



Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School

URN: 103539

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Birmingham

05–06 February 2026

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 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

Compliance statement

- This school fully complies with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- This school is fully compliant with the additional requirements of His Grace.
- This school has fully addressed all previous areas for improvement.

What the school does well

- Leaders and governors prioritise the school's Catholic identity, charism and mission, and leaders model respect for the dignity of pupils and staff in their decision-making.
- The 'Wiseman virtues' are well embedded in daily life and practice, and help pupils and staff to understand and live out the school's mission.
- Staff provide highly effective pastoral care and pupils know that they are valued and cared for as unique persons, made in the image and likeness of God.
- Chaplaincy is central to the Catholic life and mission and prayer and liturgy at Cardinal Wiseman.
- Religious education is well led and resourced, and teachers' strong subject expertise and effective assessment support pupils to learn extremely well in lessons.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop strategy and practices to support parents' engagement in the school's prayer life.
- Provide a curriculum across all subject areas, which is delivered through a Catholic lens.
- Include a broad range of pupils, inspired by the chaplaincy team and leaders, to routinely be part of the collaborative planning of prayer and liturgy to ensure maximum impact on all pupils.

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

Pupils understand and embrace the distinctive Catholic identity of Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School. They value the fact that the school 'takes God seriously' and pupils demonstrate the mission statement, 'All for Christ'. They value their community and the wide range of opportunities for formation and service that the school provides. Their active participation significantly enhances the school's Catholic life and mission. Pupils have a clear understanding that Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School follows the teaching and example of Jesus, the social teaching of the Church, and its own mission, which is reflected by the well-embedded 'Wiseman virtues'. Consequently, pupils know that they are valued and cared for as unique persons, made in God's image and likeness. They are happy, confident, and feel secure. Pupils respond actively to the demands of Catholic social teaching by supporting those experiencing need. Pupils highly value the school's chaplaincy provision, willingly taking leadership roles within it, encompassing prayer and liturgy, fundraising, social actions, and inclusive practice.

The mission statement is clear and accurately reflects the Church's educational mission and the school's own mission, 'All for Christ'. The school is a supportive and joyful community. The extended day for pupils reinforces the supportive academic and pastoral provisions offered by the school and ensures pupils have the very best opportunities to flourish. There is an embedded culture of welcome which means that the school celebrates the presence of those from various cultures and belief traditions, most notably during 'diversity day', organised and led by the pupils. The chaplaincy provision is central to the life and mission of the school. Staff are exemplary role models in their willingness to walk alongside the pupils; for example, supporting the annual speech day. Through their relationships with each other and the care they show for pupils, they consistently bear witness to the school's Catholic life and mission. As a consequence, staff

provide highly effective pastoral care for pupils, with an explicit commitment to those who are most vulnerable.

Leaders clearly articulate the Church's mission. They are energetic, joyful, and determined in pursuing this mission and they inspire the whole community. Policies and procedures consistently reflect the priority given to the school's Catholic identity and mission. Leaders are enthusiastic in their response to diocesan policies and initiatives by working in collaboration with other Catholic schools. Leaders are deeply committed to supporting staff who are new to the school and those who are established, and effective induction supports staff to participate actively in, and contribute to, the school's Catholic life and mission. Leaders model respect for the dignity of their staff and ensure that their decisions reflect this. Policies and structures are in place that provide highly effective pastoral care for staff, with an explicit and concrete commitment to both physical and mental well-being, including flexible working hours. Leaders and governors recognise parents as first educators and the school has strategies for engaging with parents/carers to the benefit of pupils, including regular communications and an annual prize giving ceremony. Governors are highly ambitious for the school's Catholic life and mission and lead by example by consistently emphasising it as a school improvement priority. Most notably, their challenge and commitment to the development of the Jericho provision to ensure a Catholic restorative and supportive behaviour programme for the pupils. The school's self-evaluation is coherent, reflects rigorous monitoring and is explicitly focused on the school's Catholic life and mission; this leads to well-targeted and planned improvements in this area of the school's work.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

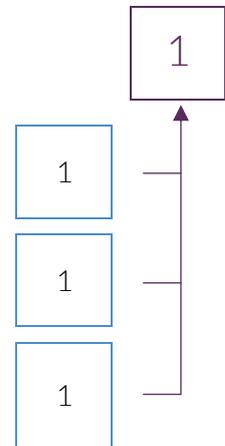
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



The *Religious Education Directory* is fully embedded into the curriculum so that pupils build excellent knowledge and understanding over time. Pupils demonstrate significant prior knowledge in short starter activities at the beginning of lessons. Structured paired discussion enables pupils to actively engage in purposeful dialogue about their learning, which inspires them to develop as competent learners. Pupils are motivated to produce work of a consistently high standard and take pride in the quality of their written work in religious education. As a result, pupils make strong progress, which has been sustained over a number of years, and can articulate what they need to do to improve, following whole-class feedback and appropriate adaptations to learning. Pupils are religiously literate and deeply reflective in lessons. They respond spiritually and ethically, recognising the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. They use subject specific vocabulary confidently and ask thoughtful questions that show curiosity and a desire to deepen their learning. Pupils are engaged in their learning, respond to feedback and express clearly their passion, enthusiasm, and enjoyment of religious education. Pupils experience a sense of belonging and flourish because of strong relationships in the classroom. There is a strong culture of learning in religious education lessons evident through notable independence in learning, where pupils demonstrate an innate capacity to challenge and stretch their learning.

