

Greyfriars Catholic School

URN: 146800

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Birmingham

01–02 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

2

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

2

Collective worship (p.7)

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

2

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

2

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 have established a welcoming community which values the contributions and cultures of all.
- Students have an evident appreciation that the school is firmly based on the teachings of Christ, and as a result, they feel valued, happy and secure.
- A strong pastoral team provides genuine care and support for this diverse community whilst having a particular commitment to the most vulnerable.
- The religious education subject leader has an ambitious vision that leads to consistently good teaching and willingly shares expertise to benefit the wider school.
- The new leader of Catholic life and chaplaincy is having an inspirational impact on students and staff and their ability to engage with the school's charism.

What the school needs to improve

- Provide far-reaching student leadership opportunities to respond to Catholic social teaching.
- Ensure religious education feedback routinely provides students with a clear understanding of what they need to do to make progress.
- Ensure that the prayer and liturgy policy is clearly understood by all, shared with staff, and implemented to encourage high quality engagement and participation.

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

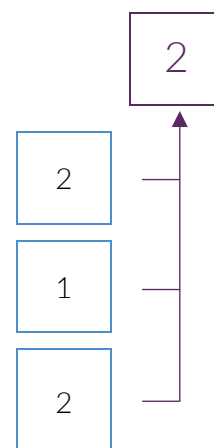
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



Greyfriars is establishing itself as a distinctive and purposeful Catholic school, which sets out 'to champion every student so they can flourish individually and collectively.' The school has fostered a strong sense of belonging for students who now feel confident and secure. This is demonstrated by their willingness to welcome visitors with warm and genuine interest spontaneously. They have a clear understanding of the school's charism, and their joyful participation reflects this. Students, as senior house leaders in the sixth form and little leaders in the younger years, take ownership of charitable and social justice projects. They have chosen to support a local community food bank, Young Minds, as well as nationally and globally through Cafod. They appreciate the recognition they receive at the Community Awards and on Culture Days, and these events instil pride and motivate broader participation. School leaders inspire students. They speak confidently about the Catholic social teaching themes, which are mapped across the year. In particular, having considered the theme of stewardship, they reflected carefully on the responsibility they have for their legacy, both within the school and in their wider lives, as well as in their future careers. Opportunities for students to independently lead the school's response to social teachings have begun but are not yet widely available to all students.

Staff provide exemplary role models and are proactive and committed to embodying the school's mission. Their enthusiasm and initiative help raise pupil confidence and aspirations. Staff willingly take groups of pupils out after school to meet local shopkeepers and residents, with the dual purpose of enhancing relationships and engaging in litter picking, demonstrating care for our common home. Students speak with pride about their school, and those of all faiths and none respectfully embrace its Catholic ethos, appreciating its inclusivity. The skilled and devoted work of the pastoral team ensures that the same energy and care extends to working with the

families of the most vulnerable and local communities, including those in the traveller community. Through the 'Thrive' pastoral hub, various programmes support pupils in regulating their emotional and mental states. Further strategies to support this are driven by the sixth form senior house leaders, who have delivered safeguarding training to younger students and organised 'switch off social media' campaigns to which both staff and students committed. The head teacher has been proactive in engaging with local parishes and religious orders, and has successfully encouraged both Salesian sisters and Franciscan brothers to visit the school to enrich engagement and dialogue with students and their families.

Governors, working closely with the head teacher, are committed to enhancing the life chances of students through a journey of continuous improvement, guided by the Church's mission to make Christ known. This drive is framed around the Catholic Church's preferential option for the poor and the 'Greyfriars Way'. This is based on St Thérèse of Lisieux's Little Way and demonstrates how staff and students can each reflect the Gospel and the teachings of Christ in simple, everyday acts and interactions. Students are explicitly taught to show kindness and respect personal dignity by reminders to smile, greet each other, hold open doors and communicate calmly. The school participates in diocesan initiatives and collaborates with other schools, both within and beyond the multi-academy company (MAC). Regular in-house training is enhanced through engagement with the diocese and external providers. All staff members have a Catholic Life appraisal target, and new staff feel well-supported in their faith formation. A particular focus on the school mission in the initial recruitment process ensures new staff commit to it wholeheartedly. Regular evaluation is becoming more established to involve leaders, staff, and students. This has involved more consistent messaging and informed plans for creative improvements to enhance the impressive site through artwork and planters. Planning for the new curriculum formalises existing connections in all subjects, which reflect the Catholic understanding of reality.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

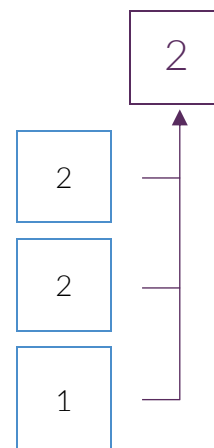
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 Greyfriars acknowledge and appreciate the efforts made by their teachers to secure the best outcomes for them in religious education. The new curriculum and pedagogy ensure that they are developing religious literacy and work well in their lessons. In a recent student survey, over 80% of students reported enjoying religious education. Many students say that it is their favourite subject and indicate that they feel cared for by their teachers, with one student stating, 'We all have a voice to bring our religion to life'. The vast majority of students are engaged in lessons and respond well to strategies such as 'Read to Succeed' and 'I Say, You Say'. Such strategies are helping to increase students' confidence in using subject-specific vocabulary and in framing their own questions. The extensive use of visualisers and mini whiteboards ensures that students work at pace and prepares them to work more independently. Students behave exceptionally well in lessons, and most take care in the presentation and quality of their work. They can clearly explain what they have learned, demonstrating their ability to remember the knowledge they have acquired.

