



137913 Notre Dame Catholic High School

# Notre Dame Catholic High School

URN: 137913

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of East Anglia

27–28 November 2025

## 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

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

## What the school does well

- The lived charism of the Sisters of Notre Dame - to care for, serve and provide for the poor and for all - runs through every aspect of school life, and is exemplified by the foundation of the school's mission statement: 'I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full' (John 10:10).
- The headteacher, leadership, governors and staff embody the distinctive and authentic charism of this school, that is a beacon of the Church in the city.
- Religious education is an exceptionally well-led and resourced department. It is undoubtedly the 'core of the core' and is described as the 'academic backbone of the school'; the subject leader is developing and building upon the exceptional work of the previous incumbent.
- The positive outcomes of religious education reflect the passion, sense of unity, and collegiality of the dynamic staff within the department.
- Prayer and worship is central to all aspects of school life.

## What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that an awareness and understanding of Catholic social teaching is embedded across all areas of the curriculum and of school life.
- Harness the activities and elements of the spiritual journey at Notre Dame in a planned and cohesive manner, mapped out across all year groups.

## 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**

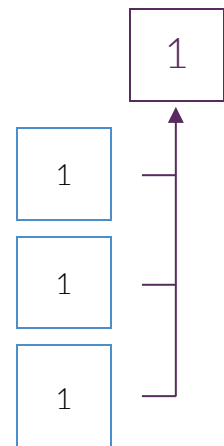
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

**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



At Notre Dame High School, the mission 'statement is lived authentically in every aspect of school life, shaping a community where all students flourish spiritually, academically, and personally. Students speak confidently of feeling deeply supported to be their true selves, with one sixth former sharing that *'since coming to Notre Dame he feels free to talk about his faith,'* reflecting an environment where faith is openly celebrated. Students value the rich opportunities offered through chaplaincy, with a Year 11 pupil expressing that what they will miss most when moving to college are *'the opportunities the chaplaincy team has given.'* This sense of belonging is echoed across the school, where identity, pride, and love for being part of a vibrant Catholic community are consistently evident. Academic outcomes reflect this holistic formation, with pupil premium students achieving progress above national non-pupil premium levels across the curriculum. Parents also recognise the exceptional impact of the school's Catholic ethos, one noting that their children's knowledge of the faith is outstanding because of high-quality teaching in religious education. In the sixth form, students clearly articulate that they choose Notre Dame because it offers an education firmly rooted in values and moral purpose.

At Notre Dame High School, the provision for Catholic life and mission is outstanding, with the school's mission woven seamlessly into daily practice and the lived experience of the whole community. This shared sense of purpose is deeply felt by staff, one of whom reflected, *'I spent my career in secular education waiting to come back home,'* highlighting the profound vocational connection fostered here. Staff are invited into prayer each morning through reflections, Mass, and shared moments of worship in briefings and meetings, ensuring the spiritual life of the school is nurtured with intention and joy. As a recognised School of Sanctuary, Notre Dame provides an atmosphere of genuine inclusivity where all feel welcomed and protected; sixth form

students themselves describe the school as a 'safe space' in which they can freely explore their identity and faith. The physical environment powerfully reflects the school's Catholic distinctiveness, with its chapel, sacred artwork, buildings named after saints, and Houses rooted in pilgrimage sites all contributing to a vibrant faith culture. The 'Walk of Faith' to the cathedral stands as a visible and unifying expression of the Church alive in the local area. Catholic social teaching is explicitly promoted and actively lived, shaping compassionate, just and outward-looking young people.

