



St Anthony's Girls' Catholic Academy

URN: 138054

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle

28–29 January 2026

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

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

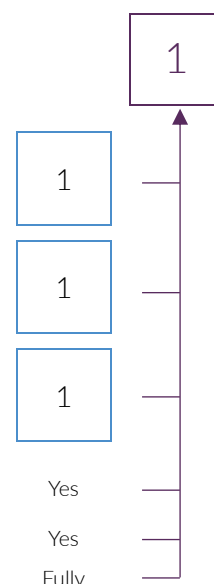
Collective worship (p.7)

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

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

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



Compliance statement

- St Anthony's Girls' Catholic Academy is fully compliant in relation to the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- St Anthony's Girls' Catholic Academy is fully compliant in relation to the requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- St Anthony's Girls' Catholic Academy is fully compliant explaining in addressing the previous areas for improvement.

What the school does well

- The mission of the school, 'Let us be shining lamps, giving light to all around us', has a unique character that is deeply rooted in the tradition influenced by the Sisters of Mercy. This mercy ethos permeates every element of the school community. It inspires all aspects of school life including relationships, behaviour and learning.
- The headteacher, governors and other leaders for the Catholic life and mission of the school are exceptional witnesses to faith and are true servant leaders, leading with passion, authenticity and integrity.
- Pastoral care is a strength of the school. Staff go the extra mile for the most vulnerable and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Students are known, valued and cared for.
- Leaders and governors ensure that prayer occupies a central place in daily life, allowing pupils to gain a deeper understanding of the shape and meaning of the Church's liturgical year.
- Outcomes in religious education are outstanding for all groups of students. Students achieve highly, make outstanding progress and can articulate their learning with confidence.

What the school needs to improve

- Provide experiences and opportunities for parents to be involved in the prayer life of the school.
- Embed the Prayer and Liturgy Directory into the school's prayer and liturgy provision.

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 make an exceptional contribution to, and derive profound benefit from, the life and mission of the school, which is deeply rooted in a lived Mercy ethos that permeates every aspect of the school community. This ethos inspires all aspects of school life, guiding relationships, behaviour, learning and acts of service, and is a source of pride as students and staff celebrate the school's rich history and enduring Mercy traditions. Students actively embody gospel values of compassion, forgiveness and service, guided by the school's mission statement, 'Let us be shining lamps giving light to all around us.' Students take on leadership roles such as Faith Ambassadors, supporting spiritual life across the school, while others participate in the Faith in Action Award, strengthening their engagement with prayer and community service. The Mercy Mentors exemplify the schools' ethos, with older students being role models in supporting younger students with their transition to secondary school. Their shining lights of friendship offer joy and companionship. Students' commitment to charitable work is outstanding, leading and participating in fundraising for causes such as the Great Air Ambulance Service, SVP, Maggie's Cancer Care and Cafod. Through all these experiences, students grow spiritually, morally and socially, becoming compassionate witnesses to faith.

The school's Catholic identity and charism is explicit, shaping a shared vision rooted in gospel values that are clearly understood and joyfully lived by all. Staff demonstrate an exceptional commitment to the Church's mission in education, acting as authentic witnesses to faith through their professionalism, care and dedication. There is a strong sense of community and a culture of welcome in which all are valued, and where inclusivity and diversity are celebrated. This is exemplified through experiences such as Faith Week and Culture and Diversity Week, which promote inclusivity, respect and meaningful multi-faith dialogue. Social justice is a lived reality

within the school, particularly through the work of the Empower Group which enables students to respond thoughtfully to local and global injustices. Pastoral care is a strength, underpinned by effective systems such as The Haven, which provides a safe, nurturing space supporting students emotional, spiritual and mental wellbeing. Chaplaincy provision is central to school life, enriching spiritual formation through prayer, liturgy and opportunities for reflection. Relationships, sex and health education is delivered with confidence, sensitivity and fidelity to Church teaching, empowering students to grow in self-respect, develop healthy relationships and moral responsibility, all within a faith-filled framework.

