



St Michael's Catholic Grammar School

URN: 101361

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster

23–24 October 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

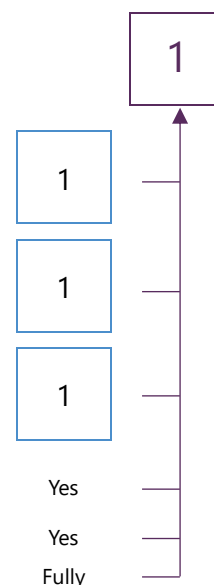
Collective worship (p.7)

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

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

The school is fully compliant with any additional 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 fully compliant with the additional requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- All areas for improvement outlined in the previous diocesan inspection have been addressed in full.

What the school does well

- The school is a happy and secure community that has Christ firmly at the centre.
- The mission statement and charism are central to the life of the school and are understood by every member of the school community.
- Outcomes for students are excellent in religious education, with outstanding GCSE results.
- Prayer and liturgy permeate the school environment and enable all members of the community to deepen their faith.
- Behaviour throughout the school is exemplary.

What the school needs to improve

- Embed Catholic social teaching in a systematic way throughout the school so that all students can articulate the theology underpinning their actions.
- Provide professional development for staff in different forms of daily form prayer, further developing student leadership skills in prayer and liturgy.
- Ensure that there is greater stretch and challenge in RE lessons to develop student independence and deeper thinking.

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

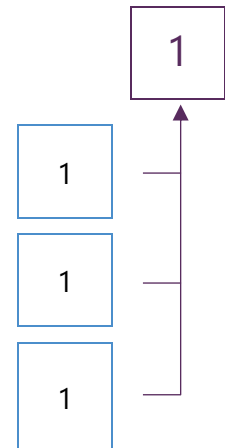
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



The Catholic mission of St Michael's Catholic Grammar school is central to the school community and clearly underpins all aspects of the life and work of the school. The school has made a strategic decision to adopt a new charism, and leaders, staff and students are all clear that the charism of the Loreto Sisters is being incorporated into the original charism of The Sisters of the Poor Jesus, and not replacing it. The values of Mary Ward permeate the entire community and are a prominent part of the rewards system. One student commented that these values 'push us to be better and they are already a part of us'. Students are rightly proud of their school community and the important place that they hold within it. They are committed to being active in the community and the amounts raised for global, national and local charities are impressive. The school has identified the need to embed Catholic social teaching in a systematic way throughout the school so that all students can articulate the theology underpinning their actions. Secure relationships and the commitment to demonstrate love for each other, manifests itself in an inclusive community where students are committed to supporting each other to grow and develop. One staff member commented that 'the community is a special one. We live our mission to "Love one another as I have loved you" in every action, conversation and decision.'

The mission statement and values associated with the charism, are understood in a sophisticated way, enabling all members of the community to thrive. The mission and values inspire all to give their very best and to support those around them to do the same. Students have the opportunity to attend a wide range of lunchtime activities as well as trips and visits which enrich their spiritual development. The physical environment of the school is inspirational for the whole community. The displays are expressive of mission and Catholic identity and provide a rich opportunity for deeper thinking and reflection. They clearly exhibit the Catholic ethos and nature of the school, embedding its history for the community in a visual way. The chaplaincy provision is enhanced by student leadership and the school priest chaplain. Pastoral care is excellent and is firmly rooted in Christ. Staff bear witness

through positive, supportive relationships and the most vulnerable students are given exceptional care and support. New students and their parents are welcomed into the community and this is celebrated with Mass. Students feel safe and know who to talk to if they do have concerns. As a result of this, all students are able to flourish and make an active contribution to the community. The RSHE programme has been carefully organised and effectively meets all diocesan requirements: it is fully rooted in the teaching of the Church.