Leadership of Catholic life and mission at Notre Dame High School is outstanding, marked by a deep commitment to the Church's mission and an unwavering dedication to the flourishing of every child. Governors wholeheartedly embrace the school's vital role as the only Catholic secondary school in the county, celebrating its contribution to the wider mission of the Church. They embody the inclusive call for each pupil to 'have life and have it to the full,' while working closely with school leaders to ensure that excellence is never assumed but continuously pursued. Together, they actively promote the Bishop's vision for an authentic and vibrant expression of Church within the school community. The school's website reflects this with confidence: clear, unapologetic, and joyfully celebratory of its Catholic identity, presented in a way that is both accessible and welcoming. Leadership at every level understands and lives the mission, ensuring that decisions, priorities, and relationships are shaped by faith. The Cathedral plays a central and formative role in the school's spiritual life, grounding the community in the wider diocesan family and providing a focal point for worship, celebration, and pilgrimage. Through this strong, faith-filled leadership, Catholic life and mission thrives across the whole school.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

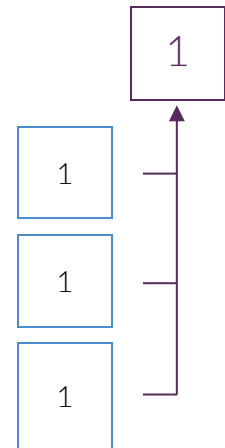
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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 at Notre Dame High School are outstanding, reflecting exceptional progress, deep engagement, and a rich understanding of the Catholic faith. GCSE results are consistently significantly above both national and local averages, performing at least on a par with, and often exceeding, outcomes in other core subjects such as English and Maths. Students show a genuine love for religious education: one teacher notes, *'We see the best of the students in RE,'* while a Year 10 pupil affirms, *'I would have taken GCSE RE even if it was an option subject.'* Sixth form students also praise the Culture and Faith programme, recognising its impact. Religious literacy is exceptionally strong because of the detailed and rigorous implementation of the *Religious Education Directory* curriculum, which builds secure knowledge and critical thinking from Key Stage 3 through to GCSE. Prayer linked to lesson themes helps students make meaningful connections between belief and everyday life. Work in books is of a high standard, beautifully presented and demonstrating pride, focus, and full engagement. Together, these indicators show that students achieve highly and flourish spiritually and academically in religious education.

Religious education provision at Notre Dame High School is outstanding, driven by expert teachers with impressive subject knowledge and guided by a highly effective leadership team. The department has developed innovative booklets used across all year groups, which support students to have high expectations and aspirations for themselves in every lesson. These resources provide structure and challenge, enabling students to deepen their understanding and take ownership of their learning. The religious education department leads the way in excellent teaching and learning practices across the school, sharing expertise and fostering a culture of pedagogical excellence. Lessons are characterised by a strong emphasis on oracy, allowing students to articulate their ideas clearly, engage in thoughtful discussion, and develop

critical thinking skills. High expectations permeate the classroom: teachers challenge students to reach their full potential, while students themselves demonstrate ambition, focus, and pride in their work. This combination of expert teaching, innovative resources, and rigorous pedagogy ensures that Religious Education is a vibrant and intellectually stimulating part of school life. Students are not only achieving excellent academic outcomes but are also developing the knowledge, skills, and confidence to live out their faith with understanding, purpose, and commitment.

Leadership of religious education at Notre Dame is outstanding, characterised by integrity, passion, and a commitment to excellence that permeates every aspect of provision. Religious education is placed at the core of the core curriculum, with lessons consistently taught in specialist rooms, reinforcing the subject's centrality to the curriculum and the school's Catholic mission. Leadership demonstrates a lived example of invitational leadership, supporting colleagues and fostering professional growth through a bespoke pathway of Continuous professional development designed to ensure effective implementation of the *Religious Education Directory* curriculum. Resources are exceptionally well planned and adapted to meet the needs of all learners, ensuring inclusivity and enabling every pupil to access the full curriculum. The department's clear vision and mission uphold the distinctive charism of the Notre Dame de Namur Sisters and the values of St Julie, ensuring that religious education contributes meaningfully to the spiritual and moral development of students. Governors are fully engaged in monitoring and sustaining the high standards, using probing visits, rigorous questioning, and detailed reports to maintain a comprehensive understanding of strengths and areas for development. They are well-informed about curriculum developments and actively contribute to sustaining excellent practice. Through strong, faith-driven leadership, religious education at Notre Dame thrives as an intellectually challenging, spiritually enriching, and transformative experience for all students.

