



# St Mary's Catholic High School, Leyland

URN: 119816

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Liverpool

13–14 March 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

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

1

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

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

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

No  
Yes  
Partially

## What the school does well

- Community, inclusivity and belonging are hallmarks of the school, making it a genuine family of faith.
- Chaplaincy is the beating heart of the school, offering a caring and inspiring ministry that encourages staff and students in their own commitment.
- Leadership at all levels is a strength and rooted in a caring approach that provides time to make the right decisions.
- Religious education is continually developing with a leadership focused on improvement and progression in teaching and learning.

- The school environment is cared for and constantly improved, with resources deployed well to benefit students and enhance Catholic life.

## What the school needs to improve

- Throughout the whole school community ensure that the close links with St Mary's parish and the Order of St Benedict remain at the heart of the unique charism of the school.
- Increase the confidence of students in articulating the school's mission and how this relates to their own individual gifts as well as to faith in action by the community.
- In religious education the full 10% curriculum requirement should be in place for each year group by September 2024.

## 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

1

The warm and welcoming Catholic identity of St Mary's Catholic High School is evident from the moment you enter it. Students clearly value this and enthusiastically participate in the school's life and mission, though they cannot all put this into words. It is a happy community. Students say 'We all feel like a family' and feel valued and respected. Many students are proactive in seeking ways to support and extend chaplaincy, through the *Faith in Action* or *Ethos Ambassador* groups for example, but also in many other ways, to suit the talents of each. They embrace the opportunity to engage in action in support of those in need, near and far, although this could be enriched by a greater understanding of Catholic social teaching and an ability to articulate it. Behaviour is excellent both in class and around school, and there is a clear sense that those with different perspectives, backgrounds or cultures are welcomed, listened to and appreciated. Those with particular needs and challenges play a full part in school life, valued and celebrated alongside everyone else. Students place great value on the chaplaincy provision, getting involved and taking the lead. Chaplaincy is at the heart of the school.

The school's mission statement is prominently displayed and used, though it is not as familiar as the school motto: 'Let Your Light Shine'. The unique potential of each individual is therefore encouraged strongly, although linking this further to the light of Christ (and the school's Benedictine heritage) could be helpful. Christ is nonetheless clearly at the heart of this school, and welcomed in other people, especially those most in need. Different belief traditions are respected and chaplaincy is accessible to all, focused on the flourishing of each member of the community and its spiritual development. Staff are impressive role models to the young people in their care, and pastoral care is expert, committed and well organised. The head teacher, chaplaincy and pastoral staff work together to reach out to students or their families facing

challenges. The school environment displays the highest degree of care and attention. Throughout the school are well chosen texts from scripture or other forms of sign and symbol expressing the Catholic faith, and individual staff and students enrich the environment with creative displays. The *Personal Development* programme for relationships, sex, social, health and economic education is superbly planned and well rooted in Catholic teaching.

Leaders and governors place great emphasis on the mission and are committed to it personally. The school is extremely well organised. Systems and policies are accessible, up to date and rooted in the Catholic life. There are numerous examples of ways in which governors and leaders, at all levels, are involved with the wider mission of the archdiocese. Excellent links with the local parish church build on the Benedictine years. End of term and other major Masses take place there, celebrated by the parish priest, and students readily speak of St Mary's as 'our church'. Parents are central to the school's life and surveys reveal an overwhelmingly positive view from parents of the care and education their children receive. Resources are carefully directed to enhance learning and the learning environment, supporting students wherever there is need. Staff bear witness to a head teacher who listens and places emphasis on wellbeing. More guidance could, however, be given to staff to help them unify the Catholic curriculum, making links between faith, life and what is studied. There is an accurate and effective system of self-evaluation, with some involvement of students, and excellent professional development, including a spirituality day.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

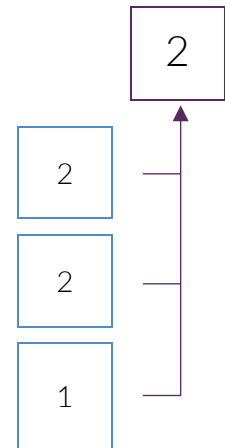
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



The new *Religious Education Directory* (RED) is being introduced and students are gaining secure skills and knowledge. There is a rising trend in attainment at Key Stage 4 with improving progress, and new insights being incorporated from the *Directory* early in Key Stage 3 are helping lessons to be more interactive and enjoyable. Careful attention is given by the department to groups that underachieve, and strategies put in place to help them. Use of key terminology is good and some students are particularly engaged and religiously literate. Spiritual reflection and ethical implications are explored largely through excellent liaison with the chaplaincy. Students concentrate in lessons, producing work in well organised books, while being encouraged to aim high. They enjoy learning and behaviour is respectful and polite. Feedback is also good, although on occasions opportunities are missed to refine or correct terminology, or to ensure each student knows exactly what detailed next steps are required to progress. Skills monitoring is good, and overall outcomes compare fairly well with other core subjects although there is room for progress to be made against national comparators. Every student is entered for GCSE.

