



Sacred Heart of Mary Girls' Catholic Secondary School

URN: 137233

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Brentwood

04–05 December 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

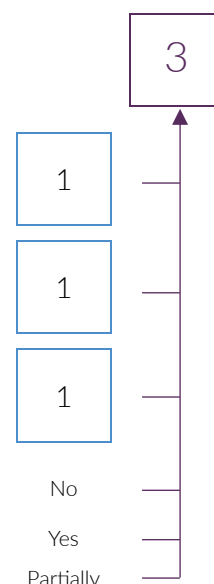
Collective worship (p.7)

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

The school is fully compliant with the 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 not fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference, as the curriculum time allocated to Religious Education does not meet the required minimum of 10% at Key Stages 3 and 4 and 5% at Key Stage 5.
- The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- The school has responded partially to the area of improvement from the last inspection by increasing the curriculum time in religious education.

What the school does well

- The authentic Catholic commitment of the leadership, staff and students ensures that the charism of the founding Sacred Heart of Mary Sisters is actively lived, with the school motto of 'that they may have life' is embodied in a community where Christ is firmly at the centre.
- Student leadership within the school is exemplary and allows the students to flourish and grow into confident and empowered young women with clearly defined roles in the school and wider community.
- The pastoral care on offer, including the commitment to others, provides support and a wealth of opportunities for all, where all students are known and loved.
- Religious education and the chaplaincy provision are exceptionally well led and resourced, leading to excellent student participation and engagement.
- The breadth of opportunities for liturgy and prayer allows for a range of engaging and creative experiences.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure full compliance with the Bishops' Conference requirements by allocating a minimum of 10% of timetabled curriculum time to Religious Education at Key Stages 3 and 4, and a minimum of 5% at Key Stage 5.

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 school's mission 'Ut Vitam Habeant' is lived authentically in every aspect of school life, shaping a community where all students flourish spiritually, academically, and personally. Students are active participants in school life, seeking opportunities to grow in virtue, through involvement in groups such as the chaplaincy team, liturgy representatives, the eco group, school council and Cafod team. They gladly embrace their personal responsibility to serve those in need and are proactive in finding ways of responding to local, national and global charities. Last year, the school raised over £17,000 for charity, provided 600 shoeboxes for the shoebox appeal and hampers for the food bank. Students are secure in their knowledge and application of Catholic social teaching, stating, 'it's the daily living out of being a Catholic and resolving problems, making the change at our level.' Students' exceptional conduct demonstrates a deep-rooted sense of respect for self and others. Students are proud to be a part of this tight-knit community and describe it as 'being more than a school, it is a family.'

The charism of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Mary is lived and witnessed through the school's mission in which the school is cloaked. Buildings are covered in inspiring quotes, celebratory photos, Catholic social teaching, prayers, artwork, and the founder of the Sacred Heart of Mary. Staff are engaged in living out the mission of the school and encourage students to live out their faith - one member of staff mentioned 'Sacred Heart of Mary girls put their faith into action everyday'. Acts of kindness are a key feature of this school; staff model this in their participation in 'Advent Angels' and students incorporate care for peers into their Advent fundraising. The school's commitment to inclusivity manifests in the cultural awareness day, which is celebrated through the sharing of cultural dress, music, food and dance. There is also an active diversity and inclusion group led by students. The sense of community is further enhanced with the

schoolhouse system, building a sense of belonging. The pastoral care provided for students allows them to feel secure, which was demonstrated through the Year 7 and 10 buddy system where the transition to secondary school is enhanced through peer support. The relationships, sex and health education programme is carefully and sensitively planned to meet diocesan requirements and is rooted in the teaching of the Church. Students can articulate what they have learnt and its importance to their lives. Chaplaincy is viewed as everyone's responsibility, therefore, the provision is dynamic and impactful on the lives of all in the community. The school offers a wide range of spiritual opportunities, retreats, pilgrimages, a prayer week, founders' day, and Friday pause.

Leaders and governors are diligent in exercising their duty as guardians of the Catholic life and mission of the school. Leadership of the Catholic life and mission is a source of inspiration for the community. Faith is developed in such a way that it will enable students to leave being prepared for their future lives. Staff are supported to take responsibility for empowering the students in their faith development through training and induction, linked to the Catholic life of the school. The school has strong links with the local parishes, and a priest visits the school regularly, supporting with Reconciliation and Mass. Links with the wider community are well established and during the inspection, a group of Sixth formers visited a local care home to 'live out their faith.' Parents are highly supportive of the school commenting they 'feel truly blessed' that their daughters are educated at Sacred Heart of Mary school. Staff feel their dignity is respected one commented, 'I am not Catholic, however, I am embraced by the school community and given every opportunity to follow my spiritual life.'

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

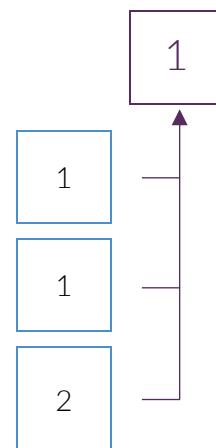
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 make consistently good progress in knowing more when measured against the planned curriculum. As a result, all students, achieve well. Attainment is above average in comparison to core subjects and national data and has been consistently sustained. The students demonstrate high levels of religious literacy and are able to use their knowledge and skills to reflect spiritually and think theologically. This was demonstrated in a Year 9 lesson when students shared their own canticle, using insightful religious language alongside personal reflections demonstrating their own faith responses. Further, this was skilfully used as an opportunity to model and display excellent work. Students are highly confident and speak fluently about what they have learned in religious education demonstrating a desire to learn, showing a curiosity for the subject. Students demonstrate the ability to think independently of the teacher, concentrate exceptionally well, and consistently display a genuine interest in learning. Most students report that they enjoy the subject, and they approach their lessons with curiosity and enthusiasm. Behaviour in lessons is praiseworthy, and students are welcoming and polite at all times.

