



St George and St Martin's Catholic Academy

URN: 140145

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Birmingham

05–06 February 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

1

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

- St George and St Martin's pupils experience a strong sense of community; they are united in their mission and warmly welcome everyone.
- The headteacher is dedicated to making Christ known to all, fostering a culture of inclusivity.
- The religious education leader has developed a clear action plan to enhance teaching and learning across all key stages.
- Investment in staff formation and training results in their deep commitment to the school's mission.
- Pupils demonstrate respect and reverence during designated times for prayer, creating a reflective and respectful atmosphere.

What the school needs to improve

- Apply a Catholic lens across the full breadth of the curriculum so that learning in all subjects reflects the school's Catholic beliefs.
- Routinely use teaching strategies in religious education lessons to promote pupils' independence.
- Develop pupils' leadership of prayer and how this links to their active participation in the local community.

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



Pupils clearly understand their school mission, 'Growing, Learning, Loving in Christ; United in Play, Prayer and Peace'. They say they 'Work together as a family, united as brothers and sisters' and feel they 'have a mission from God to look after the poor and needy'. Pupils are deeply proud of the chaplaincy leadership roles they embrace in school, including Catholic life leaders, Bible club and eco club, which enable them to flourish in serving their community's needs whilst using their God-given gifts and talents to discern their vocations. Pupils are involved in several eco-projects enhancing the curriculum. For example, the 'Higaonon' project involved planting trees to combat deforestation, improving pupils' awareness of the impact of our actions in the broader world and the need to be leaders in their stewardship of the earth in response to Pope Francis' call. The school has achieved the LiveSimply Award, and the eco club is proud of the pupils' 'Ruby Robin' awards, which reflect their hard work protecting creation, including making bird feeders and baths. The school is sharing its expertise and is now supporting the parish in working towards gaining its LiveSimply Award.

A strong sense of community is palpable and instilled within all, alongside Christ's teachings on loving one another. School leaders and staff successfully work hard to build excellent relationships at all levels, including between home, school, and parish. Parents are very supportive of the school's Catholic ethos. One parent shared, 'The school has caring and nurturing staff who lead by example'. Everybody at St George and St Martin's is valued as a child of God. As a result, all staff greet families and visitors with an exceptionally warm welcome. One staff member proudly told inspectors, 'The children here know they are loved' because of the school's excellent standard of pastoral care. A dedicated headteacher relentlessly commits to the most vulnerable and ensures that all pupils are treated equally. Chaplaincy proudly offers

charitable outreach on local, national and global scales, including to the local food bank, the Macari Foundation and the Jesuit Refugee Service, ensuring that staff are fantastic role models of Christian discipleship. Pupils and staff talk fondly about their visits to Northwood Day Centre; this intergenerational outreach allows pupils of all ages to work for the common good with older adults, affirming the school's concrete commitment to those experiencing need.

Governors and directors have clear strategic plans to ensure Catholic life and mission are central to the school's work. This is supported by visits, training, and sharing of best practices so that there is always a sharp focus on improving standards. Directors, governors, and leaders speak confidently about the 'next steps' identified to strengthen Catholic life because they have a well-informed and accurate grasp of monitoring and evaluation. For example, school leaders identify appropriate support for new and established staff members, which significantly helps them enact the school's mission. School leaders lead with faith-filled passion and integrity, focusing on bringing Christ to the lives of all through their interactions and support; they are excellent role models. Leaders ensure a careful balance between the Church's preferential option for those in need worldwide whilst showing a fundamental understanding of local needs. This is led with passion and love, always wanting the best for the children in their care. The headteacher's team recognises the headteacher as extending love to all pupils, a culture she has established. Teachers are purposefully starting to link other subjects with Catholic teachings, helping pupils understand the broader curriculum through a Catholic lens. For instance, discussions around creation and environmental stewardship in science highlight key Catholic values.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

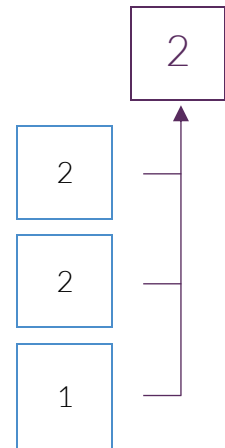
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Pupils enjoy religious education lessons and demonstrate secure knowledge, understanding, and skills. They make commendable progress by the end of Key Stage 2 and can write thoughtful and considerate responses. However, this consistency is not yet present across the entire school, as some teachers provide too much support, which stifles pupils' ability to respond to tasks independently. Pupils are provided time to reflect on the themes of lessons, which deepens their learning and provides opportunities for more profound responses; for example, pupils can link the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick to Jesus' healing miracles. Pupils adeptly utilise subject-specific skills so they can talk about their learning confidently. They also apply their spiritual and moral knowledge by linking their ideas to scripture, religious artefacts, saints, and virtues. Pupils throughout the school are developing their ability to ask 'I wonder...' questions and are beginning to pose more incisive questions, demonstrating a desire to deepen their learning further. Older pupils possess an impressive knowledge of scripture and can relate Pope Francis' teachings to the Old and New Testament scripture. Positive behaviours during lessons reflect the school's supportive culture and the pupils' strong engagement with religious education. Most pupils show the ability to focus on their work for extended periods. However, there are instances where their concentration wanes due to low levels of challenge. Adults in the school support vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and disabilities well. Generally, pupils take pride in the presentation of their work and enjoy various methods of displaying their findings.

