

St Cuthbert's Catholic High School

URN: 104835

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Liverpool

30-01 May 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

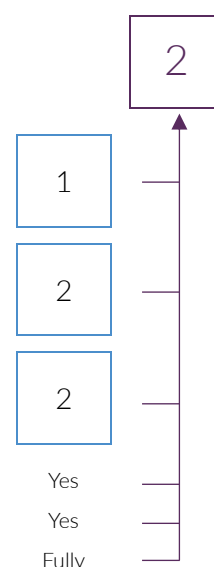
Collective worship (p.7)

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



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 laid down by the Archbishop of Liverpool.
- The school has responded fully to the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection.

What the school does well

- The Catholic mission is lived and visible, creating a strong sense of community and extending to meaningful charitable outreach beyond the school and into the local community.
- The Headteacher is an inspirational Catholic leader whose clear vision ensures the Catholic mission drives every aspect of school life.
- Pastoral care is exceptional, rooted in Gospel values, with targeted support ensuring the most vulnerable students are known, loved and supported.
- Prayer and liturgy are central to daily life, with 'sacred time' offering regular opportunities for spiritual reflection and formation.
- The school environment is a clear and creative expression of the Catholic identity of the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Support students in articulating the theological basis of their actions, enabling them to connect their charitable work with scripture and Catholic social teaching.
- Continue the strategic plans to strengthen religious education provision, ensuring teaching quality and student outcomes are consistently good across all key groups.
- Provide more opportunities for a wider number of students to plan and lead 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

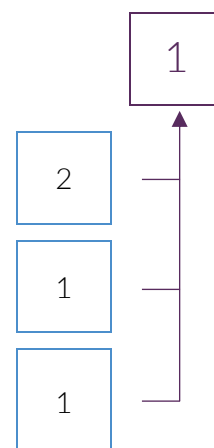
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 at St Cuthbert's Catholic High School benefit from a well-established culture of care and inclusion, rooted in the renewed mission and values of the school. The introduction of the 'Four C's' of Commitment, Courage, Compassion and Community, alongside the scriptural motto of John 10:10 has brought new energy to the school's Catholic identity. Students speak confidently about these values and can explain how they live them out in practical and meaningful ways, through events such as the school's Mission Day. There is a strong commitment to social justice, which is clearly expressed in the exceptional pastoral support offered through the Melrose and the Farne centres. Students express pride in belonging to the school community and feel deeply supported and known by staff. Chaplaincy provision is a strength, with those involved describing it as a deeply meaningful experience. However, opportunities to broaden student engagement in chapel-based initiatives should be further developed to ensure wider participation across year groups. While the mission is known and referred to frequently, students often struggle to articulate its theological foundation or connect their charitable actions to scripture and Catholic social teaching. A more streamlined articulation would support greater clarity, coherence, and shared ownership across the school community.

The provision for Catholic Life is of the highest quality and permeates all areas of school life. Staff actively promote and joyfully live out the school's mission, modelling Gospel values in all interactions. Relationships at all levels are characterised by mutual respect, kindness and compassion, with Christ visibly placed at the heart of decision-making. This is most evident in the school's unwavering commitment to the dignity of every person, particularly those most in need, and is strongly affirmed by both staff and parental voice. The physical environment testifies clearly to the school's Catholic identity: prayer spaces in form rooms and reception,

sacred imagery and high-quality displays make faith visible throughout the school. The quality of provision for relationships and sex education, as part of a wider personal development curriculum, is strong. It is faithfully grounded in Church teaching, sensitively delivered and acutely tailored to meet the developmental needs of students. Underpinned by the school's core values, it contributes significantly to students' personal and spiritual development. Staff are united in their commitment to fostering a community where Catholic values are not only taught but lived. The consistent witness of staff to the mission and values of the school leaves a lasting impression on students and contributes powerfully to their formation.

