

Bishop Challoner Catholic Secondary School

URN: 116478

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Portsmouth

05–06 November 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

1

Collective worship (p.7)

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

1

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

Fully

1

Compliance statement

- The school is fully compliant with the general norms of the Bishops' Council.
- The school has fully addressed the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection,

What the school does well

- The Catholic life and mission of this school is outstanding, reflected in its ethos, and shared worldview, which are understood and lived by pupils and staff.
- The humble and authentic leadership of the headteacher ensures that this community of faith is inclusive, prayerful and profoundly humane.
- Religious education is forming pupils with deep theological and religious literacy, supporting their development of critical reflective thinking.
- Well-crafted questioning and knowledge recall in lessons means that students' understanding is increasingly sophisticated.
- Students lead and evaluate prayer and liturgy with confidence, supported by knowledgeable staff.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to embed the 'Ways of Knowing', as expressed in the *Religious Education Directory*, as part of the refinement of the new Key Stage 3 religious education curriculum.

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

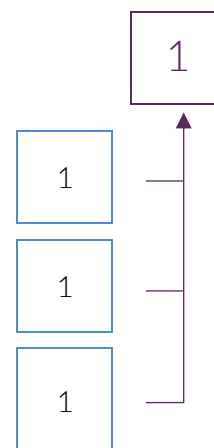
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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, staff and governors are incredibly proud of their happy and authentically inclusive school where humility, service and kindness underpin relationships and decision-making. Mission is understood and lived through the motto 'To do ordinary things extraordinarily well'. Students are known by name, valued and cared for. In a lunchtime conversation with a group of students, when asked what it is like to come to this school, they were clear that it was a welcoming community, which they saw exemplified in the work of the chaplaincy and the relationships with staff. Pupils see and can explain a clear line of sight from their faith to the justice and action it demands. Pupils of other faiths feel included and respected. For example, a Muslim student discussed how her faith is fostered by the respect and understanding she receives from the school staff, and a Buddhist student enthusiastically participated in preparing for the school's Remembrance service. Students understand Catholic social teaching reflected in diverse ways, including how they ensure new pupils are looked after, and how they support persecuted Christians overseas.

The mission of the school is understood and lived by staff, students and governors. In describing what makes the school distinct, the headteacher was resolute: 'Christ at the centre'. Staff working in a range of departments are actively modelling the mission and principles of the school within their subject content, to ensure a growing Catholic worldview. Generosity lies at the heart of the school. 'I have never worked in a school that knows its pupils so well' said one member of staff. One student spoke of the presents provided for needy families at Christmas. Another student described the lengths staff had gone to ensure he could comfortably navigate the school day despite a disability. Others commented on how the provision of the prayer room to support students of other faiths was not merely provided, but that there was proper attention to their needs. Staff across the curriculum are aware of their role in embodying and strengthening ethos, including the site team who ensure the environment is well-maintained and welcoming.

Chaplaincy provision is exemplary, both in the range of activities and in its reach. 'We all like the chaplaincy' said one student. 'I am not Catholic, but they are really kind and do so much to make our school special'.

The headteacher combines humility with a sincere personal faith, supported by a board of well-informed and thoroughly engaged governors who offer an appropriate blend of challenge and support. The school is fully engaged with the diocese, with the headteacher, chaplain and governors involved both in receiving and contributing to ongoing training. Local clergy speak of the enthusiasm of the children for the sacraments, with a significant number of students and staff active in local parishes. Almost without exception, parents speak of their child flourishing in this safe and happy school. Staff speak of the culture of leadership as being one which places their dignity front and centre. 'I cannot imagine working anywhere else' said one new member of support staff. 'Coming here compared to my old job has been life-changing; I look forward to coming to work again', said another new teacher. Staff retention is extremely high, aided by the ethos as well as a strong commitment to professional development. New staff speak of the support they receive to understand the distinctive nature of the school, as well as many examples of how they had felt supported by staff and managers. Governors and leaders take strategic decisions mindful of the school's Catholic distinctiveness, including the completion of the school chapel and ensuring that religious education is properly resourced.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

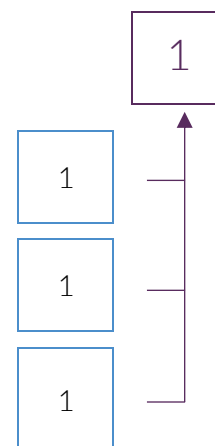
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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' knowledge is highly developed, evidenced both in the classroom and by outcomes at GCSE which are above national and diocesan averages. Parents report near universal agreement that their child enjoys the subject. Religious literacy is a real strength, with repeated examples of students engaging with challenging theological topics at Key Stage 3 and 4 and offering sophisticated responses to deep questioning. In one example, students in Year 7 demonstrated a vivid understanding of the relationship between Mary, redemption and the Fall. Typical, rather than staged, one Year 11, for example, could explain and evaluate the significance of the second Vatican Council, combining knowledge with a balanced opinion. Those with additional needs spoke of their enjoyment of the subject and the high degree of confidence they had in the teaching they received, leading to strong and equitable outcomes at GCSE. Students demonstrate curiosity and insight in many lessons, aided by a dignified climate for learning, where recall and questioning are major strengths. Students' clear enjoyment of the subject means they are confident to assess their strengths and weaknesses, leading to strong and sustained progress. Books across all year groups are well presented and show high expectations and pride in their work, as well as a consistent approach to planning and teaching.