The recent implementation of a new structure to religious education lessons has resulted in a more consistent approach to planning and teaching lessons throughout the school. Pupils are actively encouraged to collaborate, as demonstrated by discussing the 'Get us thinking' activity at the start of each lesson. Consequently, they are engaged in their learning and share

responses. All staff communicate the significance of religious education and treat the subject with the utmost respect. Early career teachers are provided extensive practical support with planning and delivering lessons from leaders to ensure they sustain the school's good standards. The subject leader supports all teaching staff with adapting planning to ensure pupils are given more opportunities to reflect more deeply on their learning with increased independence, which is starting to take effect but is yet to be embedded. Staff assessments of pupils are moderated regularly, ensuring they are accurate and enabling teachers to plan effectively to teach all pupils.

Governors ensure that religious education has parity with other core subjects. They are involved in outcomes and pupils' work to ensure the school always complies with the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales' requirements. Under the direction of a strong subject leader, there is a clear vision for teaching and learning in religious education, and this has resulted in changes to lesson design, which have improved pupil outcomes and ensured consistency across the school. Leaders have clear action plans to develop the quality of pupils' outcomes, increasing independence across the school. Ongoing training is valued highly, and leaders are committed to engaging in training opportunities from the collegiate and diocese. The quality of subject leadership at the school is recognised beyond the Newman Catholic Collegiate level, with the subject leader sharing best practice examples for deepening pupil responses during diocesan training sessions. Leaders have developed opportunities to monitor and evaluate the provision of religious education alongside schools within the Collegiate to ensure effective strategic planning is in place.

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

1

2

Pupils show respect and reverence during designated times for prayer, responding appropriately in word, song, and gesture. In line with school policy, younger pupils are supported by their class teacher in organising prayer sessions, preparing them to deliver them independently. Older pupils organise worship in class, establishing a calm space for prayer and reflection. Pupils can explain their choices; for instance, in a recent pupil-led worship, they 'arranged the chairs like pews in a church'. Pupil Catholic life leaders have initiated efforts to encourage others to pray using prayer trees. They take pride in this, helping shape whole-school prayer during the Jubilee Year. Pupils know their views are valued and acted upon by leaders. Older pupils demonstrate an understanding of the liturgical year. They are starting to discuss its related signs and symbols with confidence, particularly regarding the recent season of Advent, though this is not yet secure in all year groups. Through meaningful acts of worship, pupils are encouraged to connect their experiences with Jesus' life and develop their trust in God while learning that prayer often inspires action.

Staff engage fully in communal prayer and are good role models. Staff adhere to diocesan prayer planning frameworks, using these to support pupils in becoming independent in preparing worship. Pupils' strong recall of Old and New Testament passages demonstrates the appropriate use of scripture. Pupils of all ages respond positively to the high expectations set by staff. Pupils enjoy joining the collegiate and schools across the diocese for Masses and online celebrations. Leaders and staff provide a range of prayer opportunities within the school. Young pupils are supported in creating dedicated prayer spaces and demonstrate an understanding of the signs and symbols used, helping to build strong foundations for future spiritual development. Older pupils follow the positive role models of prayer presented to them. For example, Rosary Club pupils nurture a devotion to Our Lady. The Rosary Club has grown from two pupils to 20 regular

attendees, with one pupil sharing, 'We know Jesus is really important, but we wanted to help people talk to Mary.' Prayer is central to life at St George and St Martin's; during the inspection, one class directly linked their prayer to an issue affecting their class community, demonstrating their strong faith in turning to prayer for support. Families are invited to participate in various forms of worship, though levels of engagement vary. Pupils share how the 'go forth' message and prayer card allows them to share prayer with families at home. True independence in pupils taking ownership of planning prayer services is not yet embedded consistently throughout the school.

The school has a clear and effective prayer and liturgy policy and a well-structured guide. Staff appreciate these highly effective policies, which provide valuable support. The headteacher leads prayer and reflection calmly and purposefully, modelling the highest standards to staff. The collegiate fosters a strong sense of teamwork. Staff feel valued and appreciate the support of the collegiate lay chaplain. Directors and governors speak confidently about the school's strengths and areas for development because they are well-informed of the school's practices and are skilled and knowledgeable in directing improvements. A well-structured monitoring cycle involves pupils and staff in the process. Governors and senior leaders support staff in their professional growth and encourage them to take the 'next steps' toward improvement, which they ensure is prioritised regarding resourcing. Teachers value opportunities for coaching and collaboration, benefiting from release time to mentor and support colleagues. Leaders actively foster and strengthen links with the parish.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St George and St Martin's Catholic Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	140145
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8613 406
Full postal address of the school	Boulton Street, Birches Head, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 2NQ
School phone number	01782 234384
Headteacher	Dawn Farmer
Chair of governing board	Gillian Meller
School Website	www.sgsmacademy.co.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	The Newman Catholic Collegiate
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	November 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Rebecca McKinney
Julie-Anne Tallon

Lead
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