



Holy Family Catholic School

URN: 103106

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Brentwood

25–26 February 2026

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

1

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

Compliance statement

- The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- The school is fully compliant with the additional requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- The school has responded fully to the areas for improvement from the last inspection.

What the school does well

- The Catholic ethos is found in every aspect of the life of this school, resulting in students, staff and parents all celebrating the familial nature of belonging.
- Catholic social teaching is embedded and lived in all areas of the school and across the curriculum, which brings to life the mission of this school, 'Not to have more but to be more'.
- Pastoral care is exceptional; staff show deep commitment in the way they support pupils, modelling a strong sense of vocation in their service to the community. This is reflected in the number of former pupils who return to work within the school, continuing that same spirit of service.
- There is highly effective and inspirational leadership of religious education by the acting subject lead, senior leadership team and governors, which is demonstrated through the enjoyment, engagement and quality of work by the students and significant progress.
- The consistent, thoughtful and planned pattern of prayer is at the centre of this school, which prioritises the focus on Christ and developing the whole student.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop a consistent and cohesive approach to monitoring and evaluating opportunities of prayer and liturgy.
- Develop the Sixth Form religious education programme by implementing a monitored and recorded series of assessments.

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

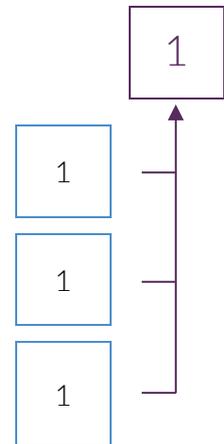
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



This is a authentic Catholic school at the heart of its community, where the mission is not merely articulated but profoundly lived. The school motto, “Aspire not to have more but to be more,” permeates every aspect of school life and is embodied in the ASPIRE values of Achievement, Service, Participation, Integrity, Respect and Equity, discerned collaboratively by staff and students. Pupils demonstrate an exceptional commitment to Catholic social teaching through acts of service and justice. Sixth form students lead initiatives in support of Cafod as Young Leaders, fundraising and participating in the Big Lent Walk, while also supporting the St Vincent de Paul Society Easter egg appeal and local homeless outreach through the Christian Kitchen. Student leadership is exemplary; pupils independently propose and lead charitable responses, including international crisis support. The compulsory sixth form service programme, the Oscar Romero Award, the Live Simply Award, and participation in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award all ensure that faith is expressed through action. A member of staff affirmed that this is “a Catholic Sixth Form, not a sixth form in a Catholic school,” where encounter with Christ guides and shapes lives.

Provision for Catholic life and mission is outstanding. The school's Catholic identity is highly visible, deeply embedded and consistently experienced through its environment, relationships and structures. Buildings, displays and window laminates celebrate the mission and House saints, while beautiful chapels on each site, dedicated reflection rooms, Bethany rooms, outdoor Stations of the Cross and prayer gardens provide rich opportunities for prayer and encounter. The alternative provision, St Raphael's, reflects the same unwavering commitment to dignity and inclusion. The school planner comprehensively articulates the mission statement, school prayer, Catholic social teaching and values, ensuring that the charism shapes daily life. Chaplaincy

provision is strong and relational, and pastoral care is exceptional; staff go above and beyond to support pupils, modelling vocation in action, with many alumni choosing to serve within the school community. Personal development, including relationships, sex and health education and personal, social, health and citizenship education, is carefully sequenced and rooted in Gospel values. Whole-school Catholic Life days, themed around forgiveness, alongside cultural celebration days and charitable initiatives such as Christmas Jumper Day supporting the Mizen Foundation, powerfully express lived faith. The innovative Family Time programme, designed and led by Year 12 students for Year 7, exemplifies student leadership and the school's authentic family ethos, where people of all faiths are welcomed and nurtured.