The religious education team is an exceptionally strong and highly skilled and specialist team of professionals. They are confident, hard-working, and supportive of one another and the pupils they teach. They have high expectations for pupils and, even when staffing is disrupted, pupils are supported to meet these expectations. Staff have created well-designed curriculum materials, which support a sequenced and progressive curriculum. Teachers use these resources effectively, alongside their knowledge of teaching and learning, to implement the curriculum

well. In-the-moment feedback, regular use of whiteboards, and whole-class feedback support ongoing assessment of pupils' needs and lead to timely adaptations within lessons. Leaders explain that teaching is planned to be ambitious for all pupils, with adaptations made where needed so that pupils remain fully engaged and learn extremely well. Teaching techniques, including questioning, are used skilfully, and pupils' effort is celebrated in ways that reinforce the Wiseman virtues which pupils know and value. Teachers have a profound understanding of the purpose of religious education and embed opportunities for pupils' moral and spiritual development within lessons. Pupils are motivated to improve because encouragement and corrective prompts help them to persevere and refine their work.

There is a clear and ambitious vision for religious education, sustained over a number of years. Regular, thorough, and robust evaluation leads to a clear progression pathway, focused on strengthening teaching and improving pupils' learning and outcomes. Religious education is the core of the core curriculum and the flagship department in relation to leading developments in teaching and learning at Cardinal Wiseman, including the development of a knowledge-rich well-sequenced curriculum adapted to meet the needs of all pupils. Staff training strengthens teaching further and is research-informed, through investment in 'leading pedagogical gurus', ensuring the department remains at the leading-edge. Leaders and governors support the department, and monitoring and evaluation are carried out with accuracy, agreeing clear next steps to improve pupils' outcomes. Governors provide supportive challenge and ensure that resourcing, staffing, and timetabling for religious education is appropriate. Leaders prioritise the well-being of the religious education team through time, support, and pastoral care.

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

Pupils respond well to prayer and liturgy. They are engaged and attentive in periods of silence and act with reverence. Resources guide pupils to a variety of ways of praying, making effective use of Scripture, reflection, and liturgical music. The 'raising the bar' briefings, formation prayer, and end-of-day prayer enable pupils to participate and reflect, which leads them to response and action. The choir enriches prayer and liturgy considerably, particularly in termly whole-school Masses, and pupils describe its contribution as joyful and uplifting. Pupils understand the prayer life of the school, which is shaped by the liturgical calendar. The chaplaincy team and leaders work well with others to prepare liturgy and support pupils to engage and participate prayerfully. However, pupils who are not part of chaplaincy teams do not have sufficient opportunities to plan, influence, and evaluate prayer and liturgy. Pupils recognise how prayer can lead to action and link prayer to fundraising and social action, including 'Show Racism the Red Card' and a sleep-out for St Basil's.

Prayer and liturgy are central to school life and there is a daily pattern of prayer. There is a wide range of engaging and creative experiences of prayer and liturgy, including the seminarians leading Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and opportunities such as the Stations of the Cross and prayer stations. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is made available during Lent. The school works closely with the Franciscans, who support prayer and liturgy through Mission Week. Scripture is well chosen and is incorporated into music used around the school at poignant times in the liturgical calendar, as well as in times of prayer. Staff, especially senior leaders, are inspiring models of practice, leading by example and through personal testimony, and those who support chaplaincy are highly skilled in facilitating this work. The school makes imaginative use of prayer spaces, including the nearby parish church, a prominent chapel, and prayer boards in classrooms that reflect the liturgical year. The chaplaincy team plans and leads well-

constructed prayer that draws on creative and artistic expertise, supported well by the lay chaplain.

The prayer and liturgy policy sets out clear expectations for prayer and liturgy. There is an embedded understanding of different levels of skill and participation, including Year 10 pupils commissioned as extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist and as lead altar servers. Appropriate ministries are given a high priority and are encouraged and supported, including readers, ushers, and musicians. Sacraments and holy days of obligation are integral to the calendar, and the annual pattern of prayer is carefully planned and adapted so that prayer and liturgy remain central to school life. Termly whole-school Masses are celebrated by the wider community, and the Sacrament of Reconciliation has a high profile and is well supported by local priests. There are regular opportunities for staff training, including modelling and supportive coaching for staff. Staff are supported in their own faith journey through Masses and opportunities such as a staff pilgrimage to Westminster, including celebrating Mass together in the crypt. Leaders and chaplains have a clear understanding of the Catholic tradition and bring this understanding to their planning, ensuring prayer meets the school's context whilst remaining authentically Catholic in nature. The chaplaincy team is well supported, is confident in preparing prayer, and is fully involved in evaluating its impact. Governors join the school for prayer and liturgy, and as a result, are confident in the school's provision and its impact on pupils. Parish links are strong, with the parish priest recognising that 'the school serves the church and the church serves the school.'

Information about the school

Full name of school	Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School
School unique reference number (URN)	103539
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	330 4801
Full postal address of the school	Old Oscott Hill, Kingstanding, Birmingham, B44 9SR
School phone number	0121 360 6383
Headteacher	Robert Swanwick
Chair of governing board	John Garvey
School Website	www.cardinalwiseman.net
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 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	November 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Rachael Waugh	Lead
Michael Burrowes	Team
Luke Salkeld	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