

Our Lady's Catholic College, Lancaster

URN: 119798

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Lancaster

05–06 March 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

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

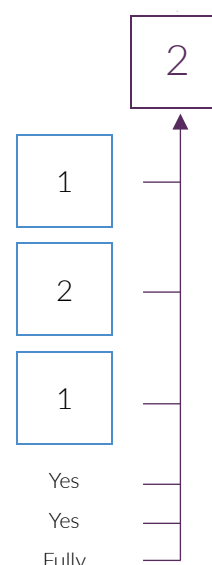
Collective worship (p.7)

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

- Governance is strong and rooted in a clear vision of Catholic education.
- Senior leaders are driving improvement with positivity, resilience and compassion.
- An experienced religious education team is implementing consistent strategies for further improvement.
- Chaplaincy is exemplary and well-targeted for the needs of students.
- The chapel and environment of the college have been enhanced with vision and creativity.

What the school needs to improve

- Embed the concept of the unified Catholic curriculum more fully.
- Continue to develop teaching, learning and assessment in religious education (including assessment in the sixth form) allowing for reflection, independent work and creativity.
- Involve students more in the planning and evaluation of prayer and liturgy.

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

Our Lady's Catholic College lives out its vision to be a family of faith where all are nurtured to grow in virtue, through Christ's example. Students link the school strongly with this mission, with Jesus and the Gospel; they feel loved and cared for and are happy and positive, whatever challenges they face. They engage with the school's commitment to Catholic social teaching as well as its practical expression in charity work. There is an atmosphere of respect, welcome and excellent behaviour and students enjoy being involved. For example, members of the Gift Team (who support chaplaincy) are proactive in helping with primary school liturgies and the Caritas Ambassadors (who lead on charity work) draw others into their spirit of service. In the sixth form, students are inspiring young leaders who can reflect deeply. For example, referring to a sleepout undertaken to support the homeless, a student said: 'It is really important to do things like this because it helps us understand what it feels like to be in this position. Isn't this why Jesus became human?' The Uganda Project, too, allows many students to engage with their peers who live on a different continent, and it has clearly borne fruit in opened minds and inspired lives.

The school's regularly reviewed mission statement reflects genuine dialogue, so staff and students 'own' it. Staff exude positivity and promote the mission in practical ways, setting an example for the students. Middle and senior leaders are well chosen and strategically placed, helping to create a supportive, joyful and welcoming community, where the most vulnerable are helped to flourish. Other faith communities are also well understood, supported and resourced. This goes beyond providing support for prayer to inviting families into the school. Excellent pastoral care also extends its welcome to all, whatever difficulties, disabilities or deprivation are faced. There is also a real vision for the school environment, which beautifully expresses the mission in creative ways.

Chaplaincy provision is a valued part of the school's Catholic life, offering clear opportunities for spiritual growth. There have been several baptisms and confirmations among the many students who are new to Catholic faith and values. Retreats are also an exceptionally well-developed feature, offered with regularity and variety. For example, students not only experience Savio House and Castlerigg but, more unusually, the hospitality of the Bernardine Cistercian sisters at Hyning Monastery. Personal, social, health and economic education has been well thought through in line with the bishops' guidelines and is imbued with a sense of the Catholic virtues, which students can readily explain.

Governors are devoted to the Catholic life and mission of the school, and have a carefully developed vision for it, which they monitor well. There is clear evidence that that vision is being realised and is coming to fruition. The headteacher and her leadership team likewise have the mission at the heart of all they do. The school is committed to the bishop's vision for the diocese and the headteacher is active in diocesan meetings. The Gospel and Catholic social teaching are at the heart of decision-making, in a spirit of servant leadership. Some areas that could be further developed and deepened are a sense of the whole curriculum being united in expressing the Catholic understanding of reality, and more student planning and evaluation. Critical self-evaluation by leaders and governors, however, is generally very good, if perhaps modest about some of the more remarkable features of the school's Catholic life.

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

2

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education

2

2

Improvements in the religious education department are progressing very well, in line with the *Religious Education Directory*, which is being systematically introduced. Students make steady progress in understanding, including those with particular needs who are especially cared for. Some students can articulate their understanding confidently – particularly, and in an impressive way in the sixth form – and others in a more limited way. The majority enjoy religious education and speak of it positively, answering questions using appropriate vocabulary. It is true that work is often very scaffolded, but this does help ensure consistency and steady progress. Perhaps more creativity and individuality could be encouraged in responses. For example, where students were encouraged to convey their understanding of the Crucifixion or of the Holy Trinity through imagery, they responded well. Students are very well behaved in religious education and engage in their lessons, drawn out by skilful and patient teaching. Parents bear witness that their children know how to progress in the subjects. While achievement is below national and diocesan comparators, the school's catchment area, along with competition from nearby selective schools, goes some way towards putting this in context. Achievement is broadly comparable to the other core subjects and indeed, high grade achievement is better. There is also a steady rising trend. For these reasons there is evidence to judge the outcomes for students as good, given that credible strategies are in place to bring about further improvement. These now need to be developed and embedded.

