

St Mark's Catholic Secondary School

URN: 137995

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster

14–15 November 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

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 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

1

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 any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- The school has fully responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection.

What the school does well

- Behaviour for learning in religious education is outstanding.
- The charity plan of the school empowers students to make a difference locally, nationally and globally, in line with the school mission, 'to live out our faith'.
- Excellent progress is made by all groups of students at GCSE and A level.
- The wide variety of student leadership within the school creates an atmosphere where the Catholic faith is lived out with joy and reverence.
- Students enjoy religious education, and this is reflected in the high standard of work produced in lessons.

What the school needs to improve

- Offer the opportunity in morning prayer for students to share their own reflections and prayer requests.
- Promote Catholic social teaching across the curriculum so that departments can contribute more fully to the Catholic life and mission of the school.

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

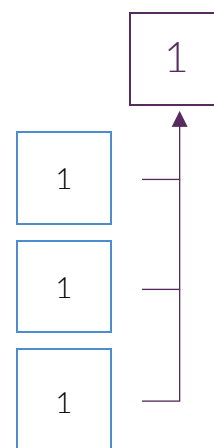
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 mission of St Mark's, "To live out our faith", is truly actioned by students and staff and enthusiastically embraced by the whole community. Students are happy and safe, knowing they are loved and cared for as unique individuals. A student commented, 'We are fortunate to have teachers who care about our academic success but also our Catholic faith. We are nourished here'. Students take a leading role in responding to the demands of the school's values and Catholic social teaching. They are proactive in finding ways of responding to local, national and global charities. Student leadership groups are very popular at St Mark's, in fact 225 students applied to be Catholic ambassadors. Student led initiatives have been so successful that they have become annual events. The senior students are excellent role models for the rest of the school. As part of their core religious education course, they put their faith into action by visiting local care homes and organise a toy drive so that every child connected to social services in Hounslow wakes up on Christmas morning with a gift. A teacher commented, 'The Faith in Action campaign is run by Year 12 students and their activities such as the Year 7 disco, food bank donations, the senior citizens' Christmas party and the toy drive make me so proud to be a staff member'.

Loving attention has been given to the school's Catholic character which is proudly displayed in the physical environment of the school. The Catholic identity is promoted on every corridor with wonderfully presented and maintained displays of students' work, displays about the house saints, school values and Catholic social teaching. Staff enthusiastically participate in and contribute to the wide range of activities which reflect the life and the mission of the school. A teacher stressed, 'It is a privilege to work in a school where I am able to witness my faith to the students, and similarly, they also evangelise me through their incredible faith and reverence'. Everyone is welcome in a spirit of generous hospitality, especially those who are most in need of help. The school goes the extra mile to provide a supportive and joyful community for each of its members. The provision for relationships, sex and health education fulfils diocesan

requirements. The programme is delivered by a specialist team with regular communication to parents. The personal, social and health education programme has links to Catholic social teaching and during the inspection the theme of anti-bullying was observed and was dealt with sensitively and maturely around the issue of sexting and bullying.

Leaders and governors at St Mark's place Catholic life and mission at the core of all they do. There are strong and effective links with the parishes and leaders work hard to include parents in the life of the school. This was confirmed in the parent survey with 91% of respondents agreeing/strongly agreeing that 'the school supports me in my role as first educator of my child'. Consequently, parents and carers are highly supportive of the school. The appointment of the chaplain by the governors and the parish has been nothing short of inspirational. Students take a leading role in responding to the demands of Catholic social teaching. They can clearly articulate the theology underpinning their actions. School leaders and staff have put a lot of work into promoting the principles of Catholic social teaching across the curriculum. To take it to the next level, the mapping exercise now needs development from each department stating why their selected principle is linked to the topics they have highlighted and also how they can relate to scripture and Church documents such as 'Laudato Si' and 'Fratelli Tutti'.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

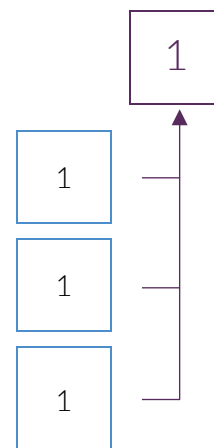
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 at St Mark's are developing excellent knowledge and skills in religious education. Both GCSE and A level results are outstanding and demonstrate the excellent progress students make as they move through the school. Fully focused in all lessons observed, students repeatedly spoke about how they enjoyed religious education. They can use key terms effectively, demonstrating strong religious knowledge. In an excellent lesson involving terms to describe God, Year 7 students displayed their religious literacy by suggesting and explaining 'immanent', 'omniscient', 'omnipotent' and 'benevolent'. Behaviour for learning is outstanding, fostered through extremely positive teacher-student relationships. A high level of challenge is provided in lessons, and this was reinforced by a parent who commented, 'My daughter enjoys writing long paragraphs to extend her independent learning. It gives her the freedom to express her feelings and beliefs'. Students take pride in their work and are regularly given opportunities to develop their responses further. A variety of activities were observed including singing, mind maps, pair-share and memory tasks. Attainment in religious education surpasses other core subjects at Key Stage 4 and all groups make significant progress. Nonetheless, the department is not sitting on its laurels and is currently looking at ways to close the gap even further between boys' and girls' achievement.