Leaders and governors demonstrate outstanding passion, authenticity and commitment to the life and mission of the school, ensuring that Catholic life and mission is clearly articulated, embedded and reviewed through all policies and strategic planning. Leaders and governors actively provide guidance, challenge and support to strengthen the school's Catholic identity. Strong and mutually enriching parish links enhance the spiritual life of the community and provide meaningful opportunities for worship, service and formation. The parish priest described the school as, 'Catholic to its core, faith filled and hopeful'. A deep commitment to Catholic social teaching is evident in decision-making, curriculum priorities and the lived experience of the school, promoting solidarity and care for the most vulnerable. Staff speak very highly of school leaders and the support they receive, with leaders and governors showing deep respect for the rights, dignity and wellbeing of all employees. Governors are highly ambitious for the Catholic life of the school and their genuine care, commitment and passion is evident. The school's self-evaluation of Catholic life and mission clearly informs well targeted, planned improvement and future development, with students, leaders and governors all taking an active role in this process.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

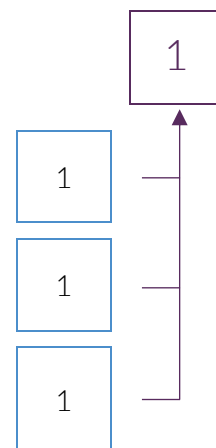
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 achieve exceptionally well in religious education and demonstrate a deep enjoyment of their learning. Retrieval practice is central to learning, enabling students to build upon their knowledge, understanding and skills over time. This allows students to make links and theological connections with their work and as a result, students can articulate their learning with confidence. Progress and attainment is excellent across all groups which is a result of high-quality teaching and a well-sequenced curriculum. Students can use religious vocabulary fluently, applying it thoughtfully when engaging with challenging questions and concepts. Opportunities are provided in lessons for students to discuss faith, belief and meaning at a deeper level. Student work is of a high standard, and they take great pride in their work and presentation. Assessment is used purposefully to inform planning, check understanding and support progress. Students understand how well they are doing in religious education and can identify what they need to do to improve further. Students speak positively about religious education, describing it as engaging, relevant and enjoyable, and their enthusiasm is evident in their commitment to learning, the strong uptake of A level and their positive outcomes. Students behave extremely well, with student voice supporting the view that this is a highly valued subject.

Teachers demonstrate strong subject and pedagogical knowledge, which enables them to present learning clearly and confidently and to address misconceptions effectively. 'Why This Now?' curriculum planning documents are shared with students to help them frame the 'big picture' of their learning, providing clarity on how lessons are sequenced and fit within the broader curriculum. Students are given structured opportunities to refine their writing, supported by clear modelling techniques that promote progress. High expectations of students' engagement, behaviour and achievement are evident, and students respond positively in lessons, showing respect for one another. Teachers use effective questioning to challenge

students' thinking, encourage reflection and promote articulate responses. Opportunities for moral development are woven into lessons, enabling pupils to reflect on meaning, values and personal responsibility. A variety of teaching strategies and resources alongside creative activities, enrich learning and support pupils of differing abilities. The availability of Bibles in all classrooms, recently received from the Jerusalem Trust, also supports scripture-based learning across all key stages. There are warm and respectful relationships between staff and students with praise used regularly to celebrate work and effort.

Leaders and governors demonstrate a deep commitment to religious education, ensuring it is at the heart of the school's mission and fully aligned and faithful to the Religious Education Curriculum Directory. The Directory has been thoughtfully and creatively planned to maximise engagement, understanding and progress. Provision in religious education is strategically planned, monitored and evaluated. Clear core parity with other subjects is evident in curriculum time, staffing and resourcing. The subject leader for religious education provides effective leadership, offering clear vision, guidance and support. Ongoing professional development for staff strengthens both the approach to teaching and subject expertise. Teachers demonstrate the belief that 'it is just not about the excellence for pupils, but about pursuing excellence in our own professionalism'. The department is a team that works collaboratively and supports one another to ensure, 'every child encounters the living Christ'. The curriculum is inclusive, enriched by meaningful opportunities for liturgy, retreat experiences and engagement with Catholic social teaching. Leaders' self-evaluation is accurate, reflective and drives continuous improvement. Provision is carefully adapted to meet the needs of all students, enabling them to flourish academically, spiritually and personally. The induction programme that is provided to Year 7 students, introduces the mercy values as the bedrock to their faith and future learning.