Leadership of Catholic life and mission is outstanding. Leaders at all levels demonstrate an unwavering and deeply authentic commitment to the Church's mission, ensuring that Catholic identity permeates every aspect of school life. The policy is clear, purposeful and fully enacted, providing a strong framework for strategic development. The school's website serves as a genuine window into its lived Catholic character, transparently reflecting its mission, curriculum and community engagement. As the parish priest affirmed, there is "no doubt about this being a Catholic school." Catholic social teaching is explicit, embedded and understood; pupils are exceptionally articulate in expressing its principles and confidently relate them to their lived experience. Leaders have ensured a coherently planned Catholic curriculum that integrates faith, reason and personal development. Self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate, demonstrating a mature understanding of strengths and areas for growth, with pupil evaluation contributing meaningfully to planning for improvement. Governors are well-informed and committed, providing both challenge and support in promoting the Catholic mission. High-quality continuous professional development and thorough induction for new staff ensure that all adults are formed as witnesses to the faith and fully understand their responsibility in sustaining and developing this vibrant Catholic community.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

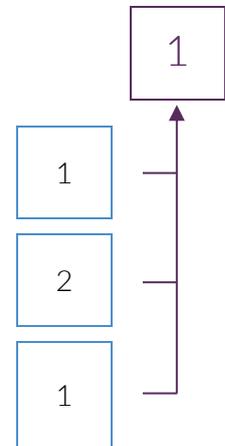
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Pupil outcomes in religious education are outstanding. Pupils demonstrate highly developed religious literacy, confidently using subject-specific vocabulary which is consistently reinforced through impactful classroom displays and effective teaching. Strong recall of prior learning is evident through well-embedded “Do Now” tasks, enabling pupils to retrieve and apply knowledge with increasing fluency and depth. Across year groups, pupils engage purposefully in independent work, showing intellectual curiosity, resilience and a capacity for theological reflection. Exercise books are of a consistently high standard, well-presented and largely complete, reflecting pride in work and sustained progress over time. Pupils speak positively about their experience of religious education, valuing both the academic challenge and the opportunity for personal reflection. A consistent whole-school approach to learning ensures clarity of expectation and strong routines, enabling pupils to focus fully on deepening their understanding. The carefully-sequenced scheme of learning supports pupils in making meaningful connections across topics and key stages. Self-assessment is used effectively, allowing pupils to identify next steps and take ownership of their progress. Attainment is now in line with the national average, representing significant improvement over the past three years and evidencing the substantial and sustained progress pupils make in religious education.

Provision in religious education is good. The reintroduction of A Level religious studies reflects leaders’ commitment to strengthening the subject’s academic profile. Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge and communicate clear expectations, resulting in purposeful learning environments where pupils are encouraged to take pride in their work. Planning is robust, thoughtfully sequenced and responsive to the needs of pupils, ensuring appropriate progression across year groups. Adaptation is evident, particularly in Year 7 where the curriculum is carefully modified to support two groups requiring additional help, enabling them to access learning

successfully. A range of stretch-and-challenge questions supports deeper thinking, while a diverse selection of engaging and appropriate resources enhances pupils' understanding. Assessment processes are effective, incorporating peer and self-assessment alongside half-termly marked assessments that provide opportunities for reflection and improvement. The "Be More" boards celebrate high-quality work and promote aspiration within the subject. Collaborative planning contributes to consistency across the department. While questioning strategies are not yet consistently strong in deepening higher-order thinking, the overall provision ensures that pupils experience well-structured, engaging lessons that support secure progress and a positive experience of religious education.

Leadership of religious education is outstanding. The *Religious Education Directory* is fully implemented, ensuring that the curriculum is faithful to the vision of the Church and coherently planned across all key stages. Leaders have secured full parity with other core subjects; religious education is rightly regarded as a flagship department at the heart of the school's mission. There is a shared conviction that all students gain faith, wisdom and understanding through the curriculum, and that this begins with high-quality religious education. Professional development is a significant strength. Staff receive regular, purposeful training focused on Catholic social teaching, the mission and vision of the school, the distinctive nature of Catholic education and placing Christ at the centre of learning. This formation enables teachers to articulate and model the Catholic character of the subject with confidence. Enrichment across the wider curriculum is extensive and well established. Leaders recognise the need to further develop extended enrichment opportunities specifically within religious education and are proactive in planning for this next stage. Self-evaluation is rigorous, accurate and clearly informs strategic improvement. The acting head of department provides excellent leadership, ensuring continuity, high standards and a clear sense of direction during this period of transition.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

