



# Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Voluntary Academy

URN: 144469

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Hallam

05–06 March 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

#### Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

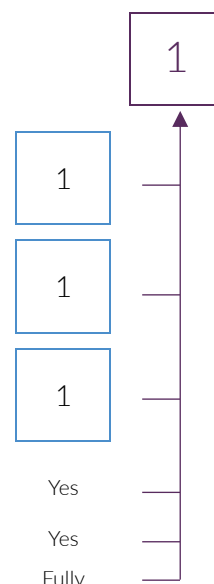
#### Collective worship (p.7)

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

- The school's religious education programme ensures that 10% or more of the timetable is dedicated to teaching and learning in the subject.
- The school follows the guidance of the diocesan bishop in its choice of religious education resource for teaching.
- School leaders have worked hard and effectively to have impact on those areas identified for improvement at the last inspection, including developing pupils' skills and confidence in planning and leading Collective Worship, improving the quality of teaching in religious education, and developing the role of the governing body in promoting, monitoring and evaluating the school's Catholic education.

## What the school does well

- High levels of pastoral care and the warmth of welcome to all are providing pupils, staff and the local community with a 'family', where they can come together to celebrate that they are all unique 'yet share the same heart'.
- Passionate and insightful leadership from the headteacher provides inspiration to staff and pupils alike.
- Thoughtful and measured development of religious education is driving up standards of teaching and learning.
- The chaplaincy provision is valued by everyone, and has a significant impact on the quality of the prayer life of the school, and the pupils' knowledge of scripture.
- The school environment expertly reflects the Catholic character of the school: it celebrates the school mission and provides a variety of prayerful spaces where the school community's faith can flourish.

## What the school needs to improve

- Embed the knowledge and understanding of the theology which underpins Catholic social teaching, for all pupils at an age-appropriate level.
- Provide more consistent and progressive opportunities across the school to allow all pupils to demonstrate a true reflection of their levels of knowledge and understanding in religious education.
- Ensure pupils have regular opportunities to reflect on, and further develop, the impact of their contribution to the school's Catholic Life and Collective Worship.

## 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

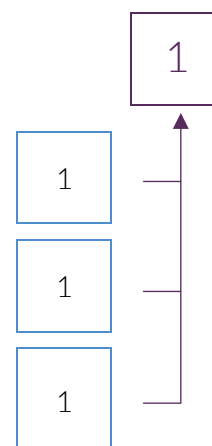
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### 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



The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school is outstanding. Pupils live and bear witness to the school's mission statement. From their earliest years they have a secure understanding of the mission and can clearly articulate how this is translated into the daily lives of all at Our Lady of Sorrows School. They are happy, confident and feel secure at school. They state that they feel proud when they are kind and supportive of others, both locally and globally. Pupils show a deep respect for all in their school and wider parish community. This is particularly evident in the many interactions that take place around the school. Pupils' responses about their understanding of different faiths demonstrates the school's commitment to recognise that all are made in God's image. Those pupils that are not baptised Catholic feel comfortable when articulating their beliefs and are able to contribute effectively. Pupils respond readily to the demands of Catholic social teaching through their support of local, national and global charities. Their understanding of the theology underpinning their actions is not yet secure. Chaplaincy roles, including the 'Faith Ambassadors' are well established.

The school vision statement - *'We are all unique yet share the same heart'* – and the school mission statement have a significant impact on the life of the school. They are deeply rooted in the word of God and provide clear direction for all members of the school community. All staff embrace the mission of the school: they are exemplary in the way they participate and contribute to its life and promotion. There is a strong sense of community and everyone, including the most vulnerable, is welcomed in a spirit of generous hospitality. Adults and pupils talk proudly about being part of 'a family' and the vision that they aspire to. The whole school environment, which includes a 'Corridor of Awe', has been thoughtfully developed, and provides the community with

areas for reflection and prayer, with pupils' work and achievements celebrated through displays. Chaplaincy provision is strong in the school: there are well-planned and effective opportunities provided for staff and pupils. These are regularly supported by the parish priest. Pupils and staff recognise the strong impact of his interactions with the school. The school's spiritual, moral, social and cultural curriculum is providing staff and pupils with effective tools for growth in these areas. The provision for relationship and health education meets diocesan requirements. In association with the St Francis Catholic Multi-Academy Trust, leaders have developed a comprehensive scheme of work based on the TenTen materials, and staff have received relevant support and training.

