

New Hall School

URN: 115387

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Brentwood

20–21 November 2025

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

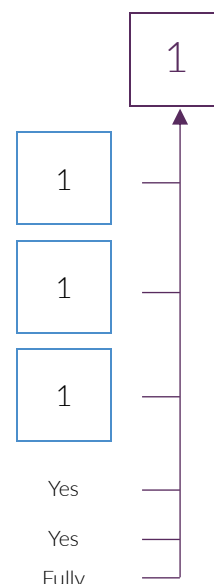
Collective worship (p.7)

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

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

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

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



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 any 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

- Pupils are exceptionally proud of their school. They have a deep understanding of the school virtues which are lived out in their actions and exemplary, respectful and polite behaviour.
- The pastoral care provided by the highly committed staff is greatly valued by pupils and parents.
- Pupils have excellent religious knowledge, demonstrated in their oracy skills, and their ability to debate, to think critically and to ask incisive questions to deepen their learning.
- Teachers are exceptionally confident in their teaching of religious education across all phases, with high levels of specialist knowledge and expertise.
- The school provides imaginative and creative spaces for prayer and liturgy, including chapels that are well cared for, making them conducive to prayer.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that the provision of relationships and sex education (RSE) is faithful to the teaching of the Church and presents a holistic vision of the human person, enabling pupils to articulate confidently what they have learned in these lessons.
- Ensure that all pupils produce work of a consistently high quality, demonstrating excellent presentation, individuality and creativity across all phases of the school.
- Ensure that pupils work collaboratively to prepare, lead and evaluate well-constructed and creative experiences of prayer and liturgy.

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



Pupils wholeheartedly embrace the school mission statement, which emphasises the school's welcome of 'students from many traditions, building a Christian community that has at its heart prayer and service to others.' The prioress of the founding Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre explained that the head boy's speech-day address, describing New Hall as a community where everyone is of equal value, echoed her own speech and sentiments. Pupils' active participation significantly enhances the Catholic life of the school and is demonstrated in their extremely courteous behaviour, their welcome to visitors and their extensive charity work. They are exceptionally proud to attend New Hall; they are happy, feel cared for, and have an excellent understanding of the school's values. One pupil in the Preparatory Divisions explained that 'we show care, trust and respect. Jesus is our inspiration'. In the Senior Division, pupils shared that as a school community, they ensure that all are made welcome. The moral development of pupils is given the highest priority. Additionally, one parent acknowledged, 'They don't just teach doctrine - they help my daughter to reflect, grow in confidence, and understand her place in a community built on respect and service.' Pupils take a leading role in serving others through the New Hall Voluntary Service (NHVS), and they willingly participate in fundraising throughout the year. Pupils across the school can articulate the relationship between their charity work and Catholic social teaching. The role of the extensive chaplaincy team, and all they provide, is highly valued by pupils, who willingly undertake allocated roles.

The mission statement is at the heart of the school; it is regularly reviewed and celebrated annually on Foundation Day. Staff are exemplary role models to pupils, embodying a culture of welcome and community. One member of staff stated that 'the sense of community is unparalleled to any place I have worked - care, trust and respect are truly at the heart of

everything'. Furthermore, staff are committed to living out the mission statement through their pastoral care, compassion and understanding of all pupils within their care. Staff, parents and governors cite countless examples of additional support provided to help pupils during times of bereavement, adapting to changing circumstances and overcoming times of anxiety. The school's environment, including beautifully appointed symbols, statues and the cross of the Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre witness to its Catholic charism and heritage. There is exceptionally well-planned and highly valued, chaplaincy provision, with a head of chaplaincy who is exceedingly well regarded by all. Additionally, the chaplaincy team liaise with local Catholic primary schools to offer retreat days and there is a wide variety of reflective activities available on a daily basis over lunch time. Pupils who are boarders also appreciate the evening and weekend opportunities provided by the chaplaincy team. A RSE policy is available and there is a plan for provision in place. The school now needs to ensure that this provision is further developed to meet the diocesan requirements fully.

Leaders and governors are highly ambitious and continually strive to ensure the Catholic identity and charism of the school remain at its centre. Strategic and departmental plans drive the Catholic aims of the school at all levels. Parents are appreciative of the Catholic ethos of the school; one parent stated that 'the school is very welcoming and encourages us to be involved as individuals and a family in the Catholic life of the school'. There is an unwavering commitment to Catholic social teaching through the school's outreach work and fund raising for charity, which recently included collections for a local food bank and the principal's initiative to welcome four Rwandan Canonesses to the school's new Mission House. Policies and structures are in place providing high level pastoral care for staff. Their wellbeing is supported through a range of clubs and many staff mention examples of the support they have received from leaders. These leaders ensure that the Catholic curriculum is robust with strong links being made with the art, drama, music and English departments. School self-evaluation is rigorous with governors providing both support and challenge regarding the Catholic life of the school. Furthermore, pupils have had opportunities to contribute to improving the Catholic life at New Hall, as part of the Corpus group, which was formed to promote diversity and equality. Pupils take a leading role in planning and organising the annual cultural day, which was a student initiative. Professional development is provided by the chaplaincy team when staff join the school and subsequently on a regular basis. A staff member explained, 'our chaplaincy team is incredible and so inspiring. They are so passionate and support others to appreciate the Catholic life and teaching.'

