



Gunnersbury Catholic School

URN: 102545

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster

16–17 April 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 school's enrichment offer and the wide range of student leadership opportunities significantly enhance student learning and create an atmosphere where the Catholic faith is lived with joy and reverence.
- The generosity and commitment of the whole school community towards numerous charitable causes is truly inspiring.
- The pastoral care of all members of the school community is exemplified through the loving relationships which recognise the unique human dignity of every person.
- Attainment in religious studies at GCSE and A level across all groups is outstanding.
- The experience of prayer and liturgy offered by the school engages students deeply.

What the school needs to improve

- Students need to be able to articulate the theology underpinning all the principles of Catholic social teaching.
- Highlight and celebrate students' achievements in religious education by showcasing exemplary work in lessons and through displays, providing models for others to learn from and aspire to.
- Ensure all students know what specific steps they need to take to improve their learning.

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

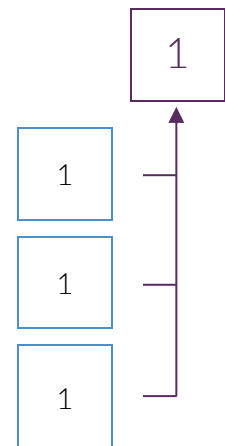
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 school motto 'Ad Altiora' (to higher things) encourages students to fulfil the values which make up the school's mission: learning; truth; justice; respect and community. The students know the mission statement and live it out in their daily relationships and the way they treat each other and everyone they meet in school and in the wider community. Students feel valued and cared for. They truly appreciate the high expectations and tireless work of staff. This was reinforced by a parent who said, 'The teachers always have the best interests of the children at heart. Lovely, down to earth and approachable staff who genuinely care'. Students flourish as they seek opportunities to grow in virtue. This was supported by a parent who stated, 'I like the opportunities the boys have for putting their faith into action through fundraising carol singing at Northfields tube station, helping at the local care home, collections for food banks and cake sales'. Students take a leading role in responding to the demands of Catholic social teaching, and particularly the preferential option for the poor. They can explain aspects of the theology underpinning their actions, but now need to articulate the theology underpinning all of the principles of Catholic social teaching.

A Christ-centred culture of welcome and inclusivity is fostered across the school. The school celebrates the presence of those from various cultures and belief traditions. A highlight of the school year is 'International Day', and the school celebrates the many home languages of students by promoting prayer in a range of languages. Everyone is welcome in a spirit of generous hospitality at Gunnersbury, especially the most vulnerable. The Solidarity team, made up of sixth formers trained as mental health ambassadors, supports the well-being of students across the school. A parent commented, 'The school is very consistent with exhibiting astounding pastoral care, showing exceptional concern for the needs and dignity of every student in the

school, which is very commendable'. The commitment and dedication of the lay chaplain is infectious and leads to a well-planned programme providing creative and high-quality opportunities for the spiritual development of students and staff. A staff member noted, 'The school chaplain is always helpful with issues about Catholic life and mission and how they may be incorporated into lesson planning'. Relationships, sex and health education is carefully planned and built into the 'Living Faith' programme. In lessons, effective links are made to Catholic social teaching and the dignity of the person.

Leaders and governors are diligent in exercising their duty as guardians of Catholic life and mission at Gunnersbury. The school has benefited significantly from the high-quality leadership of the longstanding chair of governors. The headteacher is an inspirational witness to the gospel and genuinely wants the best for every student. Governors are well informed and committed, providing both challenge and support in promoting the Catholic mission. Senior staff attend diocesan training, including 'Foundation of Faith' and 'Diversity and Catholic leadership' to deepen their understanding of Catholic education. Leaders and governors are committed to maintaining strong links with home, and a parent commented, 'Communication with parents is very good. The school sends Catholic news via e-mail, including prayers. The children have a Mass at Easter and Christmas with invitations to parents. It's awesome'. Parish links are strong with the Adoremus choir performing at local parishes as well as at Westminster Cathedral. There is an explicit, concrete commitment to both the physical and mental well-being of staff. A member of staff commented, 'I am Muslim, and the school gives me days off to celebrate our holy days. Therefore, I want to show my appreciation by doing all I can for the school in return'.

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

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

1

Student outcomes in religious education at GCSE and A level are outstanding. The achievement of students, including disadvantaged and SEND, across all age groups is exceptional. The varied starting points of students in religious education and religious literacy are quickly overcome as they make good progress by the time they reach GCSE, with results that are significantly above the national, regional and diocesan average and compare favourably with the other core subjects. Students are fully engaged in lessons and show a willingness to improve their knowledge and understanding. All students interviewed reported that they enjoy religious education and approach lessons with interest and enthusiasm. A parent also commented, 'Often my son comes home saying he has enjoyed learning about religious topics and is stimulated with ideas, knowledge and understanding.' Several students stated that they particularly enjoy the period 7 lesson on world religions as they find them very informative. They value both the academic challenge and the opportunity for personal reflection. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is outstanding and students are welcoming and polite at all times. They are aware of their target grade in religious education, but some struggle to explain what steps they need to take to improve their learning, and this is an area that the department is seeking to rectify.