Leaders and governors are deeply committed to the Church's mission in education and provide visionary, faith-filled leadership. The Headteacher is an exceptional and inspirational Catholic leader, whose visible witness to the Gospel provides a clear moral and spiritual anchor for the entire community. His commitment is recognised and appreciated by students and staff alike, with one student commenting that the Headteacher, "is always there for us, he is always smiling". He is supported by a strong leadership and governance team who share and embody the school's mission. Leaders place the Catholic Life of the school at the heart of all decisions, modelling this authentically to staff, students and the wider community. Governors are highly skilled, spiritually attuned and actively involved in all aspects of school life, providing strategic guidance rooted in faith. Staff morale is high. There is a profound sense of community and shared mission amongst colleagues, with staff consistently expressing pride in belonging to St Cuthbert's. Survey data confirms that 100% of staff believe Christ is at the heart of decision-making and that the dignity of every student informs all that the school does. Leaders also invest significantly in professional formation, engage proactively with the archdiocese and work tirelessly to build strong partnerships with families, rooted in trust and compassion.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

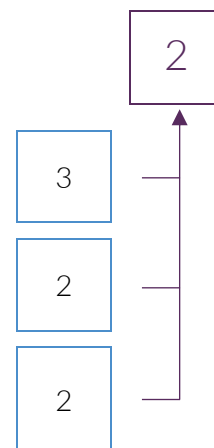
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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' outcomes in religious education at St Cuthbert's are variable and not yet consistently good. While students demonstrate respect and positive conduct in lessons, some lack the intrinsic motivation or curiosity that would deepen their engagement and support sustained progress. This is reflected in outcomes that do not yet match national expectations, particularly for key groups such as disadvantaged students. There are signs of improvement. Students in Key Stage 3 are becoming increasingly religiously literate because of the structured implementation of the new Religious Education Directory and the embedding of effective review of learning routines. These strategies are helping students to recall and connect key theological ideas. Most students take pride in their religious education books and work is generally well presented. However, there are inconsistencies in the depth and quality of written responses between groups and classes, and some students are not yet taking full advantage of opportunities to develop and extend their learning. Whilst most students value their religious education lessons, and behaviour is generally positive, levels of engagement, particularly among older students, are inconsistent, and a strong culture of academic focus and aspiration is still developing.

Teaching in religious education is underpinned by strong relationships and a shared sense of vocation. Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge, and curriculum planning is well developed and clearly aligned with the Religious Education Directory. This is beginning to bring greater consistency to both classroom delivery and expectations. Lessons are purposeful and structured with regular use of recall strategies. These help to reinforce prior knowledge and support long-term learning. When practice is at its best, questioning draws out theological insight and promotes extended thinking. However, opportunities for deeper dialogue and reflection are sometimes missed. The pace of learning varies. Stronger lessons are characterised by energy, clarity and precise scaffolding, while others would benefit from greater dynamism

and tighter time management. Assessment practices are developing. Students complete practice GCSE questions and teachers provide 'next steps' feedback. However, responses to this feedback are not yet consistent across all groups. Teachers know their students well and offer praise and encouragement. Students value their relationships with staff and enjoy opportunities to discuss and debate.

Leadership of religious education is committed and strategic. The subject leader brings energy, vision and growing expertise to the role and is supported by a team of passionate practitioners, notably her deputy. The curriculum is thoughtfully sequenced and rooted in the mission of the school, contributing positively to students' spiritual formation and academic growth. Curriculum plans make explicit links to Catholic social teaching and the school's values. The subject leader actively engages with archdiocesan support modelling professional growth to the team. Departmental training focuses on improving subject and pedagogical knowledge, supported by coaching from senior leaders and external specialists. Staff benefit from regular continued professional development and early career teachers are well supported. There is a growing culture of collaboration and high expectations. While curriculum foundations are strong, ongoing monitoring has identified the need to further embed assessment routines and raise expectations for student outcomes across all key stages. Leaders and governors ensure that religious education maintains parity with other core subjects, ensuring that this subject truly is the 'core of the core'. Whole-school quality assurance processes are applied to religious education, and leaders and the link governor are honest in their self-evaluation, and fully aware of areas still requiring improvement. The department is on a clear trajectory of growth due to strong leadership appointments and is well placed to build on its emerging strengths.

