



The English Martyrs Catholic Secondary School and Sixth Form College

URN: 140867

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

24 June 2026 – 25 June 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 RE

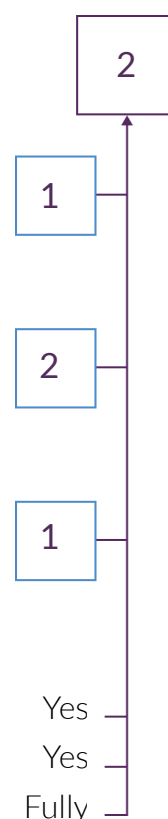
Collective worship (p.7)

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



What the school does well

- The rights and dignity of all employees are sacred. The newly appointed Senior Leadership Team goes the extra mile to ensure that all staff feel deeply valued, cared for and loved. As a result, staff retention is now strong and staff talk with pride about the servant leadership provided by the Senior Leadership Team.
- Pastoral care in the school is exemplary and therefore students have trust in the pastoral system. This approach ensures all students feel welcome. Strong relationships allow students to experience Christ through the love and care provided to them by all members of staff.
- The deputy subject leader for religious education is innovative, passionate and has an inspiring vision for his department. This motivates and enthuses his team of subject specialists.
- All leaders have a wealth of knowledge and skill when it comes to planning and leading prayer and liturgy. This results in experiences that are powerful and transformative. Leaders lead worship with authenticity, genuine witness and they ensure that Christ is truly at the centre of everything they do.
- The partnership between the school and the parish priest is exemplary. He gives constant support to the school to ensure that students have every opportunity to attend Mass, develop sacramentally and have the chance to play an active part in the local parish community.

What the school needs to improve

- Embed robust quality assurance for Catholic life and mission, including regular use of student voice that leads to action plans and impact.
- In religious education, ensure that quality assurance is undertaken regularly and draws upon student voice, using this to inform planning.
- Improve student progress and attainment at Key Stage 4 in religious education by ensuring consistently high-quality teaching, targeted intervention and effective use of assessment.

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

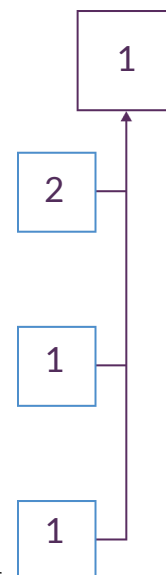
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 know and understand the importance of the school's virtues. They can articulate how they have inspired them into action, commenting that they, 'help them grow in compassion'. Students state that they, 'truly feel part of this Catholic community'. They know that they are cared for and that it is a truly inclusive community that is welcome to all. Students strive to support one another and aim to live out the Catholic ethos in the wider community. Catholic social teaching is lived out by groups such as the Pope John Paul II award, the Steps for Success programme and the faith group. These groups undertake a good range of social action for causes such as Alzheimer's research, The Mission to Seafarers, Cafod, the Great North Air Ambulance and they have adopted animals from the WWF to support overseas conservation. Through the recent appointment of a new school lay chaplain, chaplaincy provision is increasing and a good variety of opportunities is now on offer for students; numbers attending are steadily increasing. However, this is not fully embedded. Students enjoy attending events including the Source, Youth Mission Team (YMT) retreats and pilgrimages to Lourdes.

The school's mission, 'Christ has no body but yours' is increasingly understood and lived out. Staff ensure that care, love and respect is shown to every member of the school community. Inclusion is exceptional. Facilities such as the Savio centre and the Ark ensure that all students are supported, valued and loved. Staff always go the extra mile to ensure that there are no barriers to students developing spiritually and academically. Students comment that inclusion

is so strong at this school, it feels like, 'a blanket of warmth' to them. Significant support is given by both staff and students to those in the greatest need such as through donations of care parcels to the elderly, medical resources to hospitals and responsive charity donations to emerging community needs. Furthermore, pastoral structures are outstanding, and as a result this leads to excellent behaviour and a whole-school culture of calm. Relationship, sex and health education is faithfully planned, rooted in Church teaching and responsive to the context of the school. Sacred spaces such as the St Francis remembrance garden significantly enhance the Catholic life of the school.