Leaders are fastidious and energetic in promoting the Catholic mission, and are a source of inspiration to staff. They are thoughtful and reflective, joyful and determined, and have skilfully embedded an ethos that ensures that Christ is at the heart of the school. The development of the integrated specialist provision is an example of how leaders have gone about ensuring that school provides high quality pastoral and educational care for its most vulnerable pupils. School leaders are well-supported by governors and the St Francis Catholic Multi-Academy Trust, who are active in evaluating, challenging and supporting developments. They are highly ambitious for continuous improvement. Leaders ensure that pupils progressively make links with their religious education in all areas of the taught curriculum. The school is highly valued by its parents. It has developed successful strategies for engaging parents and carers to the benefit of all pupils. Families and pupils benefit from bespoke support from the Integrated Resource team and targeted programmes such as the 'Rainbows' bereavement programme. School self-evaluation in this area is based on regular, accurate monitoring, analysis and self-challenge by leaders. However, pupils are not given regular opportunities to evaluate formally their contribution to the Catholic life and mission of the school. Leaders and governors have overseen a flourishing partnership with the local community, particularly the parish. They ensure that excellent structures are in place to support the wellbeing of staff and, as a result, staff feel highly valued. Well planned and effective professional development and coaching is enabling new staff to develop and secure their knowledge and understanding of Catholic life when they join the school.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

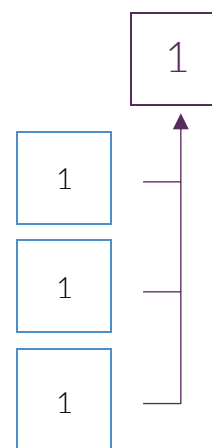
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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



Overall, pupils demonstrate excellent knowledge, understanding and skills in religious education lessons, appropriate to their age. Behaviour is exemplary. Almost all pupils, including those with additional needs, make good progress and achieve well, relative to their age and starting points. Pupils' ability to speak with confidence about what they have learnt in religious education is very strong. Inspectors found high levels of religious literacy, including some subject-specific vocabulary, with the older pupils being particularly skilled in explaining how religious commitment impacts on their daily lives. However, this oral knowledge is not always reflected in the quality of the work produced in books. The introduction of a consistent lesson structure in religious education is providing regular opportunities for pupils to make links to their prior learning within lessons. They state that they enjoy their lessons due to the increasingly creative, varied, and interesting activities teachers plan for them. Pupils like to take care with their written work and generally present it well. They collaborate with their peers very easily and respectfully. Pupils understand how well they are doing, and what they need to do to improve, giving examples of how they respond to 'next steps' to add more information or make their work more accurate.

Teachers have a high level of confidence based on secure subject knowledge overall and are committed to the value of religious education. Where best practice is seen in the school, planning is linked to current assessments. Adaptations to teaching strategies and task design enable pupils with the most significant needs to access the religious education curriculum successfully. Carefully considered curriculum developments introduced in Early Years and Key Stage 1 provide the younger pupils with a secure knowledge of scripture linked to the Lenten season: Reception children can talk about the physical environment that Jesus encountered in the desert; Year 1 pupils can retell the story of Palm Sunday through role play and Year 2 can recall and explain

words that Jesus said on the cross. In Key Stage 2, pupils can explain the religious signs and symbols linked to Lent. They understand the term 'sacrifice' and can explain how Jesus' death and resurrection shape the lives of Christians today. Teachers communicate high expectations effectively to the pupils and the effective use of questions during lessons ensures that they can identify where pupils are in their understanding. Pupils are given regular opportunities to reflect on key themes from their learning and how they impact on their daily lives.