In a small but passionate department, teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and have committed to helping students achieve their best by developing supportive and structured resources. Bespoke workbooks contain key information and model answers, and are used effectively during lessons to support student learning. There are strong spiritual and moral links to the Catholic life and mission of the school that are embedded in the curriculum. Teachers regularly seek opportunities to encourage students to self-reflect before sharing ideas during 'think-turn-talk' moments. Teachers' skills in questioning are strong and generally well-targeted, going deeper and offering challenge when needed. There is a strong emphasis on class feedback, which promotes discussion and models effective ways to improve learning and outcomes. However, not all students can articulate the specifics of what they need to do to make progress

in their learning, as this isn't always made clear to them. Teachers work systematically with colleagues to support students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and English as an additional language (EAL). Students themselves feel very well supported in this way, with more established EAL students providing support and translation for those who have newly arrived. As one student pointed out, 'I think this is us practising Catholic social teaching'.

The subject leader for religious education has an ambitious vision for teaching and learning. She has been at the forefront of plans for the new Greyfriars curriculum and leads training to model clear teaching strategies and planning for colleagues in other departments. This has resulted in improved and improving outcomes in religious education, where students perform at least as well as in other core subjects. Plans for the new curriculum demonstrate a clear expression of the *Religious Education Directory*, while making it relevant to the school's setting and students. Leaders and governors are enthusiastic and determined in supporting the new curriculum, ensuring parity with core subjects in terms of staff, training, and resources. They recognise the valuable contribution that religious education has made to shaping the curriculum changes that were needed. Governors have regular opportunities to conduct learning walks with senior leaders, ensuring they have an accurate understanding of the department. They participate fully in evaluation and monitoring through support and challenge meetings. Whilst a developing programme of subject enrichment opportunities is being offered through invited guests and agencies, leaders are working to reintroduce more opportunities for spiritual retreats and visits, which would enhance learning and experiences for students.

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

Students at Greyfriars benefit from regular opportunities to experience moments of prayer and celebrations of faith together. At these times, including form time, assemblies, and Mass, students respond respectfully and maintain a reverent silence when expected. The majority participate actively, with others remaining more passive. However, all students are invited to reflect personally on their own faith or understanding, which creates a genuine inclusiveness that is appreciated by all. A very positive response to a call for volunteers to join the newly formed chaplaincy team this year resulted in over 90 students coming forward to be Catholic Life Ambassadors. Guided by a smaller core group, along with the staff leader of Catholic life, this team has worked exceptionally well to shape the rhythms and routines of prayer across the school. For example, a small group of Year 10 students confidently explained and then led a decade of the Rosary to mark the month of May for their peers. This team has a clear understanding of various prayer methods, including both traditional and more spontaneous approaches. It is actively seeking to further enrich the prayer life of the school community by helping other students develop their understanding.

Meaningful opportunities for prayer and liturgy are becoming increasingly central to the school's life. This reflects the Church's prayer life using both traditional approaches, meditation, and reflection. Scripture often inspires these opportunities for prayer, but there is inconsistency in how this aspect is delivered when incorporated into form-time prayers. Catholic Life Ambassadors are helping to monitor this provision by visiting forms and collating their findings electronically. They provide direction and offer support where necessary. These evaluations have led to some helpful changes, which are well-received by staff. There are plans for the recently formed choral group to enhance prayer and liturgy through music, and the chaplaincy team are actively considering more creative ways to enhance the prayer life of the school. In addition to

more formal times of collective prayer, students are also encouraged to respond spontaneously in lessons of other subjects. For example, when reflecting on morality in bigger questions in history and sociology lessons, and praying for those less fortunate before studying chromosomal defects in biology.

The relatively new policy on prayer and liturgy is not yet fully understood or widely used by all leaders or staff. However, the planned calendar outlines key times in the liturgical year when appropriate celebrations of the Eucharist occur; for example, a whole-school Mass for the feast of St Francis. A letter of thanks from a priest who previously celebrated a school Mass congratulated the students on their wonderful participation and reverence. Similarly, leaders were delighted with the response from students at this year's Lenten Penitential service, with over 180 students choosing to attend and participate, compared to a handful in previous years. Practical and well-planned training is offered to staff who appreciate the personal inspiration and passion of leaders. As a result, staff feel more confident in relating the school's mission to their own daily work. There is a beautiful chapel and a chaplaincy room which is vibrant and welcoming, as well as an allocated prayer space for students and staff of other faiths. Leaders have recognised the importance of chaplaincy work in appointing a leader of Catholic life and chaplaincy who has a significant impact on the faith formation of both students and staff alike.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Greyfriars Catholic School
School unique reference number (URN)	146800
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9314014
Full postal address of the school	Cricket Road, Oxford, OX4 3DR
School phone number	01865 749933
Headteacher	Lyndsey Caldwell
Chair of governing board	Paul Concannon
School Website	www.greyfriarsoxford.org.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	The Pope Francis Catholic Multi Academy Company
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	March 2022
Previous denominational inspection grade	3

The inspection team

Clare Madden

Lead

David Bayliss

Team

Peter Foley

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