



# St Matthew's Roman Catholic High School

URN: 148389

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Salford

03–04 July 2024

## Summary of key findings

### Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

2

#### 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 curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

## What the school does well

- The school has an embedded culture of welcome for all pupils which creates a safe and purposeful environment faithful to its Catholic mission.
- The school goes over and beyond to meet the needs of all of its pupils in line with its strong Catholic ethos.
- Staff provide the highest level of care for all of its pupils with a special commitment to the most vulnerable.

## What the school needs to improve

- To develop pupil leadership of prayer and liturgy across the school.
- To develop a wider variety of styles of prayer across all year groups.
- To develop more explicit links to Catholic social teaching in weekly assemblies.

## 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

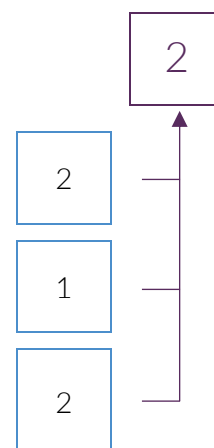
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### 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



Pupils are proud of their school and recognise the transformational changes that have taken place in the last fifteen months with the arrival of their new headteacher. They understand the Catholic mission of the school and can explain how the school's mission of 'we pray, we care, we achieve' has created a safe, happy and inclusive environment. As one student commented, 'we are like a big family in which everyone looks out for each other.' As a result of this strong, Catholic and child-centred ethos students behave well and are increasingly taking up opportunities to explore their faith. This was best seen in groups of pupils attending a Bible group and an Eco group. A Guardian Angels group ensures that older pupils take a leading role in caring for younger pupils and with a reestablished cycle of pupil retreats, pupils are poised to deepen their understanding of their faith further. A recent trip to Rome, including a private audience with Pope Francis, provided an unforgettable spiritual experience for the pupils involved. In order for the school to realise its ambition to be outstanding in this area, more pupils need to take leading roles in responding to the demands of Catholic social teaching so that they can clearly describe how the theology behind it underpins their actions.

The school's motto provides a simple and powerful message to the whole community of their collective mission. Staff are enthusiastic and dedicated in their commitment to this mission and this is most obvious by the highest levels of support shown to all pupils. The high visibility of staff around school reminds them of the premium level of care staff have for them and this is reflected in much improved levels of attendance. The school's Beehive provision, supporting its most vulnerable pupils, exemplifies this in abundance. Culture and Diversity Days have also helped embed the culture of welcome and inclusivity permeating the school. Sanctions for pupils, when they are used, are characterised by values of restorative justice and forgiveness.

When pupils make mistakes, they have the chance to start again. As one member of staff put it, 'new lesson, new start.' Staff model these behaviours and expect pupils to follow them too. This significantly contributes to creating a happy and purposeful community in which behaviour is routinely good. The school offers extensive opportunities for pupils to engage in the wider moral and spiritual life of the school such as charity fun runs, Christmas hampers and harvest festival donations. This provision, led by the Catholic life team and supported by all staff, captures well the strong Catholic values of the school.

The headteacher, supported by his senior team, shows inspiring leadership as the faith leader of the school. This was clearly evident at a staff briefing at the start of the day in which sacred scripture and prayer were central. This twice weekly event is also led by staff following the same structure and helps to reinforce the school's core values. It also creates a sense of collective mission which staff buy into. They recognise how far the school has travelled in its improvement journey and are clearly inspired to go over and above in their service to the school and wider community. Thoughtful systems are in place to ensure staff's needs are responded to. As a consequence, staff feel valued and well-cared for. Governors, well-supported by the Emmaus Catholic Academy Trust, know the school well. Through continuous support and judicious appointments, they have strengthened leadership at all levels. In order to be outstanding in this area, pastoral leaders need further training so they can more confidently reference Catholic social teaching in weekly assemblies.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

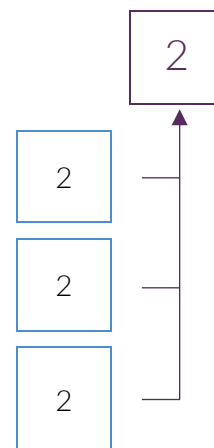
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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 and are able to explain its importance as a subject in the school curriculum. One pupil said, 'learning about world religions helps us understand our differences.' As a consequence of a consistent approach to information retrieval and recall, pupils are growing in their religious knowledge and understanding. They also show confidence in using accurate religious terminology when speaking about their learning. They see the relevance of religious education to life in modern Britain and enjoy opportunities to debate moral issues in their lessons. Behaviour in lessons is good. Pupils settle quickly to work as soon as they arrive in their lessons. Consistent approaches to the beginnings of lessons establish a calm and structured beginning to lessons. Across all learning in religious education, pupils enjoy excellent relationships with their teachers. This helps create a secure place for pupils to express their views and participate in their learning. Progress in learning in lessons is good. When lessons were more pacy and challenging, learning was more accelerated. Attainment in religious education has improved over recent years and is broadly in line with or better than other core subjects.

Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and teach with passion and commitment. They plan learning collaboratively, sharing resources and approaches to teaching. They foster positive relationships with their pupils who value the support they give. As one pupil commented, 'they are always there to help you if you don't understand something fully.' As a result, attendance at voluntary after-school lessons is good. Teachers are skilled at ensuring that pupils build up their knowledge through their use of information retrieval tasks and targeted questioning. In the best learning observed, teachers used a variety of techniques to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding. In one lesson, the teacher asked questions with escalating difficulty and was skilful in ensuring pupils gave longer and more detailed answers. In order for

this provision to be outstanding teachers should ensure the quality of feedback in books is consistent across the department and that all pupils act on that feedback in future work.

Leaders have ensured that their new curriculum adheres to the requirements of the *Religious Education Directory* and offers a well-considered pathway appropriate to the needs of their pupils. They have worked closely with the diocese as they collaboratively assemble their new programmes of study. The religious education department occupies a suite of adjoining classrooms close to the chapel and these are enriched by interesting wall displays and iconography. The department meets regularly to share resources and best practice in teaching. This has helped create an effective and cohesive team. There is a consistency to the purposeful way all lessons across the team begin which is faithful to whole school policies on teaching. There is also a clear vision for religious education in the school and with the creation of a new, enhanced post of Director of RE, governors have shown their ambition for religious education to be the true core of core subjects. The new appointee to this role is poised, with her team, to drive up standards further. The department has well-developed links with two Catholic colleges for enrichment opportunities. In its ambition to be outstanding, pupils would benefit from more subject enrichment activities such as visiting speakers and trips.

## 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

3

#### 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



Pupils routinely experience opportunities for prayer each day either in form time or in an assembly. In assemblies observed pupils were well-behaved and respectful. Pupils, however, were more passive than engaged when it came to joining in prayers. Prayers are recited at the start of every lesson and although this regularly reminds pupils of the centrality of God, this too tended to be an act of compliance rather than focus. Engagement of pupils in prayer beyond the daily routine is much stronger. Through a range of liturgical and paraliturgical activities, there is a growing understanding of the spiritual importance of prayer. The Bible Club exemplifies this well in giving pupils the opportunity to read and reflect on scripture. The Year 11 Leavers' Mass celebrated by the bishop was well-attended and students responded positively in what became a spiritually emotional farewell to their school. Outcomes, however, in the routine, daily experience of prayer are not yet good because pupils are not involved in the leadership and evaluation of it in school. The ingredients are now in place for this to happen and inspectors were confident that with the formation of a group such as a pupil chaplaincy team, improvements would follow.

Prayer occupies a central place in the daily life of the school. Prayer and liturgy are planned well by the spiritual wellbeing lead and are faithful to the liturgical year and the rich tradition of the school's Catholic heritage. He provides a daily audio reflection and prayer based on scripture which is used by all form tutors at the start of the day. Staff value this resource highly. In one form period observed, the form tutor skilfully used this meditation as a springboard for deeper reflection and discussion. Provision for prayer beyond form time and assemblies is also extensive and often imaginative. These include Celebrations of the Word, Stations of the Cross, an Ash Wednesday service and the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Lent. Close engagement with parishes and families has led to a significant uptake in pupils presenting themselves for

Confirmation with no difficulty in finding adult sponsors from neighbouring parishes. In order to ensure the school reaches its ambition to be outstanding in this area, each form room would benefit from the development of a sacred space and from the routine use of music, silence, candles and symbols to enrich their daily experience of prayer.

The spiritual and wellbeing lead makes a significant contribution to the leadership of prayer and liturgy across the school. Together with two other senior leaders they form the Catholic life team reporting directly back to the headteacher. This is an effective model. Together they ensure that prayer and liturgy follow the liturgical calendar of the Church as well as being responsive to local, national and global events as they occur. The school has a chapel but this is currently too small to accommodate what is now needed. Leaders and governors should take the earliest opportunity to review this provision. Governors have invested generously in staffing resources to support the Catholic life of the school and whilst the imminent departure of the spiritual and wellbeing lead will leave a significant gap in leadership, governors have been proactive in planning for this through further restructuring of roles and new appointments.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Matthew's Catholic High School
School unique reference number (URN)	148389
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3524015
Full postal address of the school	St Matthew's Catholic High School, Nuthurst Road, Moston, Manchester, M40 0EW
School phone number	01616816178
Headteacher	Andrew Nightingale
Chair of Local Governing Body	Samantha Breslin
School Website	www.smrchs.com
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Emmaus Catholic Academy Trust
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	17 June 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

## The inspection team

Martin Reynolds	Lead Inspector
Xavier Bowers	Team Inspector
Helen Hall	Team Inspector

## 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



