



# English Martyrs' Catholic Voluntary Academy

URN: 139611

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Nottingham

13–14 March 2024

## 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

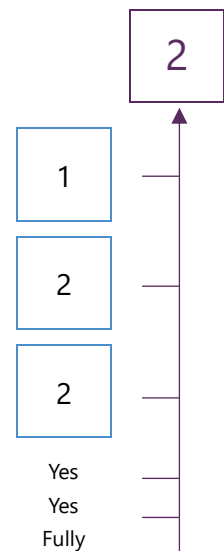
#### Collective worship (p.7)

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

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection



## What the school does well

- The pastoral care of pupils is exemplary. There is an explicit and concrete commitment to the most vulnerable pupils.
- The mission statement and virtues are a present and living reality across all aspects of school life, communicated and understood exceptionally well by all.
- Pupils are religiously literate, confident and engaged young people, who are able to use their knowledge, understanding and skills to reflect spiritually and to think ethically.
- Pupils participate fully, actively and enthusiastically in all aspects of prayer and liturgy across the school.
- Senior leaders, including lay chaplains, are inspiring models of exemplary practice to other staff and pupils as participants in and leaders of prayer and liturgy.

## What the school needs to improve

- Enable pupils to engage in and understand Catholic Social Teaching principles so that they can fully articulate the theology underpinning their actions.
- Ensure that teachers provide pupils with well modelled examples so that they know precisely how to improve their work in religious education.
- Establish a consistent approach to evaluating prayer and liturgy so that findings can meaningfully inform developments for liturgical plans and celebrations of the word.

## 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

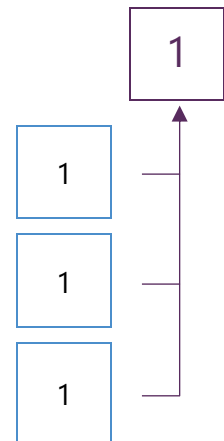
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### 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



English Martyrs' equips pupils with a clear understanding of what it means to follow the example of Jesus. As a result, pupils flourish as they grow in virtue. The school's mission, 'We grow and learn with the gifts we have been given, following in the footsteps of Jesus', is a lived reality for all members of the school community. Pupils have a clear understanding of what makes their school unique in terms of its distinctive Catholic identity and they can articulate this exceptionally well. Pupils readily embrace a personal responsibility for caring for our common home, pursuing the common good and serving those in need. They do all they can to actively participate in the Catholic life and mission of the school, for example selecting causes and charities to support such as Mary's Meals, Shelter and Cafod. Catholic Social Teaching is not securely embedded across the curriculum and school life, meaning that pupils cannot articulate fully, in relation to their age, the theology underpinning their actions.

The school's mission and virtues were devised with the whole school community and, as a result, pupils, staff and parents have a good understanding and ownership of this mission. This can be seen in the liturgical life of the school, the high quality of relationships across the community and the exceptional pastoral care of pupils. All staff confidently articulate how the school's mission shapes their work. Staff say, 'Christ is at the centre of all we do ... pupils learn to 'follow in the footsteps of Jesus' with us'. English Martyrs' embraces every opportunity to live out faith through charitable giving and acts of service: for example, the school family came together to raise money for a family member who needed emergency surgery overseas. There is a lived sense of community in this school and a strong culture of welcome, especially for the most vulnerable. Parents praise the school's inclusive ethos. There is particularly effective pastoral provision for service children. The school embraces pupils of all faiths and none, making provision for pupils to teach one another about their own faith traditions and ways of praying.

Leaders and governors are a source of inspiration for the whole community. One staff member refers to the headteacher as, 'a beacon of Catholicism. She is a role model of the schools' virtues'. Leaders and governors promote the bishop's vision for the diocese through attention to his themes of

'encounter, discipleship and missionary discipleship', and ensure that the school works with others regularly from the diocese and the St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi-Academy Trust. Parish links are exceptional, with staff members and governors visible and extremely active in the parish; the parish priest is a frequent visitor to school. Staff say, 'We are given many opportunities to be fully involved in Catholic Life... we are regularly invited to staff Masses and activities that involve our links with the parish'. The monitoring of the school's Catholic life and mission is accurate and self-challenge is evident. Pupils contribute in a planned and systematic way to this evaluation of Catholic life and mission and take a lead in planning improvements to it: for example, by devising their own action plan constructed in conjunction with the lead lay chaplain. School leaders are highly effective in engaging with parents, through personal availability for contact and communication channels such as 'school dojo'. Parents state that, 'We feel involved in our school's Catholic life. The parents are invited to Masses and liturgies held at school and at St Joseph's church. It is nice to feel part of a strong community!'

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

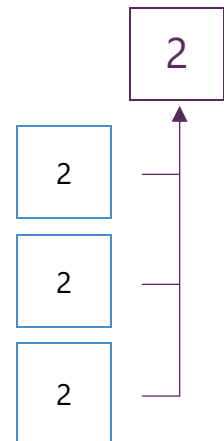
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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



Pupils have secure knowledge, understanding and skills in religious education. They make good progress in knowing more, remembering more and doing more, when measured against the planned curriculum for each year. Their attainment, when compared with other core subjects, is good: indeed, all groups of learners achieve well. The religious literacy of pupils is a real strength, with highly engaged pupils who are able to think ethically and reflect spiritually. Pupils can speak knowledgeably about what they have learned in religious education and are able to work independently, concentrating well and responding to the challenge of learning. Pupils produce good work, although there can be some variation in the quality of presentation. Pupils are not always clear, however, on how to improve their work and are unsure of how to consistently complete independent work to a high standard. Nevertheless, pupils engage well in lessons and show a willingness to improve their knowledge.