All leaders, including governors, ensure that the school curriculum for religious education is a faithful expression of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory (2012)* in Key Stage 2 and the *Religious Education Directory* in Early Years and Key Stage 1. It is comparable to other core subjects in terms of professional development, resourcing, timetabling and staffing. The religious education leader has an inspiring vision for high quality teaching and learning in the subject, and her forensic approach to securing this vision is resulting in rapid improvements. Good practice within the school is regularly shared within the St Francis Catholic Multi-Academy Trust and the wider Diocese. Senior leaders regularly scrutinise work samples and report their findings to governors. Well targeted professional development is provided for all staff and, as a result, teaching is at least good across all year groups. Curriculum planning is monitored by the headteacher and the subject leader for religious education. Consequently, it ensures clear progression of knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith and other world religions. The school ensures that world faith focus weeks provide pupils from other faith backgrounds with opportunities to celebrate and share their religious practices and knowledge with their peers. Leaders' self-evaluation of religious education is informed by regular monitoring, analysis and self-challenge. The strategic action being taken by leaders as a result of these activities is strengthening outcomes.

## 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

As a result of leaders' passion for and devotion to the enhancement of prayer and liturgy throughout the school, liturgy is a very prayerful and relevant experience for all pupils. They demonstrate their deep engagement in prayer and liturgy on every occasion that they come together, whether in class, outside, in church, or as a whole school in the hall. Pupils, with the guidance of staff, become increasingly confident and independent in their planning and delivery of liturgy as they move through the school. However, their evaluation of the quality of their planning and delivery of prayer and liturgy is not well developed. They demonstrate a detailed understanding of the variety of ways of praying in the Catholic tradition, including periods of silent reflection, liturgical singing, symbol and the use of scripture. Well-chosen weekly and daily missions enable pupils to clearly articulate how prayer and liturgy influence their day-to-day actions. They routinely go to prayer areas throughout the day to write their own prayers for others locally and in the wider world. The Faith Builders and Faith Ambassadors support pupils with a sense of stewardship of their school environment and encourage them to engage in activities that deepen their religious knowledge and skills of personal reflection.

Prayer and liturgy are at the heart of the school, ever-present and central to gatherings of pupils and staff. There is an excellent breadth and richness of the Catholic tradition of ways of praying, and this range has been significantly enhanced over time to engage pupils more actively and deeply. Scripture is chosen well, informed by the liturgical year, with links developed between these passages, and the whole celebration, and actions to take into daily life. The modelling of different types of prayer by the Prayer and Liturgy leader has played a key role in enabling members of staff to demonstrate this to pupils and include them in their gatherings in class. Four-part celebrations of the word, list prayers and movement prayers sit alongside more traditional practices such as stations of the cross and the rosary. Staff are highly skilled in helping

pupils develop their liturgical planning and leadership skills at an age-appropriate level. There is imaginative and creative use of spaces for prayer celebrations, with a strong desire to make each classroom a sacred space at appropriate times, in addition to the outdoors. Families are welcomed into school liturgies and appreciate the opportunities provided by school to encourage prayer in their homes during key periods in the Church's year.

The school's policy on prayer and liturgy has been formulated anew to ensure it is fit for purpose. Leaders, including governors, have a clear understanding of how pupils' skills of participation should be built as they mature, and the quality of prayer and liturgy that should be provided. School leaders and governors have been effective guardians of the Catholic prayer and liturgy provision, striving consistently for the best possible experiences for the pupils. The liturgical year has been clearly mapped out to ensure that the school community can gather to celebrate significant days and events in the Church's calendar. Leaders prioritise training for staff in how to plan, lead and support pupils in their leadership of prayer and liturgy. This training has empowered all staff and resulted in the high-quality prayer and liturgy experienced by the school community on a day-to-day basis. Staff readily acknowledge the spiritual influence of the prayer and liturgy leader on their knowledge of and engagement in prayer. They are instrumental in ensuring that staff and pupils are able to provide prayer and liturgy opportunities which are of high quality, are meaningful and relevant for the whole community. Pupils are not regularly required to evaluate the impact of their contributions to the planning and delivery of prayer and liturgy.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Voluntary Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	144469
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3712012
Full postal address of the school	Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Voluntary Academy, Mere Lane, Armthorpe, Doncaster, DN3 2DB
School phone number	001302833941
Headteacher	Lucy Saxton
Chair of local governing body	Sean McLaughlin
School Website	<a href="http://www.ourlady sorrows.doncaster.sch.uk">www.ourlady sorrows.doncaster.sch.uk</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Francis Catholic Multi-Academy Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	June 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good (2)

## The inspection team

Alixena Lubomski  
Tammie McNamara

Lead  
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