



St Dominic's Priory School

URN: 124476

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Birmingham

02–03 July 2026

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

2

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

2

Collective worship (p.7)

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

2

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

No

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

2

Compliance statement

- This school does not fully comply with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference because, at the time of the inspection, the requirement for 10% of teaching time to be allocated to religious education was not being met across all areas of the school.
- This school is fully compliant with the additional requirements of His Grace.
- This school has fully addressed all previous areas for improvement.

What the school does well

- A strong, inclusive and welcoming Catholic community is firmly established. Staff support one another in an impressive manner. They are dedicated to their work, and pupils benefit significantly as a consequence.
- Public examination results at GCSE level are outstanding. They are significantly above diocesan school averages, and within the school, religious education is a beacon subject.
- The commitment of the headteacher in her role is admirable. She can articulate a clear vision for this Catholic school, and she has the determination needed to bring it to fruition. Her vision is based on the promotion of the welfare of others and a witness to the Gospel.
- The Annual Plan of Provision for prayer and liturgy (APOP) is an impressive document. It clearly identifies a programme of worship that is based firmly on the Church's liturgical year, and it relates to opportunities to promote Catholic social teaching.
- The behaviour of pupils is exemplary. They are highly respectful to their peers, staff, and visitors. Subsequently, they are ready to learn.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure 10% of curriculum time is allocated to the teaching of religious education in all year groups.
- Use the broad range of religious education assessment data available more analytically to target support for pupils precisely and inform teachers' planning.
- Develop routine opportunities for pupils to plan, minister, and review prayer and liturgy independently.

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

2

Provision

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

2

Leadership

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

2

2

Pupils at St Dominic's Priory benefit from a particularly strong charism and most show an age-appropriate understanding of it. They respond positively and participate actively in the opportunities provided to support the school's Catholic life and mission. Prep pupils have a limited understanding of Catholic social teaching, while senior students are developing their understanding well. Senior students speak knowledgeably about how they put the Church's teaching on the preferential option for the poor into practice, for example, through their understanding of the plight of refugees. All pupils take part in supporting a range of charitable works, including fundraising walks for Cafod, producing high-quality hand-designed Easter cards for distribution in partnership with the St Vincent de Paul Society and contributing to the diocesan Father Hudson Caritas project. Pupils are happy, confident, and secure in school and appreciate the support they receive from staff; one student describes St Dominic's Priory as a 'very nurturing environment where you can be the best version of yourself'. The behaviour of pupils throughout the school is exemplary. They are respectful to one another, staff, and visitors.

Staff are committed to implementing the school's mission and the vision of the leaders. The school is a strong, supportive, and welcoming Catholic community; these qualities are palpable. Relationships across the school are highly supportive, and staff provide impressively positive role models. They care deeply about pupils' and students' welfare. Staff adapt planned activities to make the school's Catholic life and mission accessible to all in need. As a result, pastoral care is good. Parents value this support, and the vast majority of those who responded positively to the survey do so positively; one parent said that 'faith is not simply something that is spoken about but something that is lived each day here'. Although a chaplain is not currently in post, staff remain committed to the education of the whole person, and this promotes pupils' moral

and spiritual development well. The Catholic physical environment is good, and it is immediately clear to visitors that they are entering a Catholic school. A particular strength of the environment is some excellent artwork produced by students. Provision for relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) meets diocesan requirements and reflects the teachings of the Church.

Leaders and governors are committed to promoting the school's Catholic life and mission. The headteacher works tirelessly to uphold it, often in challenging circumstances. The chair of governors shares this commitment and provides strong support for the headteacher in promoting the school's Catholic life and mission. In partnership with the broader leadership team, they are determined to keep Christ at the heart of the school. The whole leadership group provides strong role models for staff and pupils. They now work well in partnership with the diocese, as well as with the local parish. Attendance at diocesan training opportunities has increased recently, for example, and leaders ensure that year groups attend the parish church for Mass each fortnight. Plans for further development of the school's Catholic life and mission are in place, but they provide insufficient detail in terms of how objectives will be met. Leaders engage well with parents, as shown in survey responses and discussion during the inspection. The headteacher respects the dignity of all employees and treats them with Christ's compassion. Staff value this support. The self-evaluation of leaders and governors in this area is broadly accurate; however, it does not currently benefit from the input of pupils.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

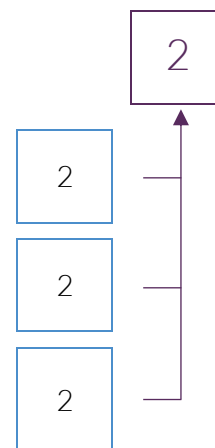
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 make good progress in their learning as they move through the school. Progress is particularly strong in Key Stage 4. Overall, outcomes are good, including for those identified as having special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). GCSE results are outstanding; they are significantly above the diocesan average, and within the school, religious education is a beacon subject. Levels of religious literacy are good, and pupils show an awareness of the demands made by being a young follower of Christ. They can think ethically and theologically. They speak articulately about their learning, and they use subject-specific vocabulary well. Examples include Year 1 pupils referring to Jesus as 'the Light of the World' in a discussion about Palm Sunday and Year 10 students discussing the concept of interfaith dialogue with confidence. Pupils produce consistently good work, which is presented to a good standard. However, pupils have insufficient opportunities to work independently and to take the initiative in their learning because teachers heavily lead learning activities. Behaviour for learning is excellent; pupils engage well, and they consistently report that they enjoy their religious education lessons. Pupils appreciate that their teachers celebrate their efforts, and older students show a good understanding of their strengths and of what they need to do to improve, though this is not always the case for younger pupils.