Leaders and governors make significant contributions to the diocese and local parish including musical expertise for the Bishop's Day conference and at the YMT's Source, as well as supporting the work of the YMT Mission Committee in their development of a retreat programme. The newly appointed leadership team have had a transformational and rapid impact on the school's engagement with both parents and the parish. Parents feel that both the Executive Headteacher and Head of School have, 'restored Catholic values' and embedded 'deeper faith in the school'. Parents feel that through the lived values of the school there is greater holistic development of the students. Leaders live out the school's mission through their interactions with staff, students and the wider community. The greatest priority is given to staff wellbeing, support and the rights and dignity of all workers. Staff comment that they feel valued, included and loved as a result. Staff comment that, 'nothing is too much trouble for the Senior Leadership Team'. Governors play a central role in the school's improvement journey, supporting leaders to embed change. However, the school does not currently have a robust and thorough policy of quality assurance for Catholic life and mission and does not include regular opportunities for student voice.

Religious education

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 key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

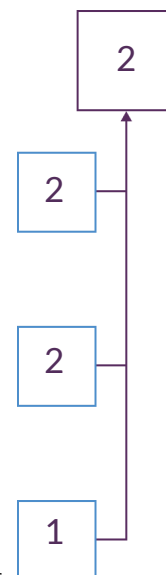
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 are developing secure knowledge particularly in the lessons planned in accordance with the Key Stage 3 *Religious Education Directory*. The department is focused on supporting students to make progress in religious education, they have built strong relationships with them leading to good engagement in lessons. As a result, most students behave well and participate in lessons and accordingly most students enjoy learning religious education. Students state that, 'teachers really care for them'. Students sometimes have the opportunity for independent learning, when they do, they concentrate effectively. Students enjoy learning about a range of beliefs and practices and they really enjoy learning about world faiths. Students can demonstrate good theological literacy and are able to use these key terms in more extended assessments. Students in Key Stage 4 are beginning to understand how to improve, with many seeking out extra support from staff. They are developing a strong foundation of religious understanding leading them to grow in confidence, analyse religious beliefs and practices effectively and demonstrate an awareness of complex concepts. Progress and outcomes at Key Stage 4 are not outstanding because teaching does not consistently secure the highest standards through precise use of assessment and timely, targeted intervention.

Teachers demonstrate confidence in their subject knowledge across all three key stages and have a clear commitment to expanding their subject knowledge through their attendance of relevant professional development courses in the diocese such as the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS). They model high expectations which all students strive to meet.

Teachers apply whole-school teaching and learning strategies effectively to promote student engagement and interest. Classroom routines are purposeful, creating a positive climate for learning in lessons. Teachers use questioning techniques to check students' understanding and to promote deeper thinking. They are aware of the need to embed space for spiritual and moral reflection in lessons. Praise is used to great effect in lessons, this increases student motivation and builds great confidence among students. Praise postcards and headteacher awards are often given for high-quality work. Students really appreciate the recognition they receive for their hard work. As a result of these new routines and structures, students produce work that is well-presented and of an increasingly high standard. Teachers provide effective feedback and support, ensuring that students, including those with additional needs, build the skills to achieve their potential.

Leaders and governors ensure that religious education is the 'core of the core' curriculum. They are aware of the strengths of the department and have a clear plan on how to drive improvement. The subject enjoys full parity with other core subjects and leaders actively prioritise professional development opportunities such as the CCRS programme for newer members of staff to support their subject knowledge. The curriculum deputy leader is an excellent role model for his department. Both students and staff are inspired by his passion, dedication and vision. Through his unwavering commitment to improvement, he is rapidly strengthening the provision of good quality religious education across the department. Leaders have embedded the Directory effectively as part of their curriculum design. This allows learning to be sequential and increasingly demanding. Leaders are committed to providing a wide range of enrichment opportunities that enhance students' learning beyond the classroom such as through their retreat provision, rosary club and trips to the Source. Students demonstrated enthusiasm for these opportunities. This is not outstanding because leaders do not embed robust quality assurance in religious education and do not draw upon regular student voice to inform future planning.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

