunity to be creative and adaptive. Sharing with another Diocesan school has meant that curriculum sequencing and subject content has been subject to further quality assurance. Religious education has parity with other core subjects and is recognised as 'the core of the core'. The department is frequently held up as a model of best practice and the team's drive for excellence is reflected in the commitment made to professional development. As well as whole school pedagogical development, the department fully engage with any training offered by the Diocese or the examination board to inform their own knowledge and skills.

## 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

Students' participation in a wide range of opportunities for prayer and liturgy enables them to confidently link this to their own school experiences. There is enthusiasm and involvement during assemblies including in formal prayer, reading, and singing. Occasions for prayer are varied and include weekly reflections with Sister Rosaline as well as rich experiences such as for The Stations of The Cross during Lent and praying the rosary around the school during the month of October. Students reference the liturgical calendar with confidence and have a keen understanding of the pattern of worship in the Catholic tradition. There are abundant opportunities for students to help plan and deliver prayer and liturgy across the school. The popularity of the GIFT teams is reflective of the growing student collaboration for the provision, with approximately sixty students attending weekly for liturgical formation. These teams are involved in the planning of prayer resources and for ministry, often delivering elements of worship such as the 'travelling nativity'. Students are included in evaluations of prayer and liturgy so as to gauge their views to the school's offer. Responses illustrate that they value prayer life and the opportunities presented. One GIFT team member explained, 'When we have the chance to pray, it is our chance to grow in our faith and be closer to God, and that is what our school is all about'.

Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school and based on scripture. The development of a liturgical calendar highlights every opportunity for prayer including staff briefings, form worship, and significant moments. This ensures a rich provision for all. Daily acts of worship are built into the school routine and, when adapted well by skilled staff, are high in quality. Staff and students work collaboratively to provide a range of creative experiences. One example includes the school hymn, developed by the music teacher and students for use during assemblies and celebrations. This creativity is further characterised in the use of physical space optimising the vision of prayer as central to school life and increasing accessibility for students. The school chapel is prominently located and used daily by students for chapel assemblies. Staff

commitment to prayer and liturgy is genuine, with senior leaders acting as strong witnesses. The religious education department use their comprehensive knowledge and experience to ensure that prayer and liturgy is rich and varied. Sometimes, this extends to include opportunities for the wider community and a support for families in their own faith journey through initiatives such as 'prayer in a bag.'

The newly adopted prayer and liturgy policy is modelled on the new directory- *'To love you more dearly'*. There are good resources for prayer and liturgy and these are communicated well to staff who are tasked with delivery to students. This is frequently done well, but, in some cases, resources are not sufficiently adapted to take account of the age and ability of students. Liturgy runs through the school calendar marking significant holy days and seasons. Professional development and personal formation focussed on Catholic life, is prioritised by leaders and recognised as a lever for improving students' experiences. Leaders for religious education have a thorough knowledge of the Church's liturgical cycle and have the skills to deliver. Sometimes, because of their teaching classroom focus, they are prevented from prioritising these skills. The chaplaincy structure enables a team of staff to make an impact in form time and assemblies. Prayer and liturgy is appropriately resourced; typical of this is the investment in poster depictions of saints, selected for their associations with curriculum subjects, around the school. Staff responsible for the delivery of prayer and liturgy are highly skilled but may be even more effective if they had more time to prepare and support colleagues.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Damian's Catholic Science College
School unique reference number (URN)	106270
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3574602
Full postal address of the school	St Damian's Catholic Science College, Lees Road, Ashton-under-Lyne, OL6 8BH
School phone number	01613305974
Headteacher	Sheldon Logue
Chair of Governors	Loretta Dean
School Website	<a href="http://www.stdamians.co.uk">www.stdamians.co.uk</a>
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	9 <sup>th</sup> March 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

## The inspection team

Philip Mooney	Lead
Sarah Daley	Team
Julia Cunningham	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