Relationships between staff and students are excellent, creating a respectful, engaging learning environment where every learner feels valued and supported. An outstanding Year 13 core religious education lesson on relationships and sex showed excellent lesson planning as well as

students who are keen to contribute in a respectful atmosphere. Think, pair and share opportunities were also provided so that all students could fully participate. The success of the core religious education programme has led to some students opting to study philosophy and ethics at university because they found the course so interesting. Adaptation was evident in an excellent Year 10 lesson on Christian symbols. The teacher checked students' understanding of key terms, showing that she knew the needs of her students. Students are encouraged to reflect spiritually on what they are being taught, and support assistants are used effectively in lessons to optimise the students' learning experience.

Leaders and governors ensure that there is regular training on the *Religious Education Directory*. As a result, the new curriculum is now fully embedded, and resources are used imaginatively and creatively. Religious education is rightly regarded as a flagship department at the heart of the school's mission. The expertise and commitment of the religious education team is a real strength. Seven members of staff hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies and members are also examiners for AQA and Edexcel which enables them to share their knowledge and expertise with the rest of the team. The celebration of student achievements is evident in the subject colours worn on blazers but also in the postcards, letters and phone calls home acknowledging outstanding work. However, student achievement should also be acknowledged in classrooms with displays of outstanding work for everyone to see and aspire to. A wide range of enrichment activities is provided to promote students' learning locally but also globally with a biennial trip to Rome, and recently students went to Poland and visited the birthplace of St Pope John Paul as well as a trip to Auschwitz. Students also had the opportunity of seeing a relic of St Carlo Acutis in January. These experiences provide students with opportunities to promote their learning and strengthen their faith.

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



The experience of prayer and liturgy offered by the school engages students deeply. This was particularly evident in the Year 7 celebration of the word with joyful hymn singing. Students are respectful, attentive and responsive when prayers are said by the form teacher or liturgy leaders. The chaplaincy team and liturgy leaders, with the support of the chaplain, form the heartbeat of the school. Their roles include planning and delivering voluntary morning prayer before school for staff and students three times per week. The large team of altar servers all belong to the Guild of St Stephen and also fulfil this duty in their own parishes. The students collaborate with the chaplain and staff to provide innovative experiences of prayer and worship. They undertake their ministries with confidence and skill and can evaluate the quality of their presentations, identifying ways to make them even better. Students were proud to show their sign language skills and how they communicate parts of the Mass and standard prayers through sign language. The impact of prayer and liturgy inspires students to put their faith into action. A student commented, 'Gunnersbury lives out Catholic social teaching. It is not an add on, it is our responsibility to live out the teachings of Christ'.

Prayer is central to the life of the school, and daily opportunities for prayer are a natural part of the school day. A wide range of significant moments of both joy and sorrow are marked with reverence and creativity; allowing students to share their prayer intentions openly and feel spiritually supported by their community. A member of staff noted, 'One of the reasons why I really enjoy working at my school is because of the Catholic spirit that permeates every aspect of our daily life. I feel that praying is strongly encouraged and facilitated both for students and

staff. Relevant staff, particularly the chaplain, are highly skilled in helping students to confidently plan and lead well-structured prayer and worship. Staff and students are able to use their musical and artistic talents to enhance prayer and liturgy. The artistic displays in communal areas and corridors are an effective witness to the Catholic identity of the school. These include the stunning Pilgrims of Hope mosaic, stained glass and perspex displays of Our Lady and St Francis. The Adoremus choir significantly enhances liturgical celebrations throughout the year. The school makes imaginative use of space with a chapel which has the Blessed Sacrament present and is fully utilised for various services, including Adoration. A room is also provided for students and staff of other faiths to use for prayer.

Governors are regular visitors to the school and actively participate in worship, including the staff Mass of welcome at the beginning of each year. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is made available to students and staff during Lent and Advent. Over 160 students received the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Lent. The school celebrates a voluntary Mass every Friday at lunchtime for students and staff. The influence of prayer on the curriculum has led to every subject across the school formulating its own departmental prayer, which can be said at the start of lessons. A member of staff noted, 'Prayer is important and valued by everyone in the school, and a nice thing about how this has developed is that we are all teaching students how to pray effectively and have their own personal intentions. Be it by subject or individually'. Staff are comfortable and confident supporting students with prayer and liturgy. One commented, 'When we pray, we are establishing our sense of community and evoking God to be with us and to see the meaning of being here'. The link governor is also a local parish priest and visits regularly to observe and evaluate assemblies and year group celebrations of the Word. A parent summed up the school saying, 'The headteacher and staff have created a school life for my son which supported all we wished for. We are very grateful for this'.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Gunnersbury Catholic Secondary School
School unique reference number (URN)	102545
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3135401
Full postal address of the school	The Ride, Boston Manor Road, Brentford, TW8 9LB
School phone number	02085687281
Headteacher	Kevin Burke
Chair of governors	Andrew Flatt
School Website	http://www.gunnersbury.com/
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Boys, with girls in the Sixth Form
Date of last denominational inspection	9 October 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Dermot O'Neill	Lead
Anne Moloney	Team
Teresa Michael	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