

## Our Lady & St John RC High School, a Voluntary Academy

URN: 150308

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Salford

25–26 June 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

Partially

2

### Compliance statement

- School follows the required GCSE specification, is fully implementing the *Religious Education Directory*. Religious education provision meets the required 10% curriculum time in all key stages.
- Teachers are appropriately qualified; 90% have completed diocesan religious education professional development in the last two years.
- Whilst the school has put in place strategies to address the last report's areas for improvement, the impact has yet to be borne out and further re-evaluation of these strategies should be considered. Since the last inspection, a more formal approach to charitable fund raising has been adopted. Outcomes demonstrate some improvement over time, but there is still a journey ahead to reach national expectations. School has employed many strategies to engage families, but further work and re-evaluation of the impact of these strategies is required.

## What the school does well

- This is an inclusive school. Students demonstrate a deep respect of those of other faiths, religions, and none.
- Staff provide the exemplary levels of pastoral care for students and there is an explicit and commitment to the most vulnerable.
- The strong religious education team has excellent subject knowledge and teaching expertise.
- Leaders ensure that religious education is the “core of the core” at Our Lady and St John.
- Catholic social teaching is evident across the curriculum and students can readily verbalise how this links to their life choices and school's mission statement. Support of the bishop's directive to engage with environmental issues is exceptional.

## What the school needs to improve

- School needs to significantly diminish the gap between national attainment in religious education and outcomes at Our Lady and St John.
- School needs to re-evaluate their strategies to engage families to support a culture of aspiration for students.
- Whilst there is strong evidence of quality assurance at Academy Trust level, at local school level school needs to formalise processes of governors' and leaders' quality assurance of religion, collective worship and Catholic life and mission to make demonstrable improvements.

## 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

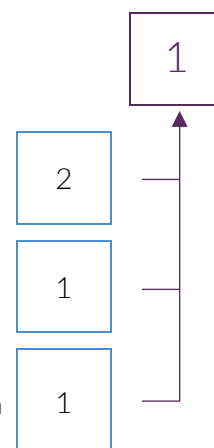
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### 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



Students at Our Lady and St John understand the distinctive Catholic identity and mission of the school. School is multi-cultural, but students celebrate together. Staff at all levels consistently told inspectors, 'We are the OLSJ family.' Students express that they are valued and cared for. They are happy, confident and feel secure. Students told the inspectors, 'One of our values is unity, this means we are one family, and no one gets left out'. Students gladly embrace their personal responsibility to care for our Common Home, most recently winning a Laudato Si' award. They serve those in need through an array of charity acts, including raising funds for Derian House, supporting Caritas Every Step 2025, providing an annual pensioners Christmas party and participating in family fast days to raise money for Cafod. Students have a well-developed sense of respect for those of other faiths. Leaders state that, 'regardless of faith, our values are grounded in supporting the development of well-rounded spiritual human beings.' The behaviour of students is good in lessons and throughout the school. Students value the school's chaplaincy provision. However, the number of students who actively participate in chaplaincy is currently small. School should consider strategies to engage a wider cohort. The mission statement is a clear and inspiring expression of the educational mission of the Church. As a result of the headteacher's inspiration for Catholic life and mission, staff embrace the mission statement and enthusiastically participate in and contribute to those activities which reflect it.

Staff are emotional when they discuss Our Lady and St John. They state, 'It is a privilege to be a safe space for children. We are home and Church for them.' It is evident that Christ is at the heart of this school and that there is a lived sense of community. School has a culture of 'notice the niggles' and staff state 'We encourage and support those with life challenges to be brave enough to change.' As a result of school's embedded culture of welcome, the presence of those from various cultures and belief traditions is celebrated, going the extra mile to understand their needs and enable them to live and pray in fidelity to their own commitments. Staff provide exemplary levels of pastoral care for students. Leaders and governors welcome students whose

circumstances have made them vulnerable and school has deployed funding to meet the needs of these students via several provisions including the Ignatius centre. The provision for relationships, sex, and health education is carefully planned to ensure that it fully meets diocesan requirements, is firmly rooted in the teaching of the Church, and celebrates a holistic vision of the human person. There is a real strength in this leader's passion for the subject.

Leaders and governors promote the bishop's vision for the diocese, including the commitment to academisation. Trust leaders already have in depth knowledge of school's strengths and areas to strengthen and are rapidly empowering school improvement. The leaders and governors of the school recognise the principle that parents are the first educators of their children and support them in meeting the demands of this vocation. Nevertheless, a re-evaluation of family engagement strategies would be of benefit. Governors are passionate in their support of school. It is evident that they visit regularly and undertake learning walks for example. However, a greater focus needs placing on their formal self-evaluation, leading to measurable improvements. A more formal process needs to be established to monitor improvements. Similarly, whilst the school's self-evaluation is very thorough, the formal quality assurance processes at local school level behind this self-evaluation, would benefit from greater formality and scheduling.

## 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

2

#### Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education

2

#### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education

1

2

Students are developing secure knowledge because of the ongoing strengthening of both the religious education curriculum and classroom pedagogy. They are remembering more and doing more when measured against the planned curriculum for each year. Lessons demonstrate that relative to their age and capacity, students are religiously literate and engaged young people; they use their knowledge, understanding and skills effectively, to reflect spiritually, and to think ethically and theologically. Students speak with confidence about what they have learned in religious education, showing an awareness of key concepts and using some subject specific vocabulary. Consequently, they ask good questions of adults and peers, which enhance learning. In lessons observed, they concentrate well and respond to the challenge of learning. Books also support this finding, showing good progress over time. They are presented well and shows signs of emerging individuality and creativity. Students engage in lessons and show a willingness to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills, to further develop as competent learners. Students enjoy their learning and approach their lessons with interest and enthusiasm. Therefore, behaviour in lessons is good. Student voice and books demonstrate that students understand how well they are doing, of what they need to do to improve. As a result, whilst outcomes remain below national expectations, the capacity to diminish this gap is strong and religious education does achieve in line with other core subjects at Our Lady and St John.