Leaders and governors ensure that Christ is at the centre of this school. The head teacher and senior team are passionate advocates for those in their care and they thoroughly exemplify the school's mission and values. Governors have a good level of expertise and they are clearly determined to keep the school mission at the heart of all policy and decision making. The Catholic curriculum is kept under continuous review by governors and leaders. Governors conduct regular 'Ethos Walks' to ensure that they are immersed in the life of the school and able to evaluate provision effectively. Planned changes in the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* continue to be implemented and there is evidence of thoroughness and rigour in the intent and planning. Catholic culture and tradition is visible across the taught curriculum and staff are well prepared for this through a comprehensive induction programme. Leaders and governors have a thorough understanding of the school and are ambitious for its continuous improvement. The evaluation of the Catholic life of the school is collaborative, regular and accurate; leaders have identified clear and appropriate enhancements to build on the excellent practice that is already in place.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

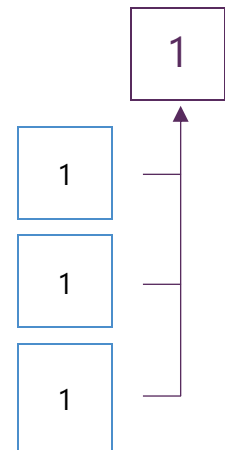
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 are developing excellent knowledge, understanding and skills and make above average progress in religious education compared to other subjects in school and national averages. The GCSE results are outstanding and show the extent of the hard work which students display in lessons. In 2024 the pass rate was 100%, with 95% obtaining grade 7 or above and 44% of students achieving grade 9. There is strong religious literacy and oracy, with students showing the ability to think deeply about spirituality and ethics, using key concepts perceptively. In an observed Year 12 core religious education lesson, all students were attentive and engaged and able to offer thoughtful perspectives on the issues under discussion. Student behaviour in lessons is outstanding; they are focused and work effectively on their own and in groups. Presentation in books is excellent, and work is of a consistently high quality. In lessons, students are engaged and clearly enjoy the work they are doing; there is a busy, productive environment and pupils are not afraid to ask questions to deepen their understanding. One parent commented, 'I truly believe that the structure of the religious education curriculum, and the school's overall excellence in Catholic education, assists all students to reach their full potential'.

Teacher subject knowledge is strong and there is a very clear commitment to getting the best out of the students. Expectations are high and there is a positive celebratory culture in lessons leading to strong levels of motivation from students. A key strength of the department concerns the regular consolidation of prior learning through the 'retrieval' exercises at the start of lessons. One Year 7 student commented, 'I love religious education, and I can still remember the things we did in the first lesson of the year'. Teachers understand the importance of religious education to the moral and spiritual development of students. In an observed Year 7 lesson on prayer, the teacher gave practical expression to the learning by introducing Pope Francis' Five Finger Prayer and a period of quiet reflection. Lessons are well planned with a good variety of activities to engage students, using high

quality resources to optimise learning. Marking is rigorous and provides specific feedback to aid student progress. In a Year 10 lesson on Genesis, the teacher skilfully probed students with good questioning to deepen their understanding as they completed a spider diagram together. In a small minority of lessons, however, the activities were not challenging enough for some of the students.

Leaders and governors have ensured that the curriculum for religious education is a faithful expression of the *Directory*. Religious education has full parity with other core curriculum subjects with regards to professional development, resourcing and staffing. Continuous professional development is ongoing and effective, and monitored by leaders. The head of department has a high level of teaching expertise and an excellent vision for the department. Teaching is consistently good with many outstanding lessons. Subject content is introduced in an effective and systematic way as students progress through the planned curriculum. There is effective support for pupil premium and SEND students which enables them to achieve well. Leaders ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of learners with each new topic carefully building on and enhancing prior learning. There is a wide range of enrichment opportunities including visits to a local mosque, synagogue, Hindu temple and retreats at SPEC for Year 11 students. The annual Loreto student conference to York encourages leadership skills in a Catholic context. There is an extensive programme of retreats for all students as they progress through the school. Leaders, including governors, demonstrate excellent self-evaluation of religious education which helps contribute to outstanding outcomes for all.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