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

Students participate in and respond to prayer and liturgy in a deeply reverent and engaging way, demonstrating respect and embracing the prayer life of the school. Students embrace the opportunity to work collaboratively with other pupils and staff, to produce creative, meaningful and reflective celebrations of the word. Collective worship reflects a rich variety of forms and is firmly rooted in the liturgical year, ensuring that students' spiritual journey is nurtured through seasons, feasts and key moments of the Church's life. Students have excellent knowledge and understanding of the liturgical year. They have developed their own beautiful prayers and reflections, presented in prayer books demonstrating the tangible impact prayer has on students' spiritual growth and formation. One student said, 'Daily prayer provides me with a calm and purposeful start to each day, helping me feel prepared and focused regardless of any challenges I may face.' Chapel lessons and opportunities for students to visit Oaklea Convent, helps students reflect on their school mission and deepen their understanding of the school's mercy ethos and values.

Prayer occupies a central place, with both students and staff engaging reverently in a variety of forms that reflect both the liturgical season and the daily rhythm of school life. Prayer and liturgy is enriched by a creative and thoughtful use of space, music, and visual resources, which together foster a reflective and prayerful atmosphere. Scripture is consistently integrated, helping students and staff to make connections between gospel teachings and their own lives. Mass is offered weekly for form classes on a rotation and regular staff Mass is also offered. Staff support students to use their talents for services and Mass in school and local parishes, where students minister through altar serving, Eucharistic ministries, music, and prayer. Staff demonstrate high levels of commitment, modelling prayerful participation and supporting students to develop their own spiritual expression. Prayer spaces are used around the school such as the Chapel,

Mercy garden, and multi-faith room to provide students the opportunity to respond in faith and prayer throughout the day. Students also have opportunities to deepen their faith through a variety of experiences and retreats. Although the school works well to secure a strong partnership with the local parish, leaders understand that there is more planning and work to do to include parents and families in the prayer life of the school and to support the developing prayer life of students.

Leaders and governors demonstrate a strong commitment to promoting, monitoring, and evaluating prayer and liturgy across the school. Leaders are passionate about ensuring that prayer, Mass, and liturgical celebrations reflect the liturgical calendar, including key Sacraments, Holy Days of Obligation, and other significant Church feasts including the school's House saints. The sacramental life of the school is strong, supported by the parish with the Eucharist being at the foundation but also providing opportunities for reconciliation and confirmation. Senior leaders are skilful in modelling high quality experiences of prayer and liturgy. Leaders actively support staff through guidance, resources, and professional development that equips them with the skills and creativity to plan, lead and deliver meaningful worship experiences. However, the Prayer and Liturgy Directory is not fully embedded across the school. The school has an ongoing self-evaluation process, which identifies areas for development and informs ongoing improvement. The voice of students is also a valued part of the evaluation of prayer and liturgy. Governors provide effective oversight, reviewing policies and outcomes to ensure high quality prayer and liturgy remains a central aspect of school life.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Anthony's Girls' Catholic Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	138054
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3944610
Full postal address of the school	Thornhill Terrace, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR2 7JN
School phone number	01915658904
Executive headteacher	Not applicable
Headteacher	Mrs Marie Lanaghan
Chair of local governing committee	Mrs Maureen Galbraith
School Website	www.st-anthonys-academy.com
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Date of last denominational inspection	13 – 14 June 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

Donna Burns	Lead
Rachael Blackburn	Team
Claire Humble	Team
Joanne Cervantes	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