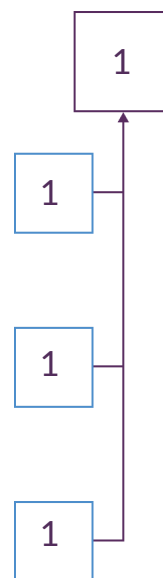
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

Leadership

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



Students participate well in prayer and liturgy. Increasing numbers of students willingly lead and deliver powerful celebrations of the word. These are well-constructed, and are rooted in relevant scripture. Furthermore, they follow the norms of a celebration of the word and encourage students to go and live out the gospel message. Students have increasing opportunities to plan and choose what is included in each celebration of the word. They participate in communal singing and enjoy the impact these hymns have upon their day. Additionally, students have the opportunity to take part in visio divina, meditation, formulaic prayers and spiritual reflection. They talk with passion about the impact that prayer has upon them. Moreover, students state that the daily celebrations of the word help them, 'to feel calm', 'boost their mood for the day' and help, 'to encounter Jesus Christ'. They are keen to attend opportunities for liturgy, with voluntary attendance at Mass being significant. Students speak confidently about how the Thoughtful Thursdays prayer initiative inspires them to grow in faith and helps them to develop spiritually. A notable number of students contribute to the wider-parish serving at Mass on weekends as altar servers, ministers of the word or on the parish youth council.

Significant transformation has occurred under the new Senior Leadership Team with prayer and liturgy being enshrined as central to the entire school life. Prayer and liturgy here offer students and staff the opportunity to experience the breadth and richness of the Catholic tradition. Morning and afternoon prayer is well-embedded, natural and students look forward to it each day. Furthermore, all prayer and liturgy reflect the norms of the liturgical calendar. Senior leaders are outstanding role models of true Catholic faith, using their God given gifts

and talents to inspire other staff and students to partake in prayer and liturgy. The school ensures that this is infused with joyful music, communal singing and powerful pieces of artwork. This inspires students and uplifts them spiritually for the day ahead. Significant investment has been given to the number and quality of prayer spaces around school such as the installation of faith banners, remembrance gardens and a renovated chapel which contains the Blessed Sacrament. There is a flourishing partnership between the school and the parish. The parish priest describes prayer and liturgy here as 'perfect' and appreciates the dynamic partnership between the school and the church.

The school's prayer and liturgy policy is robust, relevant and informative. Staff comment that the policy is useful and supports them in helping to lead meaningful moments of prayer for their students. Senior leaders demonstrate exceptional talent in leading both prayer and liturgy. The morning staff prayer in the chapel is emotive, humbling and authentic. Senior leaders are genuine witnesses to the faith, they regularly share their own inspirational faith testimonies and lead the staff community as true servant leaders, rooting their ministry in that of Jesus. Leaders and governors ensure that the highest priority is given to ensuring students and staff have regular access to the Eucharist. This is enhanced by the recent reservation of the Blessed Sacrament in school, which staff and students both deeply appreciate. Leaders ensure that all holy days of obligation and significant feast days are celebrated. They strive to offer regular access to the Sacrament of Reconciliation in conjunction with the parish priest. Leaders provide meaningful and regular continuous professional development for prayer and liturgy, which empowers staff to be able to lead morning and afternoon prayer to support the spiritual development of students.

Information about the school

Full name of school	The English Martyrs Catholic Secondary School and Sixth Form College
School unique reference number (URN)	140867
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8054603
Full postal address of the school	Catcote Road, Hartlepool, TS25 4HA
School phone number	01429 273790
Executive Headteacher	Mr Andy Rodgers
Headteacher or Head of School	Mr Glenn Thompson
Chair of Governors	Mrs Paula Strachan
School Website	www.ems.bhcet.org.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non Selective
Age-range of pupils	11 - 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	08 February 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The Inspection Team

Andrew James Young

Lead

Suzanne Lewis-Dale

Lynsey Craig

Lisa Ord

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