Teachers in religious education are mostly specialists, confident in their understanding and excellent at leading students into fuller engagement. There is a consistent departmental strategy for teaching and learning, including planning and assessment that is taking root and resulting in some improving outcomes. Good leadership and staff engagement are together bringing tangible benefits. For example, there is a reasonable consistency of good questioning

across the department and the same is true of the celebration of student effort. It is particularly noteworthy when staff recall earlier student responses in a positive way when reinforcing learning. Expertise and variety help foster motivation and good behaviour, and further opportunities for spiritual reflection during lessons would enhance teaching and learning. The collaborative work and expertise of colleagues in developing the curriculum matches well with the direction set by the team leadership.

Leaders and governors, along with the department, ensure that the *Religious Education Directory* is at the heart of all curriculum developments. There is clear parity with other core subjects. Good resourcing and opportunities exist for the team to develop, and leaders are sympathetic to requests for professional development and materials that support it. There is a clear vision on teaching, learning and assessment from the subject lead, fully in accord with and supported by the headteacher and senior leadership. Plans are in place to make learning more sequential as the first students to follow the revised syllabus move through the school. There is evidence of consulting and listening to the voice of students during the development of the curriculum, not least in the sixth form. A-level lessons are particularly inspiring, with a high level of engagement and debate and a thirst for deeper understanding. Impressive teaching and learning in the sixth form is leading to ambitious and articulate students. Teaching and learning here is noteworthy. Enrichment is very good across the subject and age range – especially where it is linked with the exceptional chaplaincy opportunities. Self-evaluation is also noteworthy and includes good quality monitoring by senior leaders and governors. The link governor system promotes excellent mutual understanding.

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

1

1

Students are respectful towards and respond well to opportunities for prayer and liturgy, even though this is unfamiliar to many of them at first. Over time they are able to encounter something of the richness and breadth of Catholic practice. Groups like the choir and the Gift Team work excellently with the chaplaincy in preparing, leading, reading at and singing in liturgies, which are planned well for the needs of students. Such ministries are undertaken willingly and are remarkable given low starting points many students. Chaplaincy support for students is exemplary and the chaplaincy office is often 'open house', with a lively, welcoming atmosphere. The liturgical year is creatively celebrated not only liturgically but also with sign and symbol, which students – working with chaplaincy and the art department – enrich greatly. For example, the Stations of Cross for Lent are inspiring and a model of excellence showing what can be made by students themselves, with skilled guidance. Students make some connections with wider life and links to the Catholic curriculum, but this aspect could be substantially developed. In a similar way, there is a need for students to be involved more in planning prayer and liturgy, as well as reflecting on it and evaluating their contribution.

Liturgy and prayer are central to the school's life. The chaplaincy team are highly skilled, motivated and spiritually inspiring. St John-Paul II is an inspiration to both priestly and lay ministry, not least through his words: 'Dear young people, let yourselves be taken over by the light of Christ and spread that light wherever you are.' This appeal, set out on the website, is lived out by those who minister in the college. Significant moments of joy and sorrow are well handled and extend to the family of schools. Good daily prayer, using relevant and appropriate resources, is overseen by the lay chaplain, but there are also regular opportunities for form groups to plan and deliver with their teacher. There is also good use of the Sunday gospels linking to the wider liturgy and the Church's year. Taken together, a considerable range

of experiences are on offer and some students take full advantage of this richness. Student groups associated with and supported by chaplaincy take leadership roles, as do senior leaders. Use of music could be further extended, with those who play instruments being encouraged to support the existing choir. Work with families is strong, including a remarkably professional and engaging regular chaplaincy newsletter. Some parents even express a wish for more opportunities to join in the school's worship.

Policies and vision in the area of prayer and liturgy are having real impact, based as they are on the *Prayer and Liturgy Directory*. They are live documents for the relevant personnel, linked well to the school's mission, and offer good practical guidance to other staff as well. The skills of students in leading prayer are being built up as they progress through school and the school year is well planned, with important holy days well marked and – as described above – exceptional opportunities for trips and retreats. Work is going on to build up a tradition of celebrating Our Lady on a particular day – as advocated by governors. Opportunities for Mass and the sacrament of reconciliation are provided, and careful thought is given to making these occasions helpful even to those with no liturgical experience. In summary, chaplaincy (including priest, lay chaplain and all who lead in this area) is focused on bringing students and staff closer to the Lord through the richness of the Catholic spiritual tradition. Resources and budgets are well prioritised by governors and leaders, who take an interest in monitoring the provision and the views of students about it.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Our Lady's Catholic College
School unique reference number (URN)	119798
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8884717
Full postal address of the school	Morecambe Road, Lancaster, LA1 2RX
School phone number	0152466689
Headteacher	Helen Seddon
Chair of Governors	Philip Jones
School Website	www.olcc.lancs.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	11-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	February 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	1 - Outstanding

The inspection team

Dr Daveth Frost

Louise Lavery

Carol Gregson

Lead

Team

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