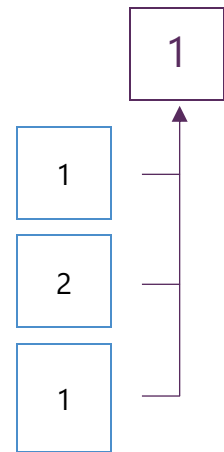
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

Leadership

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



Students take prayer and liturgy extremely seriously and are reverent and reflective participants. They recognise the importance of prayer and liturgy in deepening their faith. Students value shared opportunities such as the St Michael's day Mass and associated celebrations. Students respond well to opportunities for active participation, demonstrated by a wide range of contributions to the Year 7 liturgy of the word. Students articulate that they value the opportunity to lead prayer and liturgy, with one student stating that she was inspired by a past student who led an assembly on charity work in Kenya. A lunchtime guided meditation session takes place every week, led by pupils, with a mixture of readings and time for quiet reflection. Students are keen to add a further richness to prayer and liturgy through demonstrating more independence and creativity. The student chaplaincy team are well placed to lead developments in this. The religious formation of students is carefully planned and students can articulate clearly how prayer and liturgy have supported this.

Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of St Michael's. A wide range of moments of joy and sorrow are celebrated through prayer. Holy days of obligation are celebrated with a whole-school Mass and meetings involving staff, leaders, governors and parents always start with a prayer. Daily form prayer is embedded across all year groups and is student led, however these form prayers are often lacking in creativity and innovation and don't fully express the breadth and richness of the Catholic tradition. Students feed into the planning of liturgy through the student chaplaincy team. Scripture is always at the heart of prayer and liturgy and forms an integral part of each weekly assembly (focusing on the previous Sunday Mass readings). Staff, including senior leaders, are models of good practice for the rest of the school community. The school makes good use of the spaces available to them. There is a beautiful purpose-built chapel which is well used. There is also the Oratory, which is always open for students and staff as a place for quiet prayer and there is a space here for writing personal prayers and intentions. Each Key Stage 3 class is taken to St Alban's parish church each year to celebrate Mass

during the school day which enables the partnership between the school and the local parish to flourish.

The school's prayer and liturgy policy is written to ensure a clarity of purpose. There is a clear map of provision and participation in prayer and liturgy. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered to students during Lent and Advent, the rosary is said in May and October, and the Stations of the Cross in Lent. Eucharistic ministers are drawn from both staff and student bodies, although the majority are Year 12 and 13 students who participate as an act of service to the school community. Leaders and governors ensure that there is comprehensive provision that aims to be progressive. Monitoring and evaluation are thorough and robust, and leaders take into account the views of all members of the community. Students and staff are invited to evaluate provision of assemblies and school Masses, and leaders act on these views. The effective delivery of the provision would be further enhanced by professional development for form tutors so that the daily ritual of prayer is creative and engaging, framing the day in the hands of God. The school chaplain leads the student chaplaincy group, helping students to interact with other schools and organisations (in particular the Loreto schools). Leaders and governors take their responsibility for the formation of students extremely seriously and this is monitored through mechanisms such as Governor visits and scrutiny by the Ethos Committee.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Michael's Catholic Grammar School
School unique reference number (URN)	101361
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3025404
Full postal address of the school	St Michael's Catholic Grammar School, Nether Street, North Finchley, London, N12 7NJ
School phone number	02084462256
Headteacher	Michael Stimpson
Chair of governors	Ann Oddy
School Website	http://www.st-michaels.barnet.sch.uk/
Trusteeship	St Michael's Catholic School Trustee, a member of the Loreto Education Trust. Founded by the Sisters of the Poor Child Jesus.
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Loreto Education Trust
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Selective
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Girls with mixed VI Form
Date of last denominational inspection	November 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

Jo-Anne Hoarty	Lead
Paul Higginson	Team
Winnie Greer	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