Lesson observations revealed that religious education teachers have strong subject expertise and that they skilfully lead with passion and integrity. Students have confidence in teachers' ability and subject knowledge. Teachers demonstrate high expectations for religious education, and they communicate them effectively. Relations between staff and students are excellent, creating a respectful and engaging learning environment where every learner feels valued and supported, enabling students to enjoy their learning with enthusiasm. One student commented that 'The religious education department is a great model of faith to us. I would love to come back and teach religious education here; that is my dream.' A level lessons display high levels of

teacher knowledge and students are fully engaged and able to understand and evaluate the subject context with expert language. Best practice demonstrated an ability to skilfully question students in order to maximise learning and increase participation. Achievement and effort are celebrated in lessons, which evidently enhances motivation. Teachers encourage students to reflect spiritually on what they are being taught, thereby helping students to see the impact of the subject on their moral development. There is a consistent approach to marking and feedback resulting in excellent outcomes. Core religious education is well delivered and well received; it contributes to students' ability to make sense of their experience of the world.

The subject leader has an inspiring vision incorporating the desire to 'plant the seeds that will grow.' There is a high level of expertise which is used to develop teaching and learning, resulting in lessons being at least consistently good. The quality of leadership is recognised outside of the department and across the school. Leaders are committed to professional development opportunities that will enhance religious education teaching by incorporating subject and pedagogical development. The curriculum is well designed to ensure that learning is systematic and meets the needs of learners, allowing prior learning to be built upon, as demonstrated in lessons that started with review tasks, which were thoughtfully planned to allow students to review their learning. However, religious education is not yet fully comparable with other core subjects in terms of timetabling and falls short of the Bishops' Conference requirements. Leaders' ability to evaluate religious education is seen through the forensic monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum, which takes place through learning walks and book scrutiny, both of which are regular features in the religious education department. The governors understand standards and base their self-evaluation of religious education on careful monitoring and analysis. The department provides reports for the governing body, which are fully scrutinised, resulting in strategic action and targeted planning.

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

Prayer and liturgy are central to life at Sacred Heart of Mary's, shaping its rhythm and reflecting its authentic Catholic identity. Students are deeply engaged, and this leads to wholehearted, active and conscious participation in prayer and liturgy. A range of significant moments of both joy and sorrow are marked with reverence and creativity, for example, the Memorial Remembrance Mass and annual recommissioning Mass, allowing students and staff to share their prayer intentions and feel spiritually supported by their community. Students lead at every opportunity and take pride in the responsibility they are given, showing spiritual maturity. They show confidence and the capacity to evaluate the practice. Students experience a variety of ways of praying, demonstrated in the Friday Pause, form time reflections and assembly prayer. In a house assembly, students lead each other to reflect on how they can prepare to do small things with great love, showing their prayer and liturgy shapes how they think about themselves and the world and how they are inspired to put their beliefs into action.

Staff are inspiring models of exemplary practice through their leadership of prayer and liturgy. One staff member commented that the chaplaincy lead is 'extremely creative in finding ways to enthuse students to both experience and lead prayer in this school. We always have beautiful liturgies.' The school has a Week of Prayer that provides a range of innovative prayer opportunities for students and staff. Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school. Students participate in three assemblies per week (year group, key stage and house), these draw on the richness of Catholic tradition and include the use of and reflection on well-chosen scripture. Students are aware of and take part in different types of liturgical music (traditional and contemporary), and the school also has a chamber choir that sings at all Masses. The school's prayer book is widely used throughout the school and supports the rhythm of the school's prayer life. Students have the opportunity to participate in a wide range of prayerful

acts, including rosary groups, the Friday Pause and form prayer. Students value the opportunities to attend celebrations, such as the school Founder's Day, Advent carol service and the Remembrance service. Students receive formation to become Eucharistic ministers, and both the Diocesan Youth Jubilee Mass and Flame have been well attended by students. Students attend the diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes with numbers increasing year on year.

The prayer and liturgy policy is written in an accessible and useful way for staff. The liturgical calendar is well reflected in the Prayer and Liturgy Policy. Themes are mapped to the liturgical calendar as well as significant and important events in the school, such as leaving liturgies and Masses before exam seasons, the Year 7 Mass of welcome and retreats before exams at Walsingham House. There is also a recommissioning of staff Mass. A distributed leadership model is employed to ensure all staff are involved in the leadership of assemblies, prayer and other forms of worship. The chaplaincy lead has created and monitors the chaplaincy pupil team who add vibrancy to prayer and liturgy by leading assemblies, reading in Masses and services and helping to raise the profile of the school's mission among both staff and students. All staff receive professional development on prayer and liturgy so that there is a consistent approach across the school. Governors monitor and evaluate the provision and are invited to all celebrations and Masses throughout the year. Governors receive detailed reports and are critical friends to the senior leadership team.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Sacred Heart of Mary Girls' Catholic Secondary School
School unique reference number (URN)	137233
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3115403
Full postal address of the school	St Mary's Lane, Upminster, Essex, RM14 2QR
School phone number	01708222660
Executive headteacher	N/A
Headteacher	Vivienne Qurrey
Chair of Trust	Tracey Knight
School Website	http://www.sacredheartofmary.net/
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Sacred Heart Of Mary Girls' School
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Date of last denominational inspection	March 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Laura Maw	Lead
Andrew Bull	Team
Thomas Gillingham	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