Teachers have a high level of confidence based on authentic subject knowledge and teaching expertise, appropriate to the phase in which they are teaching. They demonstrate a deep commitment and high expectations for religious education, and they communicate this highly effectively to their students. One member of staff stated, 'this place has my heart completely' and students stated, 'I really like my teachers. They all want us to succeed in life.' Lessons consolidate and extend students' knowledge and teachers use questioning skilfully during lessons. They adapt explanations and tasks, thus improving learning for most students. Celebration of effort is clear and consequently; motivation is high amongst students. Teachers at Our Lady and St John have a profound understanding of the impact religious education has

on the moral and spiritual development of students. They give students space and time for reflection in lessons and provide students with opportunities to present their learning using a variety of forms of expression to meet the differing needs of students. Good quality resources, including other adults are used effectively to optimise learning for most students.

Leaders ensure that the school curriculum for religious education is a faithful expression of the *Religious Education Directory*. They ensure that religious education has at least full parity with other core curriculum subjects. Leaders state that religious education is placed 'at the core of the core.' Leaders are committed to securing regular, high quality professional development in religious education for all practitioners in relation to both subject knowledge and pedagogical development. As a result, standards have been rapidly strengthened in these areas. The subject leader has a clear vision for teaching and learning and possesses a high level of expertise to secure this vision. Leaders ensure that religious education is imaginatively and thoughtfully planned to meet the needs of different groups of students and each key stage and that students are provided with engaging enrichment activities that enhance pupil learning in religious education.

## 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

1

#### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for collective worship

2

2

Students respond well to their experiences of prayer and liturgy in a fully inclusive environment. They participate by reading, reflecting in silence, joining in communal prayer with confidence and on occasions singing. Appropriate to their age and experience, students understand a variety of ways of praying in the Catholic tradition. They can describe the Church's liturgical year and articulate how it influences the life of the school. Students work well with the chaplaincy lead, teachers, and their peers to prepare engaging experiences of prayer and liturgy. Students recognise and articulate how prayer and liturgy influence, and are influenced by, both the curriculum and the wider life of the school and most can articulate how such experiences have led to action. The centrality of prayer in school life is very clear. Appropriately planned worship is integral to routine and moments of joy and sorrow are identified and celebrated. There is a naturally embedded daily pattern that faithfully reflects the rhythm of the prayer life of the Church and a balance between routine and innovative prayer. Scripture passages illuminate the liturgical season and are carefully and thoughtfully selected to ensure that all present can fully and actively participate.

Leaders are often inspiring models of exemplary practice to other staff and students, engaging in and leading prayer and liturgy. Relevant staff are skilled in helping students to confidently plan and lead well-constructed prayer and liturgy, such as the fortnightly voluntary prayer services. Students and staff use their gifts to enhance collective worship, deploying music and art to enrich it. The school makes creative use of its site capacity to provide prayer stations within classrooms which are mostly owned by students, also ensuring suitable spaces for the worthy celebration of Mass. The school has an attractive chapel that is cherished and in regular use. Staff reach out to a diverse range of families to include them in the faith life of the school. The school collaborates well with two local parish priests who are highly supportive, to enrich students' liturgical and sacramental experience. The policy on prayer and liturgy is well formulated and accessible to staff.

Leaders understand the varying levels and skills of participation that are reflective of the age, diversity, and capacity of students. They have a strategy for developing them as students' progress and mature. Leaders have planned the calendar and timetable carefully to ensure that opportunities to celebrate the Eucharist are regularly offered to the school community, particularly at key times in the liturgical year. All Holy Days of Obligation and other significant events, such as the Year 7 welcome Mass and Year 11 leavers' Mass, are prioritised in the calendar to ensure full access. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is also offered at key times during the liturgical year. Leaders provide regular opportunities for staff professional development, incorporating liturgical formation and the planning of collective worship. As a result, all staff understand the importance of prayer and liturgy and are well supported to lead it. Leaders confidently articulate the Church's understanding of the relationship between participation and ministry and are thoroughly familiar with liturgical sources. They consciously deploy their knowledge and understanding of the needs of the community in the planning of prayer and liturgy. Consequently, students and staff lead and enjoy prayer opportunities that are engaging, of a good quality and accessible and relevant to students. Leaders, including governors, recognise the importance of prayer and liturgy when setting budgets and allocating resources. The views of students are regularly sought as part of the school's evaluation of prayer and liturgy.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	Our Lady & St John RC High School, a Voluntary Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	150308
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8894006
Full postal address of the school	Our Lady & St John RC High School, North Road, Blackburn, BB1 1PY
School phone number	01254588388
Headteacher	Peter Tite
Chair of local governing body	Mike Zammit
School Website	<a href="https://www.olsj.blackburn.sch.uk/">https://www.olsj.blackburn.sch.uk/</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Romero 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	10 <sup>th</sup> July 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

## The inspection team

Lisa Corrigan  
Simon Duggan  
Rachel Thompson

Lead  
Team  
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