

St Oscar Romero Catholic School

URN: 126096

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Arundel & Brighton

20–21 November 2025

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

- St Oscar Romero Catholic School is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- St Oscar Romero Catholic School is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- St Oscar Romero Catholic School has responded fully to the areas for improvement from the last inspection.

What the school does well

- The authentic vision of exceptional Catholic education is lived out in the school mission statement of 'Aspire to be more' and permeates every aspect of this joyful and harmonious community.
- Leaders, governors and staff model discipleship in all that they do, in conversation, action and decisions and are role models for the students.
- A well thought out, embedded curriculum, and expert teachers enable students to engage, enjoy and thrive in religious education, resulting in exceptional GCSE results.
- Religious education is exceptionally well led. It is undoubtedly the 'core of the core curriculum' and the subject leader makes a huge contribution to the spiritual and religious direction of the whole school.
- Prayer and worship is central to all aspects of school life.

What the school needs to improve

- Schedule and deliver annual opportunities, based around the school motto of 'Aspire to be more', for example a whole school mission week.
- Extend Catholic leadership opportunities for students, beyond Faith ambassador membership, and into the growing Sixth Form.

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

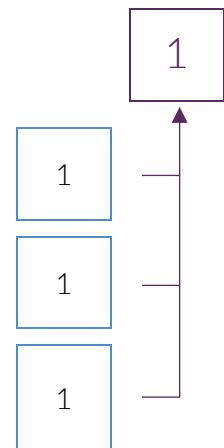
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 motto, 'Aspire to be more' is deeply embedded in the life of the community and is joyfully embraced by the school. It has an unwavering commitment to equity and the belief that all are made in the image of God. Behaviour across the school is exemplary; students show profound respect for one another and extend compassion to those who are vulnerable or in need, embodying the conviction; captured in the words of a student, that 'school is where you are loved.' Catholic social teaching is powerfully lived out through enthusiastic engagement in charitable initiatives at local, national and international levels, including support for communities in the Philippines, Cafod and the local SVP. Students take a leading role in responding to this mission, especially through the vibrant work of the Faith Ambassadors, representing every year group, who help plan and lead acts of worship, run chapel activities, promote Fairtrade and contribute to deanery council days. The dignity of every person is honoured in the quality of relationships, ensuring a community where outstanding personal development and Catholic witness flourish.

The school's mission is powerfully reflected in its outward-facing and inclusive Catholic ethos, prompting one primary headteacher to describe St Oscar Romero as 'a beacon of light—a school that exemplifies what it means for Christian organisations to work together for the benefit of all.' Opportunities to live out Catholic social teaching are exceptional and wide-ranging, from the Night Walk and mountain climbs to sleepovers raising awareness and support for the homeless. The school's long-standing partnership with their charity in the Philippines has inspired deep global solidarity, including one student preparing to return there for a gap year of service. Such provision has even supported a student's journey into the Catholic faith. All staff wholeheartedly promote and lead work on Catholic social teaching, modelling the school's belief that all can

contribute to its mission. The physical environment—including the remembrance garden to Our Lady, the amphitheatre, and the chapel—provides a constant, prayerful witness to faith. The choice of patron saint is truly inspired, with his call to 'aspire not to have more but to be more' shaping the decisions of students, staff and governors. Staff and parents speak with pride about the school's welcoming, tightly knit community, especially its generous support for families through initiatives such as food hampers. The beautifully curated environment, rich with symbols, displays and images of faith, reflects a deep commitment to stewardship and the Catholic mission.

Leadership and governance of Catholic life and mission are outstanding, characterised by a shared vision, deep commitment and admirable strategic oversight. Governors are fully immersed in the Catholic mission of the school, participating in a number of school activities and serving as constructive, challenging critical friends to the headteacher. Leaders place the dignity of every individual, staff and students, at the heart of their decision-making, fostering a culture where all feel valued, supported and called to excel. Professional formation is a priority, exemplified by whole-school professional development from David Wells, ensuring all staff are inspired and equipped to contribute to the mission of the Church. Recruitment processes strongly reflect this ethos, with the central interview question being, 'What will you do to support the Catholic ethos of the school?' Parish partnerships are exceptionally strong, evidenced by raising £15,000 for the local SVP. The school's understanding of family extends to staff themselves, who are encouraged to attend their own children's significant events. As one parent beautifully described, Romero's is 'a living, breathing embodiment of the teachings of Christ' in every aspect of school life.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

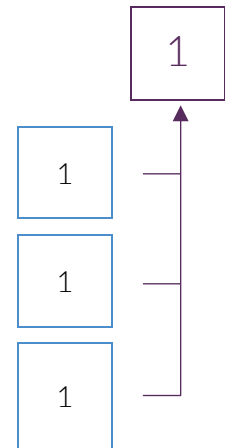
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Student outcomes in religious education are outstanding, reflecting the school's high expectations, strong subject expertise and deeply embedded culture of aspiration. GCSE results in religious education are significantly above the national average year on year, with students whose circumstances have made them vulnerable, achieving exceptionally well, further demonstrating the school's commitment to securing excellence for all learners. Behaviour for learning is excellent and contributes substantially to students' impressive progress, creating classrooms where productive dialogue, thoughtful questioning and deep engagement with religious ideas bloom. Students consistently report that they enjoy religious education, valuing both the subject matter and the opportunities it provides to explore faith, ethics and the world around them. At A level, learners are highly articulate and confident in their use of theological and philosophical vocabulary, demonstrating sophisticated understanding and the ability to construct well-reasoned arguments; current AS-level results were strong. Across all key stages, teachers maintain high expectations that inspire students to think critically, reflect deeply and take genuine pride in their learning. As a result, students leave the school exceptionally well prepared, both academically and spiritually, to contribute thoughtfully to wider society.