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

2

Leadership

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

2

2

Prayer and liturgy is clearly central to daily life at the school and valued by both students and staff. 'Sacred time' provides a daily opportunity for prayer and reflection, grounded in scripture that is liturgically appropriate and aligned with weekly Gospel readings. These sessions are consistently respected, with students gathering reverently and engaging in a calm, prayerful manner. The centrality of prayer and liturgy is evident in all areas of school life, having a beneficial impact on student formation, including those students receiving additional support. The school's investment in the quality of its environment, including sacred spaces in tutor rooms and creative liturgical displays, enhances an overall sense of the sacred. Students talk about the seasonality of the Church, describing how the school community responds through well-planned 'sacred time'. However, while the provision is regular and valued, prayer and liturgy are largely led by adults and students can become passive participants. A small group of committed student chaplaincy leaders and Society of St Vincent de Paul members contribute actively, but broader student involvement is not yet routine. To deepen the school's identity as a worshipping community, more students need to take an active role in shaping and leading these moments.

Prayer, liturgy and worship is clearly embedded in daily routines and structured with care, ensuring a consistent and spiritually enriching experience for all students. Provision, skilfully planned by the religious education department, demonstrates thoughtful attention to theological accuracy and spiritual depth. Students discuss their experiences of 'sacred time' and described their participation in spiritual practices such as the Novendiales for Pope Francis. The religious education department provides knowledgeable guidance for staff which enables high levels of confidence in leading prayer and worship. Staff across the school, regardless of faith background, recognise and value the centrality of prayer and liturgy, reflecting its whole-school importance. The Friday morning staff prayer is a highly appreciated time of communal reflection

that demonstrates a culture in which many staff contribute their gifts generously. Staff have voluntarily delivered sessions on the Rosary and stations of the cross for the community, encouraging students to experience the richness of tradition. Students are offered meaningful opportunities to encounter Christ through school Masses celebrated on key feast days, such as St Cuthbert's Mission Day, and year group occasions dedicated to their patron saints. The prayer life of the school is further enriched through retreat and pilgrimage experiences to places such as Savio House, the archdiocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes, CYMFED, Flame and Rome. The school goes above and beyond to provide opportunities for vulnerable students to access such experiences.

The clear articulation of strategy and policy is a strength. For example, the lead for Catholic life has created a comprehensive 'sacred time' annual plan of provision. Consequently, provision is well planned and effective. Leaders and governors care deeply about the spiritual formation of all members of the community and therefore ample time and resourcing are dedicated to prayer and liturgy. Leaders are aware that as student leadership and creativity increase, the spiritual impact of worship will be enhanced and its formative purpose more deeply realised. Senior leaders' model excellent practice and ensure consistency across the school. Monitoring is rigorous, and evaluation processes highlight the strengths of provision. Student evaluation and leadership of prayer and liturgy is limited. Leaders' visibility and modelling of 'sacred time' are appreciated by the school community, and their investment in liturgical formation is evident through continued professional development and resource allocation. Staff are well supported in leading prayer and liturgy and particular care is given to the induction of new staff. An expertly planned programme, alongside a staff buddy system, ensures that all staff gain the confidence to authentically lead students in prayer and staff note that monitoring feels supportive and collaborative.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Cuthbert's Catholic High School
School unique reference number (URN)	104835
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3424801
Full postal address of the school	St Cuthbert's Catholic High School, Berrys Lane, Sutton, St Helens, WA9 3HE
School phone number	01744 678123
Headteacher	Stuart Holland
Chair of Governors	Rev Philip Swanson
School Website	http://www.stcuthberts.com
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	19 th June 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The inspection team

Hannah Coe	Lead
Ed Varey	Team
Paul McMenamin	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