

St Gabriel's Roman Catholic High School, a Voluntary Academy

URN: 148049

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Salford

22–23 May 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

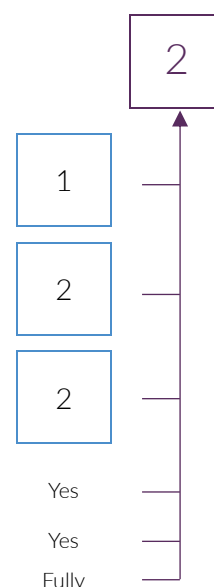
Collective worship (p.7)

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 is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference and 10% of curriculum time is devoted to religious education.
- The school is fully compliant with the additional requirements of the diocesan bishop in relation to the GCSE offered.
- The school has responded fully to areas of improvement identified in the last inspection.

What the school does well

- St Gabriel's has created a strong culture of welcome and inclusivity for all members of the community, resulting in a sense of family, with the school's Catholic mission at its heart.
- Staff provide the highest level of care for all students, with a clear commitment to the most vulnerable. Students value all that the staff do for them, as evidenced by the high-quality relationships in the school.
- The leadership of religious education is excellent. The curriculum leader has a clear vision and leads by example. As a result, the team is committed to ensuring all students achieve well.
- Prayer and liturgy within the school is enhanced by high quality links with the local parishes.

What the school needs to improve

- To develop students' confidence and skill in articulating how the school's mission and values shapes and impacts upon their lived behaviour.
- To fully implement the marking and feedback policy in religious education, consistently providing students with the opportunity to respond to the targeted feedback provided.
- To review and evaluate the work undertaken on collective worship to further develop the quality of provision in form time daily prayer.

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

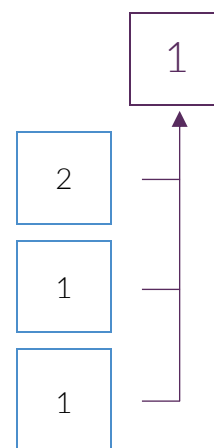
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 distinctive Catholic identity of St Gabriel's is understood and lived out by students, staff and governors. Students benefit from a highly committed team of staff which contributes to a supportive community, where they are given the opportunity to grow. As one staff member commented, 'the children need to know that they are loved'. Students, staff and governors refer to the school as a 'family'. There is a strong pastoral offer which is rooted in the school's values of strength, service and success. Students are active in their commitment to serve, which is seen in their involvement with a wide range of charities linked to the demands of Catholic social teaching, including St Joseph's Penny, CAFOD and Bury Red Door, a local foodbank. Students' behaviour and attitudes in lessons and around school are good. They demonstrate respect and care for others as well as themselves. Students are extremely positive about the leadership opportunities that exist in the school and there are many involved as chaplaincy team members, Laudato Si' ambassadors, and Caritas ambassadors. Leaders now need to reflect upon how they can ensure that all students are able to articulate how the school's mission and values impacts on their lived behaviour.

The school's values of strength, service and success are at the heart of its mission. There is a culture of inclusive welcome, where students of all faiths are recognised and respected. As one student put it, 'I feel comfortable and welcomed here'. The quality of care shown to all members of the community is excellent. The pastoral team is highly committed and skilled in providing tailored support for vulnerable students and their families. The Gateway Centre helps to meet the needs of the most vulnerable students of the school, allowing them to have appropriate intervention and to support them into a return to mainstream lessons. There is a carefully planned relationships, health, and sex education programme in place that fully meets diocesan

requirements. Ample time is given to training to ensure staff are confident in delivering the content. The school has a focus on staff wellbeing and there are several mechanisms in place to support colleagues. Several staff could articulate how the school has supported them in times of personal adversity. They feel valued and supported, in particular new staff, who are fully inducted into all aspects of school life, with a focus on its Catholic life.

The headteacher, leaders and governors of the school are committed to the school's Catholic life, and it is a priority for them. They are heavily invested in the St Gabriel's community and know the school well. Governors are highly ambitious for the school; they are experienced, skilled and are proactively involved in its self-evaluation. The curriculum contributes to students' spiritual and moral development and the school's mission is explicit in all its policies. Leaders of all curriculum areas have identified the contribution made by their subject to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and Catholic social teaching, resulting in an authentic Catholic curriculum. This was evidenced in planning documentation, lessons observed across the school and via student voice. Leaders and governors strive to build on the school's strong Catholic tradition and the school has excellent links with the local parish of Our Lady of Good Counsel and Guardian Angels. The work of the IMPACT group in engaging students in the life of the parish should be commended. Parents and carers recognise the role the school plays in developing the faith life of their children. The school's engagement with the diocese is excellent and these professional development opportunities are appreciated by staff. Annual training days take place around Catholic life and mission.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

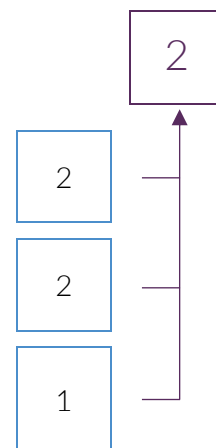
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 at St Gabriel's enjoy religious education and understand its importance as part of the curriculum. They approach their lessons with interest and enthusiasm and as a result they achieve well. Students' demonstrate a good level of knowledge in their lessons and books. They use religious terminology with increasing confidence and accuracy. Students are able to work independently in lessons when they are given the opportunity to do so; this is evidenced by extended writing in their books. The consistent focus from the department on the 'Do Now' task at the start of lessons has meant that students are embedding skills of retrieval and this has supported them to know and remember more. Most students can speak with confidence about their learning in the subject. Careful monitoring of progress is gradually assisting students to become more aware of their individual strengths and areas for improvement. Their attainment at Key Stage 3 continues to rise. Whilst GCSE attainment dipped in 2024, students are benefitting from a focus on examination requirements and leaders expect a return to previous performance levels, that have historically been in line with, or above, diocesan averages. Students are responding well because they want to succeed.