Teachers across English Martyrs' utilise a clear lesson structure. Elements consistently include prayer, revisiting of previous learning, articulation of new learning objectives and key vocabulary, scripture readings, and tasks that foster development of the 'driver words' associated with the end of year expectations. Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge, evident in their skilful use of questioning. There has been significant improvement in the use of effective questioning during lessons since the last inspection. This has had a positive impact upon pupils' levels of religious literacy. Teachers are committed to the value of religious education. Planning is usually linked to pupils' current assessment so that pupils learn well. However, the current implementation of the feedback system does not always allow pupils to consolidate and extend their understanding. Additionally, in some lessons, the amount of teacher talk can impact upon the amount of modelling that is able to take place during lesson time. Religious education is not outstanding because teachers do not model to pupils precisely how to succeed. Where learning is most effective, pupils are exposed to one independent task that increases in complexity. This scaffolded approach is a highly effective aspect of pedagogy across most classes. Teachers celebrate pupils' effort consistently, resulting in well-motivated and confident pupils. Teachers give space and time for reflection in lessons, and they provide pupils with opportunities to present their learning using a variety of forms of expression to meet the differing needs of pupils.

Leaders and governors ensure that religious education has full parity with other core subjects, with a particular emphasis on developing staff through professional development opportunities such as the courses offered by the diocese and the St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi-Academy Trust. This has been most impactful in relation to the development of effective questioning. The subject leader for religious education has a clear vision for teaching and learning and a good level of expertise. As a result, the curriculum is sufficiently sequenced to enable learners to progress sequentially through the subject content. Leaders ensure that religious education is effectively planned to meet the needs of different groups of pupils and much work has taken place to ensure that effective curriculum adaptations are in place for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Governors' self-evaluation of religious education is accurate and is informed by monitoring analysis and self-challenge. Strategic actions often lead to good outcomes as a result.

## Collective worship

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

### Collective worship key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

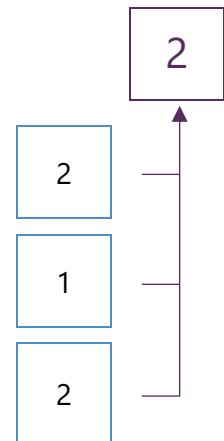
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

#### 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



Pupils engage deeply in prayer and liturgy, with full and active participation, due to the quality of experiences consistently provided. Pupils demonstrate this through their prayerful silence, attentiveness and responsiveness to prayer and liturgy. Appropriate to their age and capacity, pupils have a detailed understanding of the wide variety of ways of praying that are part of the Catholic tradition. Pupils are acquiring the liturgical knowledge required to lead liturgy with greater independence. Pupils work well with adults in school to prepare engaging experiences of prayer and liturgy. They speak highly of the support given to them by the lay chaplain. Pupils undertake liturgical ministries willingly and confidently. Pupils are at an early stage of evaluating the quality of prayer and liturgy, though this does not currently have a meaningful impact on prayerful occasions which follow.

Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school. The school provides a daily and weekly pattern of prayer, to reflect the liturgical seasons of the Church's year and to reflect the school's 10 virtues. Leaders have thought very carefully about selecting well-chosen scriptural passages which are informed by the liturgical season for the focus of prayer and celebrations of the word. They have 'gone the extra mile' by linking the school's virtues to each week of the liturgical calendar. For example, when the focus of the week was 'sacrifice', the school decided to link their virtue of 'love' to this theme, set a weekly mission for the pupils to live out this virtue, shared this plan with parents and followed up with a 'mission award' for pupils. Families are thoughtfully included in the prayer life of the school, through sharing the weekly prayer in the newsletter and sending out the weekly virtue-linked mission, inviting parental nominations for pupils who have lived out the mission at home. The school liaises with the parish priest to ensure that there are opportunities to celebrate Mass at significant moments in the year, and other Catholic traditions are shared, such as the Stations of the Cross. Pupils are assisted in their leadership of celebrations in class by the knowledge and guidance provided by the lay chaplain and lead lay chaplain, whose growing influence is used to good effect. The school provides a dedicated prayer focus table in each class, and there are several prayer spaces in communal areas of the school, both indoors and outdoors, an example of which is 'the prayer pod'.

The policy on prayer and liturgy at English Martyrs' is well formulated and fit for purpose. This is supported and exemplified further by a collective worship progression document which, though useful, is not used consistently when preparing age and stage appropriate liturgy. Leaders and governors

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have a carefully planned school calendar that sets aside opportunities to celebrate the Eucharist, key times of the liturgical year and holy days of obligation. Opportunities to celebrate the Eucharist are regularly offered to the whole school community. Leaders have placed high priority on the professional development of all staff and there is a clear strategy in place. For example, the focus last year was on developing the use of the 'LetUsPray2gether' resources, before moving on to the implementation of Lectio and Visio Divina this year. Leaders have not increased the independence of pupils when leading others in celebrations of the word, in line with the collective worship progression document, and so there is a lack of consistency in quality across all year groups. However, the good knowledge of leaders and lay chaplains in relation to prayer and liturgy is highly effective and this helps to develop, in turn, the knowledge and confidence of teaching staff



## Information about the school

Full name of school	English Martyrs' Catholic Voluntary Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	139611
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8573429
Full postal address of the school	Willow Crescent, Oakham, LE15 6EH
School phone number	01572722400
Headteacher	Alison Chambers
Chair of Local Governing Body	Claire McGrory
School Website	<a href="http://www.englishmartyrs.rutland.sch.uk/">www.englishmartyrs.rutland.sch.uk/</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi Academy Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	N/A
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	06 February 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	2 - Good

## The inspection team

Rachael Snowdon-Poole  
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