Teachers of religious education have strong subject knowledge and competence. They are fully committed to the subject, which is highly valued across the school. They show a good understanding of the needs of pupils and plan accordingly. Overall, the quality of teaching is good, with some stronger practice evident in the way older students are supported and prepared for public examinations. In the best lessons, teaching tackles complex issues very effectively so that students understand them; Year 10 students, for example, discern the key messages from The Second Vatican Council's 1965 declaration, *Nostra Aetate*. The quality of teachers'

questioning is generally good. However, at times, teachers do not follow initial questions with discussions that deepen the quality of pupils' answers. Teachers present the subject positively to pupils, and relationships are strong. Their marking is positive and encouraging. However, it does not consistently help pupils to understand how to improve their learning. Pupils respond well to the range of opportunities teachers give them to present their learning, but this range is somewhat limited. Learning support staff work well in partnership with teachers; their work makes a positive difference to pupils.

Leaders and governors ensure that the school's curriculum is faithful to the *Religious Education Directory* and that the school conforms to diocesan curriculum expectations. They ensure that staff take advantage of training opportunities, including those provided by the diocese. The subject leader for religious education is highly knowledgeable, and she has an admirable sense of vocation in relation to her role. She has overseen the processes that support strong public examination results over an extended period of time. Leaders provide good opportunities for pupils to benefit from a range of enrichment activities, including retreats and an excellent Lenten Stations of the Cross service, all of which link to the religious education curriculum. Senior leaders' observations of practice do not sufficiently support self-evaluation judgements in relation to the quality of teaching, and this limits how effectively staff training is targeted to address individuals' needs. Leaders ensure that teachers' regular assessment of pupils is completed, stored, and collated. Termly meetings with staff to discuss their findings represent good practice. However, this work is not yet fully utilised by teachers when planning learning in the prep phase and in Key Stage 3, meaning that the curriculum is not always adapted precisely enough to meet those pupils' needs.

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

Pupils generally respond well to prayer and liturgy. They have a good understanding of how to conduct themselves during times of worship. They are able, for example, to reflect in silence for extended periods of time. Younger pupils are at ease in sustaining atmospheres conducive to prayer, although a minority of senior students are less so. Most pupils take an active role in prayer and liturgy when asked to do so; they proclaim Gospel passages and guide reflections and missions well and respectfully. For example, Year 8 pupils reflect maturely on the Gospel in which Jesus refers to St Peter as the rock on which His Church would be built, and individuals proclaim God's work competently throughout. They have a good understanding of some of the ways of praying in the Catholic tradition. However, their understanding of the range of ways of praying in the Catholic tradition is not yet fully developed. They have an impressive knowledge of the Church's liturgical year. They can make good links between the school's programme of prayer and liturgy and the charitable works it undertakes in response to Catholic social teaching. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to plan and pray independently as a matter of routine; consequently, their ability to undertake liturgical ministry is limited. Pupils do not currently contribute in a formal way to the school's evaluation of prayer and liturgy.

A well-planned programme of prayer and liturgy is in place across the academic year. Staff are continuing to work effectively to make prayer and liturgy accessible to all and relatable to pupils' life experiences. Scripture is central to prayer and liturgy. The prayer and liturgy coordinator provides a programme of weekly acts of worship for each year group, based on the Sunday Gospel. This supports staff who are less confident in leading prayer to do so effectively and to a good standard. Staff are skilled at preparing pupils to take part in prayer and liturgy on particular occasions, such as Lenten Stations of the Cross; a strong feature of the school's provision. It is complemented by artwork of a very high standard, ensuring provision is enhanced by creative

input when appropriate. However, provision to develop pupils' skills in leading day-to-day prayer is less well developed. Space is used well across the school and is set up in a way that is conducive to prayer; this is particularly evident in the senior building. A well-presented prayer garden in the grounds creates good opportunities for pupils to reflect in their own time. Parents are invited into school to join some occasions; for example, a good number join the celebration of Year 6's achievements.

Leaders and governors ensure that an appropriate policy for prayer and liturgy is in place, and their annual plan for it is detailed. It creates regular opportunities for the celebration of the Eucharist, including year groups walking to the parish church for Mass every fortnight. Mass is also celebrated on holy days of obligation. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is currently limited to the First Holy Communion programme. Staff training, particularly in teaching pupils to plan, minister, and evaluate prayer and liturgy, is limited. Leaders and governors are committed to developing this area of school life, and budget decisions already reflect this commitment. Leaders have a good understanding of the current quality of collective worship across the school. However, a formal process of scoping, reporting, and target setting for improvement planning is not established.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Dominic's Priory School
School unique reference number (URN)	124476
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	860 6011
Full postal address of the school	37 Station Road, Stone, ST15 8ER
School phone number	01785 814181
Headteacher	Rebecca Harrison
Chair of governing board	Karen Champ
School Website	www.stdominicspriory.co.uk
Trusteeship	Independent
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	All Through
Type of school	Catholic Independent School
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	3 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	October 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Lyndon Watkins
John Toal

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