## Collective worship

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

### Collective worship key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

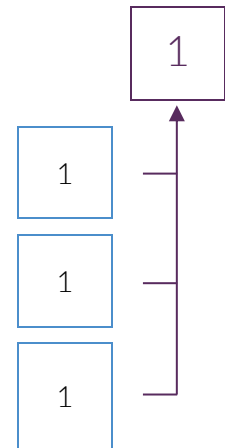
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

#### 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 collective worship at Notre Dame High School are outstanding, reflecting high levels of engagement, confidence, and spiritual maturity. Students pray with assurance and understand the value of daily prayer, making meaningful connections between their academic learning and lived faith, exemplified by the prayer at the end of each religious education lesson linked to the topic. Assemblies provide a rich and structured spiritual experience, following the See, Judge, Act model, and consistently focus on the weekly Gospel, helping students reflect on its relevance to their lives. Students actively lead and shape worship through roles as catechists and retreat leaders, with Year 8 students mentoring Year 7, fostering responsibility, leadership, and peer support. The chaplaincy team, comprising 94 students from across all year groups, plans, prepares, and delivers assemblies alongside staff, ensuring a wide range of voices and talents are represented. Students contribute to the development of worship through the school council, providing feedback on assemblies and morning prayer, which directly influences future planning. Additional opportunities to participate in collective worship include the Shine Band, art group, choir, altar servers, and media group, allowing students to use their gifts to enrich the spiritual life of the school. Through these experiences, students demonstrate confidence, active participation, and a deep appreciation for prayer and worship.

Provision for prayer and liturgy at Notre Dame High School is outstanding, offering a rich, engaging, and inclusive spiritual experience for all students. Daily prayer is well resourced and highly valued across the school, with students participating reverently and confidently, reading prayers with assurance and focus. The school fosters an active prayer culture through prayer books, reflection, and prayer linked to religious education lessons, ensuring that faith is consistently integrated into the curriculum. Students engage in a wide range of spiritual experiences, including Year 7 and 11 visits to the Cathedral led by the Ignite outreach, retreats

for Years 7, 8, and 10, and form group liturgies of the Word in the chapel on a rotational basis. Weekly rosary, Mass, and whole-school Masses at the Cathedral strengthen the communal and sacramental life of the school. Opportunities for reconciliation for Years 7–9 have been expanded, with three priests now available to meet the growing demand. The full-time chaplain plays a pivotal role in coordinating and enhancing worship, building strong, supportive relationships with staff, students, and the Cathedral parish. Through these comprehensive and varied opportunities, students experience prayer and worship as meaningful, relevant, and central to both their spiritual development and their daily life in school.

Leadership of prayer and liturgy at Notre Dame High School is outstanding, exemplifying a deep commitment to faith and the centrality of prayer in the life of the school. The impact of the school's clear policy is evident: prayer and worship are integral to daily life, shaping the spiritual culture and underpinning all school activities. The sheer number of respondents to surveys and active engagement from students, staff, and parents demonstrates the high value placed on these opportunities; one parent commented on how the prayer life of the school has positively nurtured their child's faith. The spiritual programme for all students is carefully planned, with clear mapping and ongoing development to ensure breadth and progression. During the inspection, a Mass at the Cathedral in memory of a recently deceased staff member—attended by students, staff, alumni, parents, and governors—highlighted the strong communal and faith-filled nature of worship. The headteacher and senior leadership team lead with integrity and a lived expression of faith, fostering a culture where students actively value the chaplain, who serves as a visible witness to faith. Governors are fully engaged, attending school celebrations, Masses, and incorporating prayer into their own meetings, ensuring that leadership at all levels sustains and models the school's outstanding provision for prayer and liturgy.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	Notre Dame Catholic High School
School unique reference number (URN)	137913
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9264605
Full postal address of the school	Surrey Street, Norwich, Norfolk, NR1 3PB
School phone number	01603611431
Head teacher	Thomas Pinnington
Chair of governors	James McGarry
School Website	<a href="http://www.ndhs.org.uk">http://www.ndhs.org.uk</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St John The Baptist Catholic Multi Academy Trust
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	9 <sup>th</sup> March 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Grade 1

## The inspection team

Mr Andrew Bull	Lead
Mr Andy Lewis	Team
Mr Sam Tatum	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