



## Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for **Nicholas Breakspear Catholic School**

URN: 137938

Carried out on behalf of the Most Rev. Cardinal Vincent Nicols, Archbishop of Westminster on:

Date: 23 – 24 March 2023

Overall effectiveness The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....	<b>1</b>
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 curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops’ Conference	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

### Summary of key findings

What the school does well:

- Leaders are ambitious; this is a school that is not complacent but is continuing to improve and innovate.
- The school is highly creative in that it has developed a whole school curriculum that places Catholic Social Teaching as a core theme.
- Pupils are rightly proud of their Catholic school. They understand and embrace the distinctive Catholic identity and mission of their school.
- Pupil outcomes are outstanding in RE. This RE department is a beacon of excellent practice.
- This school is developing creative and innovative ways of being an authentic school of prayer.

What the school needs to improve:

- Further develop challenge in the Key Stage 3 curriculum to meet the requirements of the new *Religious Education Directory*.
- Further develop tutor time prayer to reflect the breath and richness of the Catholic tradition.
- Continue to explore ways to enhance the physical buildings to match the aspirations and achievements of the pupils.

## 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:.....

1

### Pupil outcomes

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

1

### Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school .....

1

### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school .....

1



Pupils are rightly proud of their Catholic school. They understand and embrace the distinctive Catholic identity and mission of their school. Pupils embrace opportunities to participate and enhance the Catholic life of the school. Pupils value the tools provided in tutor time such as the NBS Citizen programme which explicitly develops virtues. Pupils articulate how they hope their work in this area will impact on them after they leave school, so that they can build a better world. The behaviour of pupils in lessons and throughout the school is exemplary. Pupils show a deep respect for their own dignity and the dignity of others. Pupils take a leading role in responding to the demands of Catholic Social Teaching. During the inspection as part of Addo mission week pupils were engaged in raising funds for chosen charities. The focus on why this was important generated insightful discussion in tutor groups. Pupils value the school's chaplaincy provision highly. Pupils understand the meaning of the school motto 'Per Tuas Semitas', meaning, 'In Thy Ways'. Pupils understand that the school community is committed to following the teaching and example of Jesus.

The school is highly creative in that it has developed a whole school curriculum that places Catholic Social Teaching as a core theme. The result is that the school's curriculum is integrated, and Catholic Social Teaching provides a unified purpose for pupils and staff. This is an example of best practice that other schools should learn from. The school provides exceptional support for those new to Catholic teaching. Staff welcome the sense of community and belonging which in turn fosters respectful relationships with pupils. Inspectors spoke to staff who were overwhelmingly positive about their experience of working in this Catholic school. Staff are supportive of one another and celebrate the fact that they know their students as individuals. This generosity of spirit creates an environment of aspiration and compassion where everyone acknowledges Christ's presence in one

another. Staff provide the highest level of pastoral care for pupils; they listen to their views and value their opinions. Pupils from other faiths are encouraged to practice their own faith traditions in an inclusive manner. Leaders have ensured that the school environment reflects its Catholic life; however, the physical buildings do not reflect the aspirations and achievement of pupils. The provision of RSHE is carefully planned and as a result pupils value the lessons.

Leaders are ambitious, this is a school that is not complacent but is continuing to improve and innovate. Other Catholic schools would benefit from visiting this community and be inspired. Leaders have ensured that Christ is at the heart of the school. The school's mission is in evidence where students and staff gather, whether it is in formal learning, informal situations, fundraising activities or community work. There is a clear focus on the moral purpose of education with pupils challenged to consider why they are learning what they are learning. Leaders listen to staff; staff wellbeing is important to them, and inspectors saw evidence of issues raised and resolved. Staff were keen to explain how they had chosen to work in the school because of its Catholic ethos. Leaders have ensured all staff receive training as well as support to embed the principles of Catholic Social Teaching into the curriculum and ensure its relevance as it permeates throughout all subjects. Governors excel in working collaboratively with senior leaders; holding them to account and developing the strategic intent of the school. Governors and leaders ensure that Catholic Social Teaching drives all decisions. Leaders have highly effective strategies for engaging with parents and as a result are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. One parent commented, 'I cannot praise the school highly enough for the inspiring Catholic content that is embedded in the culture and fabric of the school.'

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

1

### Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

1

### Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

1

### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....

1



Pupil outcomes are outstanding; relative to their starting points and capabilities they make outstanding progress. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils in RE make excellent progress compared to other core subjects. All groups of learners make excellent progress in GCSE RE. Students also make excellent progress at the end of Key Stage 5, consistently achieving some of the best results in the school. These outcomes measured by public examinations demonstrate that pupils develop excellent knowledge and understanding and skills that exemplify the learning required by the *Religious Education Directory*. Pupils appreciate the experience they receive in RE and recognise the dedication of their RE teachers. There is genuine enjoyment of RE lessons. Pupils' work is very well presented; demonstrating the value they give to the subject. Pupil behaviour is exemplary in RE lessons; they engage very well in learning demonstrating high levels of collaboration with staff and peers. Pupils embrace the responsibility given in RE lesson for their learning. There are regular opportunities for extended writing to which they excel, showing their deep thinking on topics. Pupils demonstrate that they can speak fluently about what they have learnt in RE lessons; they have developed strong oracy skills using key concepts and subject specific vocabulary with confidence.