Students benefit from a well-planned and thoughtful curriculum in religious education. The *Religious Education Directory* has been fully implemented in Years 7 and 8 and will include Year 9 by September 2025. In Key Stage 4, all students are entered for GCSE, including a small number who are also undertaking an entry level certificate. Teaching resources are of a high quality due to the collaborative and creative approach from the department. The 'write like a theologian' resource reinforces teachers' high academic expectations. They have high standards for students, and this underpins careful end of topic assessments and tracking of performance. The majority of teachers are subject specialists. Consequently, planning and provision for teaching and learning is a strength, with all staff well deployed. In most lessons there is skilful use of

questioning by teachers. In the best teaching observed, there was a clear focus on religious literacy and students' were confident in their use of subject specific terminology. The marking of students' work and insistence on careful presentation is evident. However, a small minority of books sampled require more in-depth monitoring to ensure that regular marking takes place, with feedback and unfinished work more robustly followed up.

The curriculum leader for religious education is a highly committed, respected and competent professional, with a clear vision, and this has resulted in consistently good teaching within the department. The departmental team have unanimous confidence in her and regard her as a servant leader. Departmental staff are driven by a vocational commitment to the students in their care. One member of staff referred to the love for the students that is at the heart of their reason for being. The development of the new *Directory* at Key Stage 3 has been prioritised and consequently has meant a more challenging and creative curriculum for all students. Continued monitoring of programmes of study, outcomes from assessments and the impact of learning walks ensures that the department continues to improve. Leaders ensure that religious education has full parity with other core subjects, in terms of generous financial provision and resourcing. The school is compliant with the requirement to dedicate a minimum of 10% curriculum time to the teaching of religious education. There is a full programme of continued professional development provided through the trust and by the diocese. Staff appreciate the prioritised place of religious education in the school's development plan.

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

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

Leadership

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

2

2

Students generally respond positively to the opportunities that are provided for them to experience prayer and liturgy. During daily prayer in form time, students' experience traditional, meditative and creative prayer and they are becoming increasingly confident in participating as this routine is embedded. The virtual assembly that was observed was planned and delivered by a Year 7 form group. The theme of mental health awareness week was powerful, relevant and was linked appropriately to the school's mission and Catholic social teaching. Students' were well-behaved and respectful. However, the quality of prayer and liturgy would be enhanced by students' communal responses being more confident and committed. Through a range of prayer and liturgical activities which include scripture, silence and music, students are developing their understanding of prayer within the Catholic tradition. They understand the liturgical year and can articulate knowledge of the Church's seasons and feasts. The chaplaincy team take responsibility to lead prayer and liturgy and do so with knowledge and confidence, growing in their ability to plan as well as take part. Students' experience would be enhanced by their taking a more active role in the evaluation of the quality of prayer and liturgy that they have planned.

Prayer and liturgy is central in the daily life of the school. The Annual Plan of Provision outlines the prayer and worship opportunities that students are offered during the academic year. It is faithful to the liturgical year with themes linked to scripture and Catholic social teaching. Provision for prayer beyond form time and assemblies is becoming more extensive and varied. This includes the stations of the cross, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Ash Wednesday services and form time Masses. The Catholic Mission and Worship Team are a well-established, committed group of staff who meet regularly to plan the whole-school offer for prayer and liturgy. This group includes the deputy headteacher responsible for Catholic life and mission, the curriculum leader of music and chaplaincy. Creative and regularly updated prayer boards in

classrooms provide students with ownership of form prayer. They are regularly updated with students' work. However, the use of dedicated sacred spaces would provide a focal point for prayer which would further enhance students' experience. Deanery sessions for the preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation take place in the school.

The school is fully compliant with the diocesan policy for prayer and liturgy which impacts positively on their practice. The deputy headteacher and chaplain contribute substantially to the leadership of prayer and liturgy across the school. Through careful planning they ensure that prayer and liturgy follows the liturgical calendar of the Church. The partnership with the parish priest of Our Lady of Good Counsel and Guardian Angels is a key strength of the leadership of prayer and liturgy. The school has a chapel that is well maintained and is used during form time and for other aspects of worship. Leaders and governors have a clear knowledge and understanding of the importance of prayer and liturgy as central to the life of the school. They have prioritised the provision of resources to support the Catholic life and mission. Leaders now need to review and evaluate the offer of prayer during form time. This will enable the school to take the next steps in ensuring the quality of daily worship is further strengthened, through continued training and support.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Gabriel's Roman Catholic High School, a Voluntary Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	148049
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3514003
Full postal address of the school	St Gabriel's Roman Catholic High School, a Voluntary Academy, Bridge Road, Bury, BL9 0TZ
School phone number	01617643186
Headteacher	Simon Braithwaite
Chair of local governing body	David O'Brien
School Website	https://www.stgabrielshigh.stoccat.org.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Teresa of Calcutta Catholic Academy Trust
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	10 October 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

Claire Wallace

Deacon Paul Mannings

Julia Cunningham

Lead

Team

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