Students benefit from a team of experienced and committed religious education teachers who display excellent subject knowledge, are consistent in their practice and forensic in their skilful questioning which is driving progress and engagement. Activities are varied, but expectations are consistently high with pupils moving easily between whole-class work, group work and independent learning. Retrieval practice is fully embedded and highly effective. Achievement in religious education is celebrated at both a department level and as part of the whole school's substantial commitment to celebrating success, with pupils proudly explaining their various ribbons and badges, free of any self-consciousness. In one excellent lesson, immediate, meaningful and warm feedback was given as part of extending challenge. The team and the head of department are clear that spiritual and moral development, supported by academic religious

education, goes beyond the classroom and has clear links to their own lives. Staff lead high challenge, low stress learning and are clear role models, helping pupils see beyond the absorption of knowledge to the possibility of real wisdom.

The highly effective head of religious education leads a committed team with a clear vision that has meant that the outcomes of the *Religious Education Directory* are met. She ensures a rigorous and effective system for the monitoring of progress and is committed to continuous improvement. Marking, assessment and lesson planning is strong, contributing to a reputation for success, supported by the active participation of the headteacher as a member of the department. This includes the ongoing work to embed the skills set out in the 'Ways of Knowing' from the *Directory* more deeply into classroom experience. The department benefits from very good accommodation, centrally placed in school, and is well-resourced. The head of department attends diocesan training and works collaboratively to provide training and development both within and beyond school. The curriculum is carefully thought through providing rich opportunities for progression and enrichment. It meets students' needs, reflected in their feedback, rapid progress and degree of engagement. It has a rich co-curricular element, including multi faith trips to the mosque, temple and gurdwara.

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

This is a prayerful school where spiritual development, underpinned by deep humility, is fully embraced, valued, properly resourced and appreciated by all students, including those of other faiths and worldviews. Participation is exceptional, not only in the number of students engaged in faith-related activities, but also in terms of its quality, supported by the chaplaincy. Expressions of faith are not paraded, but are underpinned by humility and sincerity, and led by senior leaders. Students in an excellent Year 9 assembly, co-creating a presentation that combined prayer with a reflection on the plight of persecuted Christians, could accurately evaluate their presentation and look to the next steps. In a tutor group, space was given for traditional, spontaneous and silent prayer. Prayer punctuates the day, including the lunchtime grace and end of day examen, all fully embraced by students. In one student meeting during the inspection a student, hearing the bell for lunchtime grace, spontaneously began to lead a prayer. Students regularly lead prayer which is, as described by a parent, 'the anchor of everything they do'. The clear link between prayer, practice and social justice is evident in displays, the constitution of worship and the whole school development of a coherent Catholic worldview.

The assemblies attended, as well as the assembly rota, reflect well-planned, age-appropriate prayer and liturgy. There is a substantial commitment to incorporating music as well as dance and art into worship, supported by creative thinking on the part of staff and students alike, but most of all by the trust and engagement demonstrated by students who fully embrace this aspect of their school life. There is a coherent plan across year and day which is liturgically appropriate, allowing for traditional and student co-created prayer, as well as space for spontaneous prayer. In a well-planned celebration of the Mass, students were engaged in appropriate roles supporting the liturgy. Eucharistic adoration is also a feature, supported by a beautiful chapel and the reservation of the sacrament. In a Bible study meeting, facilitated by a member of staff but entirely created and led by students, they demonstrated sincere, insightful understanding of the significance of scripture to their lives and the world, and provided a

respectful space for all participants to share. Parents typically expressed a deep appreciation for prayer being at the heart of the school.

The prayerful and authentic leadership of the headteacher, whose personal, informed and gentle faith is central to his leadership, is echoed across the senior team and driven by the dynamic lay chaplain who enjoys the confidence and admiration of her colleagues, whatever their own faith tradition. 'We never have to worry. She is always there to help if we need some guidance' said one member of staff. Governors are highly committed to supporting prayer and liturgy, reflected in the project to build the new chapel which has been transformational in providing a heart for the school and allowing a range of services to coalesce around a beautiful space. Holy days and seasons are given due prominence, for example the work to celebrate the Year of Jubilee, as well as supporting students to attend retreats and visits. This is supported by deeply committed local clergy whose regard for this secondary school as an ecclesial space with Christ at the centre is evident in their support of a weekly mass, the regular and well-attended voluntary Sacrament of Reconciliation, as well as the support for all holy days of obligation.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Bishop Challoner Catholic Secondary School
School unique reference number (URN)	116478
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8504604
Full postal address of the school	St Michael's Road, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG22 6SR
School phone number	01256462661
Headteacher	John Wright
Chair of governors	Kieran Sidley
School Website	http://www.bcs.hants.sch.uk/
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	25/11/2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

Dr Simon Uttley	Lead
Sadie Whyte	Team
Trisha Hedley	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