Teachers in the religious education department are confident in their subject knowledge and teaching and learning skills. Where these can be developed even further, there is always a willingness to do so. The whole department values religious education, as does the school. Students sense this and it increases their engagement and understanding. Lessons and courses are effectively planned in the light of assessments so that students learn well. They are readily and warmly praised when they make good contributions, increasing motivation. Opportunities for creativity and spiritual or ethical reflection are given, such as writing environmental prayers in relation to Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si* or taking part in the stations of the cross while travelling around the school. Artwork, posters and group activities supplement more traditional learning activities, and resources are very creatively planned and consistently used throughout

the department. There is a strong link with chaplaincy, and staff make good use of the chaplain and chapel, as well as their own expertise. There is some disparity in year groups with regard to the overall percentage of curriculum time provision for religious education, although systems and plans are now in place to ensure this is rectified by September 2024.

Leaders and governors are committed to embedding the insights of the new Religious Education Directory and resources are continually being refreshed with this in mind. They have committed the appropriate investment and undertaken planning to ensure that, having moved to the 10% requirement for religious education for Key Stage 3 and 4 (in fulfilment of their last Section 48 report) they will achieve 10% for each year group by September of this year. There is a real sense of parity with other core subjects like English and mathematics, and resourcing is broadly comparable, although the library's holdings on faith and religion could be enriched and more prominently displayed. Professional development is encouraged by the head teacher, senior staff and governors. The department hosts local cluster meetings for the subject, which is an example of the subject leader's outstanding vision and rate of ongoing departmental improvement. Leaders and governors have focused on the department's teaching and learning to support it in moving from solidly good teaching to more exceptional practice. Internal planning and innovative teaching and learning resources harness imagination and consistency in the quest for improvement. Very good enrichment activities are made available to each year group, including residential visits to Ampleforth and elsewhere.

## 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

Assemblies, form groups, religious education lessons and above all chaplaincy, ensure that the students of St Mary's have excellent experiences of prayer and liturgy. There is engagement by senior and pastoral staff, including heads of year, and the creative arts are also well deployed, with qualified staff ensuring careful thought is given to the use of music in the expression of spirituality. Students, not least through form groups have many opportunities to lead prayer and explore scripture, art, drama, music, reflection and prayer in ways that speak to them. While there could be more signs of the liturgical seasons around school, their themes are central to assemblies and prayer. Students work well together with staff to prepare liturgy and the expertise of the chaplain is an important resource in this. There are some very committed groups such as *Faith in Action*, *Ethos Ambassadors* and others that show an exemplary level of commitment. The chapel is a hub of activity and a place where students love to be, working with the chaplain on planning prayer and action. They evaluate and reflect on what they do, ensuring they progress in understanding. Some students make very good connections between their chaplaincy involvement and the wider curriculum.

Prayer is central, highly valued and integral to meetings, form groups, assemblies and daily life in a way that seems natural. It is, however, not accidental. The care and commitment of the chaplain ensures that students and staff are provided with all the help they need to lead to a high standard. An example would be the prayer sheets that connect each day to the scripture readings of the week. There is a wide variety of prayer and liturgy available for students, from the rosary to Mass to more informal expressions. Good catechesis is provided, not only on liturgy but on signs and symbols such as the *Burnt Crucifix* and St Mary's stained-glass. Scripture is used well and chosen to meet need. The chaplain and school leaders' model good practice and students gain an understanding of the Church's ways of prayer and how to lead them. The chapel

itself is a beautiful space at the heart of the school, which has been well resourced and is eminently suitable for liturgy and prayer. At appropriate times local people and families are invited to share in celebrations.

The school's policy on prayer and liturgy is effective, easy to consult and regularly reviewed. Chaplaincy, leaders and governors work together to ensure that appropriate participation (including leadership) in prayer and liturgy is offered to students. The school timetable is planned meticulously to allow for this, and in addition to opportunities for Friday Mass in the chapel, whole school celebrations of the Eucharist occur at key times in the year in the parish church. The spirituality days enable staff to deepen their own understanding of prayer, which is excellent professional development for their roles. The chaplain's diaconal formation is a great resource for the school, adding to the considerable existing experience. Scripture, the liturgical books and the breadth of Catholic spirituality are all familiar and used expertly. In particular, the chaplain inspires and encourages others, including both students and staff, in their own leadership of prayer and liturgy, as well as caring for all in a dynamic and supportive way. Leaders and governors have invested well in this provision and in resources, and the fruits of this are clear to see. Regular reports on the school's spiritual life are seen, discussed and evaluated by the governing body.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic High School
School unique reference number (URN)	119816
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8885407
Full postal address of the school	St Mary's Catholic High School, Royal Avenue, Leyland, PR25 1BS
School phone number	01772421909
Headteacher	Phil Thompson
Chair of Governors	Gill Donohoe
School Website	<a href="http://lsmchs.com/">http://lsmchs.com/</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	28 June 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

## The inspection team

Daveth Frost	Lead
Sarah Daley	Team
Louise Byrne	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