Teacher subject knowledge is mostly outstanding, which in turn inspires confidence in pupils. Teaching at A level is rigorous, and students are challenged in their learning. In a very effective lesson, the teacher used a recall activity to prepare students to engage in complex theological concepts. Teachers' planning is strong, resulting in resource rich lessons. Scaffolding of learning is a strength of the department; all pupils benefit from the skillful use of breaking the learning into manageable parts to develop more complex concepts; this was seen in an outstanding A level lesson that explore the debate regarding revealed and natural theology. Another strength of teaching is

the effective use of questioning that critiques pupil responses to develop their thinking. In a Key Stage 4 lesson on the Kingdom of God, the teacher expertly drew out pupil learning from an engaging question and answer section of the lesson. Where teaching was seen in Key Stage 3, learning was often confined by a curriculum that was not sufficiently challenging. Greater challenge is required to accelerate learning. RE teachers play a significant role in developing pupil understanding of Catholic Social Teaching which is also taught across the rest of the school's curriculum. Teachers are very effective in giving space for pupils to reflect on their learning and thinking about the 'why?' in their learning. Pupils are challenged by staff to meaningfully make sense of their experience of the world.

The subject leader has a dynamic vision of RE within the curriculum and a very well-developed understanding of teaching and learning as well as the role that RE plays to foster the value of faith. The RE department is skillfully led and managed as evidenced through the high outcomes that pupils achieve at the end of Key Stages 4 and Key Stage 5. Teachers within the RE department collaborate in the development of resources and curriculum design. Imaginative resources are used effectively to stimulate pupil thinking. The department has effective systems that monitor teaching and learning. As a result, teachers receive targeted support that enables them to develop in their professional practice and the subject leader for RE has an excellent grasp of the strength and areas for development within the department. Great attention is given to the development of subject knowledge. The department provides a good range of enrichment opportunities for pupils and there is scope for further development. The department is well resourced within the school. The subject leader leads the RE teacher network for the Academy Trust, facilitating the sharing of good practice such as moderation. Overall, this department is a beacon of excellent practice.

## Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

1

### 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

Pupils highly value their experience of prayer and liturgy. They are deeply engaged, and their participation is characterised as full, active and conscious. For example, pupils regularly lead assemblies, read prayers and join in communal singing. There is a strong tradition of encouraging pupil participation, for example as Chaplaincy Reps, which has led to a culture in which pupils feel empowered to lead prayers. For example, during Lent, the school prayed the Angelus every day at noon, which pupils readily led. There are high levels of collaboration between pupils and staff in developing the prayer life of the school. Effective training ensures that pupils are prepared well for their liturgical ministries. Pupils are given opportunities to evaluate their experience in prayer and liturgy and as a result have a very good capacity to reflect and identify how to improve prayer and liturgy. Pupils can articulate with confidence how liturgy can develop their thinking and inspire them to action.

There is no doubt that the school recognises the centrality of prayer and liturgy. The programme of planned prayer and liturgy ensures that there is a vibrant pattern of prayer in the school. An excellent feature of the school is the regular experiences of Mass that pupils experience. The chaplain makes a significant positive contribution in leading prayer and liturgy. The local clergy, who are attached to a year group, also make a strong contribution to the liturgical experience of pupils. Pupils also have regular opportunities to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation and have an excellent retreat programme that pupils value highly. Pupils regularly take a role in leading assemblies; in the assemblies witnessed by inspectors, staff played a nominal role. Tutor time prayer is organised very well. Each tutor group has a Chaplaincy Rep who facilitates prayer by working closely with the tutor. Chaplaincy Reps are given regular training that helps them to understand their role within the tutor group. Every tutor base has a sacred space, with appropriate

images and religious artefacts that are used as a focus during the time of prayer. This is an example of best practice. The resources for tutor time prayer whilst being appropriate, have scope to be developed to reflect the breadth and richness of the Catholic tradition. The use of scripture is used well to underpin prayer and assemblies, helping pupils to make links between the word of God and Catholic Social Teaching, leading to an authentic invitation to respond in action. The school has developed innovative ways in which they have provided opportunities for families to be involved in the prayer life of the school.

Leaders, including governors, have worked hard to develop successful strategies to strengthen the prayer life of the school. This school is developing creative and innovative ways of being an authentic school of prayer. The school's policy on prayer and liturgy captures the vibrant vision that leaders have for this aspect of the school. There is a strong attention to detail in planning that results in a carefully constructed programme of prayer and liturgy that is very effective in its delivery. Pupils benefit significantly from the clear leadership shown in this area of the school. Staff are given opportunities to develop their understanding of prayer and liturgy and value the formation they receive. Leaders, including the chaplain, have demonstrated that they are highly effective in enabling others to plan and lead prayer. This is embedded in the culture of the school; pupils take responsibility for planning and leading prayer and liturgy. Leaders take seriously the monitoring and evaluation of prayer and liturgy. Pupil feedback is expertly used to strengthen and innovate provision.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	Nicholas Breakspeare Catholic School
School unique reference number (URN)	137938
Full postal address of the school	Colney Heath Lane, St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL4 0TT
School phone number	01727860079
Name of head teacher or principal	Declan Linnane
Chair of governing board	Sue McLellen
School Website	www.nbs.herts.sch.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Trustees	DOWAT
Gender of pupils	Co-educational
Date of last denominational inspection	May 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

## The inspection team

Matthew Dell	Lead inspector
Evelyn Ward	Team inspector
Rose Marie Sorohan	Team inspector

## 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