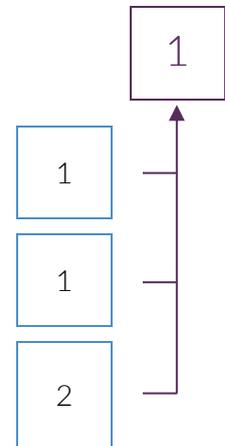
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

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



Pupil outcomes in prayer and liturgy are outstanding. Pupils demonstrate a deeply embedded understanding of the importance of prayer and willingly participate with reverence, confidence and authenticity. Opportunities for spontaneous prayer are regularly encouraged during registration, supported by daily chaplain reflections that invite thoughtful inward and outward responses. Pupils respond with maturity and sincerity, contributing prayers of their own which are displayed publicly in communal areas, evidencing both ownership and pride in the school's prayer life. Personal prayer is actively promoted, and pupils value the open invitation to encounter Christ throughout the day. The annual programme of provision is beautifully constructed and comprehensive, enabling pupils to engage with the liturgical year and themes in a meaningful and coherent way. Younger pupils participate enthusiastically in hymn practice, strengthening communal worship and fostering active participation. Across the school, pupils speak warmly of the prayer life, recognising it as central to their lived experience. They engage freely and respectfully, making their faith visible, alive and real in daily practice. Prayer is not an isolated event but a natural and integral expression of the school's Catholic identity, embraced wholeheartedly by pupils.

Provision for prayer and liturgy is outstanding. The prayer life at Holy Family is rich, inclusive and spiritually transformative. It is planned with great care, delivered with reverence and deeply rooted in scripture, Church tradition and the liturgical year. Leaders prioritise formation, resourcing and rigorous evaluation, ensuring that liturgy remains central to school life. The rhythm of worship is shaped coherently by the liturgical calendar through Welcome and Leavers' Masses, House Feast Days, Holy Days of Obligation, Advent and Lent devotions, and regular opportunities for Reconciliation, supported by strong partnerships with local clergy. Prayer permeates daily practice: morning prayer, prayer before every lesson, Grace before meals, the

Angelus during Advent and Lent, and the Five Finger Examen at the end of the day establish a sustained spiritual rhythm. Sacred spaces, chapels, prayer corners and crucifixes in every room are used intentionally and reverently. Celebrations of the Word are a particular strength, following a clear theological structure and enabling pupils to proclaim Scripture and engage deeply with Catholic Social Teaching. High-quality CPD and chaplaincy support ensure staff confidence and theological integrity. Music, drama, the Carol Service, Stations of the Cross and responsive prayer for world events further enrich provision, fostering a profound sense of family and communal faith.

Leadership of prayer and liturgy is good. Leaders and governors demonstrate clear commitment to ensuring that worship remains central to the school's Catholic identity. The ratified Worship and Liturgy Policy provides a well-devised and effectively implemented framework, bringing greater consistency and supporting staff confidence in planning and leading prayer. Prayer and liturgy is regularly evaluated through half-termly review meetings involving senior leaders, the staff governor and the lay chaplain. External validation, including diocesan involvement, has strengthened practice and confirmed secure systems and a robust liturgical programme. Monitoring of celebrations of the word shows strong liturgical accuracy and high levels of student participation, with increasing opportunities for pupil leadership. Access to the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist is prioritised, both in school and through attendance at weekly parish Mass at Our Lady and St George's Church, ensuring meaningful integration of sacramental life. Staff formation is a strength: induction and ongoing continuous professional development provide practical support for leading prayer, and the lay chaplain, supported by senior leaders, models effective practice. Worship is well resourced, with dedicated chaplaincy time and two chapels across the sites. Self-evaluation is effective and informs ongoing development, sustaining a culture where prayer is valued and visibly led by school leaders.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Holy Family Catholic School
School unique reference number (URN)	103106
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3204603
Full postal address of the school	1 Shernhall Street, Walthamstow, London, E17 3EA
School phone number	02085200482
Headteacher	Carolyn Laws
Chair of governors	Justin Madubuko
School Website	http://holyfamily.waltham.sch.uk/
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	May 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Andrew Bull	Lead
Lisa McDermott	Team
Martin Fahey	Team
Susan Grace	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