The provision for religious education is outstanding, characterised by highly effective teaching, rigorous systems and a clear commitment to deepening students' theological and philosophical understanding. Across the department, questioning is exceptionally well used to challenge students' thinking, promote deeper reflection and encourage them to articulate increasingly complex ideas with confidence. The strongest practice enables learners not simply to recall information but to think critically, make connections and explore the richness of Catholic belief and tradition. A level provision is exemplary; the subject leader prepares students thoroughly and teaches with a combination of expertise, passion and intellectual rigour that inspires

learners to excel. The very best teaching across the department demonstrates exceptional subject knowledge, energetic delivery and skilful use of probing questions, all of which lead to high levels of engagement and sustained academic challenge. Centralised, high-quality resources and carefully designed assessments ensure consistent expectations and allow all teachers to deliver the curriculum with precision and clarity. Regular moderation further strengthens the robustness of the department's practice, guaranteeing accuracy, shared standards and continual refinement. Together, these elements create a vibrant, ambitious religious education curriculum that enables students to flourish academically while deepening their understanding of faith, morality and the wider human experience.

Leadership of religious education is outstanding, underpinned by a highly effective subject leader who sits on the senior leadership team and drives the religious and spiritual education of the school with vision, expertise and passion. Governors play a central role in holding leaders to account, rigorously scrutinising all documentation, ensuring that curriculum decisions, teaching quality and outcomes are continually evaluated. Termly reports from the head of department, alongside learning walks, student interviews and detailed analysis of GCSE results and predictions, provide a comprehensive understanding of students' progress and highlight areas for development, which are then addressed through the school improvement plan. The *Religious Education Directory* has been fully implemented and is exceptionally well resourced, with a carefully constructed curriculum plan and detailed schemes of learning that promote consistency, ambition and progression across all key stages. Governors are well informed about the curriculum, outcomes and wider religious education provision, and through regular meetings and visits they challenge, support and celebrate achievements in equal measure. This highly structured, reflective and ambitious approach ensures that religious education remains a cornerstone of the school's Catholic life, inspiring both staff and students to achieve excellence academically, spiritually and morally.

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

Student outcomes in collective worship are outstanding, reflecting a school-wide commitment to prayer, reflection and active participation. Feedback gathered from the inspection surveys demonstrates that students engage meaningfully with worship and value the opportunities to deepen their faith through shared prayer. Whole school Masses are celebrated regularly, and during the inspection, a Mass for the Jubilee year, was concelebrated by the Bishop and parish priest. Students confidently exercised a range of ministerial roles and participated enthusiastically, demonstrating maturity, reverence and a clear understanding of the significance of the celebration. Behaviour throughout the Mass, when entering, during the liturgy, and on exiting, was commendable, reflecting a deep respect for the sacred and for one another. Prayer and reflection are central to daily school life, with tutor time providing regular opportunities for students to lead and participate in thoughtful, meaningful prayer, fostering both personal spiritual growth and a collective sense of community. Assemblies further support this strong culture of worship, reinforcing key messages, Catholic values, and spiritual development. Together, these experiences ensure that students leave the school not only academically prepared but spiritually enriched, confident in their faith, and able to participate fully and meaningfully in the prayer life of the Catholic community.

Provision for collective worship at the school is outstanding, characterised by careful planning, rich resources and active engagement across all year groups. During Advent and Lent, over 400 students participated in Reconciliation, reflecting the school's commitment to sacramental life. Whole school Masses are expertly planned and resourced, with staff ensuring a reverent, prayerful atmosphere in which students of all faiths and none can participate meaningfully. The Mass observed during the inspection, exemplified this provision: students from Year 7 to Sixth Form sang enthusiastically, engaged in prayer with reverence, and exercised ministries with

confidence. Tutor time is enhanced by well-prepared resources that enable consistent opportunities for reflection and prayer throughout the school day. A robust, calendared on-site retreat programme provides spiritual enrichment for all year groups, supporting personal growth and community cohesion. Faith Ambassadors play a pivotal role, leading and supporting the work of the chaplaincy, including guiding prayer and worship activities. The recently constructed chapel has become a welcoming centre of prayer, evidenced during the inspection when students responded enthusiastically to the chaplain's invitation to pray at lunchtime, depositing written intercessory prayers to be blessed by the parish priest. These experiences foster a vibrant, accessible and spiritually nourishing environment for all students.

Leadership of collective worship is outstanding, marked by vision, commitment and praiseworthy practice from both leaders and governors. Leaders consistently model high-quality worship, demonstrating reverence, confidence and a deep understanding of liturgy, setting the standard for staff and students alike. The shared vision of leaders and governors has been instrumental in the creation of the school chapel, providing a dedicated, welcoming space that supports the prayer life of the entire community. Governors hold leaders rigorously to account, ensuring that worship remains central to the school's Catholic life, while their visible presence at liturgical events and regular engagement within the school reinforces the importance of prayer and reflection. Strong parish and local community links further enrich the provision, offering students opportunities to participate in wider Catholic life and witness the Church's mission in action. This partnership between leadership, governors, staff and the wider community ensures that collective worship is thoughtfully planned, deeply valued and consistently executed with excellence. The leadership team's commitment nurtures students' spiritual development, encourages active participation, and sustains a culture in which prayer, reflection and Catholic values are embedded across the whole life of the school.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Oscar Romero Catholic School
School unique reference number (URN)	126096
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9384603
Full postal address of the school	Goring Street, Goring-By-Sea, Worthing, West Sussex, BN12 5AF
School phone number	01903241368
Headteacher	Peter Byrne
Chair of governors	Chris Silk
School Website	http://www.stromeros.co.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
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	July 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Andrew Bull	Lead
Bridget Durant	Team
James Kilmartin	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