The curriculum has been carefully planned and a bespoke Key Stage 3 curriculum is being developed and rolled out using the new *Religious Education Directory*. All religious education lessons are mixed ability taught from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 5. This has led to high quality resources that are challenging, engaging and suited to students' abilities. Teachers make good use of data and progress is tracked using termly assessments which are levelled. In an excellent A level lesson on the challenge of secularism students explored the views of Richard Dawkins from his book 'The God Delusion'. Students got down to work immediately using precise source materials and a lively discussion ensued where students were encouraged to think about alternative perspectives based on personal views and backed up by other philosophical theories. A core religious education lesson involved discussion groups using interesting higher-level

information about Kantian and utilitarian views on sexual morality. Students were fully engaged showing how the department has high expectations for students following core religious education.

Leaders, including 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, staffing and accommodation. The vibrant displays in the classrooms create an atmosphere that is conducive to learning. The subject leader has an inspiring vision for religious education and has the expertise to secure this vision. She willingly and enthusiastically shares her expertise not just within the department but with other religious education subject leaders across the diocese. Consequently, professional development is a priority and a strength in the department with frequent opportunities to participate in high level quality training aimed at improving subject knowledge. Religious education has 10% curriculum time at Key Stage 3 and 4 while the Key Stage 5 allocation is 5%. This does not include a Faith in Action lesson each week for year 12 students. A carefully planned sequential curriculum is in place which ensures that students' achievement is strong as they progress through the school. The senior management team ensures that attendance and punctuality are excellent. The school attendance for September 2024 was 97.1%. which would suggest that students enjoy school and value their learning. Enrichment activities have included visits to a Jewish museum, local places of worship and the parish church adjacent to the school. Leaders and governors' self-evaluation of religious education is informed by monitoring, analysis, and self-challenge. This results in strategic action taken by the school leading to outstanding outcomes both at A level and GCSE.

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 quality and variety of prayer and liturgy provided by the school is outstanding. Each morning in form time a student assists the teacher in the delivery of the daily prayers. A member of staff commented, 'students are respectful during prayer and have a genuine desire to become involved in worship'. Prayer is at the heart of this school. The variety of prayer and liturgy on offer includes the dramatisation of scripture, reciting the rosary at special times of the year and opportunities to adore the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel. The voluntary break time Mass is very well supported with more than 60 students and staff in attendance during the inspection. Students highly value the school's chaplaincy provision, willingly taking leadership roles within it including a student chaplaincy team made up of students from different year groups who were commissioned at a school Mass. This ensures that students are confident in their roles and able to reflect and evaluate prayer and liturgy. However, in form time prayer, on occasion opportunities are missed to take advantage of the strong faith commitment of many students by asking for their reflections or personal prayer requests.

The centrality of prayer and liturgy is very well evidenced. There is a carefully planned programme that ensures students experience the richness and breadth of the Catholic tradition. Having a lay chaplain serving the school and the local parish is a tremendous asset for St Mark's. The strong link with the local clergy enables the school to provide a weekly celebration of the Eucharist. 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 have been provided with excellent resources to help them to pray with students in form time. The recently renovated chapel is widely used and for many it is seen as a spiritual haven. A student said, 'Any time we need to speak to God we can go to the chapel. It is a safe place'. All form rooms have a dedicated

prayer area with a display board focusing on the house saint, Catholic social teaching and school values.

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 school. The chaplain has been very effective in providing support to form tutors as well as training the chaplaincy team to assist and lead in prayer and liturgy. A member of staff commented, 'I count myself as incredibly lucky to work in a school that is so committed to excellence and ensuring students fulfil their potential and live out their faith with passion and conviction'. For many staff it provides them with an opportunity to reflect and deepen their own faith. There is a healthy budget set aside for prayer and liturgy and when there are additional resource needs, the head teacher ensures they are purchased so that the spiritual needs of students and staff are fulfilled. Staff have received training on the structure of prayer and liturgy and there is a clear understanding amongst all staff that the delivery of high-quality prayer and liturgy in all its forms is a priority within the school. The voice of the youth leadership teams is an integral part of the school's evaluation of prayer and liturgy. Student voice and staff voice are regularly sought by the leadership. Their input contributed to the changes in the school mission and school prayer. This was reinforced by a student who said, 'Teachers really value student voice'.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mark's Catholic Secondary School
School unique reference number (URN)	137995
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3134800
Full postal address of the school	St Mark's Catholic Secondary School, 106 Bath Road, Hounslow, TW3 3EJ
School phone number	02085773600
Headteacher	Andrea Waugh-Lucas
Chair of governors	Eliza Duenas
School Website	http://www.st-marks.hounslow.sch.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	The Diocese Of Westminster Academy Trust
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	December 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

Dermot O'Neill	Lead
Mary Coyle	Team
Clodagh Benning	Team
Rose-Marie Sorohan	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