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

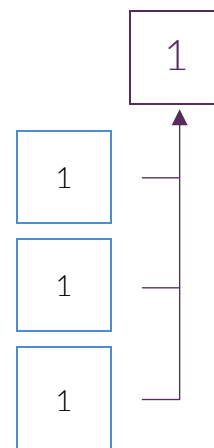
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 in the Preparatory Divisions are developing excellent knowledge, understanding and skills in their religious education lessons as a result of high quality teaching. These skills are systemically learned and new knowledge is quickly acquired. Pupils speak eloquently and think deeply. Pupils in Year 2 are able to use the vocabulary of scripture when describing the Annunciation. When looking at sacred art, a Year 4 child responded that they were 'awestruck' and 'I could look at it for hours.' In the Senior Divisions pupil outcomes at GCSE and A level are exceptional. Observations show that oracy is a significant strength. Across the whole school there are high levels of positive engagement, independence of thought and with clear evidence of critical thinking in lessons, resulting in excellent progress. Pupils demonstrate excellent recall and ask insightful questions in lessons. Their work is recorded in a variety of ways. Where pupils' work is well presented, the content, quantity and quality of their books, and of work captured on the OneNote app, reflect their developed oral skills and high quality outcomes. These excellent practices regarding presentation of pupils' work now need to be consistently applied across all phases. All pupils thoroughly enjoy their religious education and theology lessons evidenced in the high take up of theology A level and very high levels of attainment. These sentiments were captured in the comments of pupils in the Preparatory Divisions who frequently highlighted, 'I love religious education; it is my favourite subject'.

Teachers in the Preparatory Divisions have exceptionally secure subject knowledge. In the Senior Divisions, the theology department has a rich and able team of staff who are genuinely passionate about their subject and impart their subject knowledge to pupils with great skill and enthusiasm. One parent commented that their child 'has enjoyed the religious education teaching in the sixth form. I cannot praise the school and teachers enough.' Another parent stated that their child is now studying Theology at university, 'inspired by the wonderful theology

department.' All staff have exceptionally high expectations regarding outcomes in religious education. Teachers have precise and perceptive questioning skills allowing them to adapt and modify learning so that every pupil can access religious education learning with success. Pupils with additional needs have excellent support from a wide professional network, ensuring they are included and able to participate with confidence. The quality of feedback and marking is strong. In the Preparatory Divisions the marking system is understood by pupils and helps them to know when they have achieved lesson objectives. At A level, marking is robust and action orientated to challenge and guide pupils to strive for better. Teachers have a real and profound understanding of the impact religious education has on the moral and spiritual development of pupils. This was clearly demonstrated in a Year 5 lesson where the pupils were discussing Jesus as the Servant King and the qualities required to be a servant leader.

Leaders and governors have prioritised the introduction of the new *Religious Education Directory*, which has been implemented across all phases. Governors are highly proactive in ensuring that staff are recruited across the whole school with the necessary subject knowledge to teach religious education. Consideration is given to the design of the curriculum. Theology is imaginatively and thoughtfully planned, for example the core religious education programme, called Horizons, is creatively structured to respond to pupil voice from the Theology Society discussion on New Age Movements. Furthermore, professional development in religious education is given the highest priority. Leaders of religious education, across the whole school, carefully monitor the quality of teaching and track pupil attainment to inform the school's self-evaluation process. They use this information systematically to strive for further improvements resulting in excellent outcomes. Religious education is given parity with other core subjects with regard to resourcing, timetabling, accommodation and professional development. The latter is greatly appreciated by staff, with one early career teacher highlighting, 'I have experienced a high level of support with my religious education teaching.'

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

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

1

1

Pupils engage well in the experiences of prayer and liturgy provided. In a Preparatory Division Gospel assembly, all pupils responded well to the prayers and reflective and meditative aspects of the liturgy. Pupils demonstrate a strong understanding of the liturgical year, knowing that they attend Mass during Advent, receive ashes on Ash Wednesday and join the Marian procession to the grotto in May. In the Senior Divisions pupils also speak of the richness of the liturgical music at New Hall, particularly the contribution of the choristers, who enhance the experience of prayer and liturgy. Pupils work with adult chaplains to organise liturgies and many are keen to undertake ministries, such as reading and altar serving during Mass. However, pupils do not yet take a key role in planning, leading and evaluating prayer and liturgy. Pupils can make links between world events and their prayers of petition. For example, a Year 6 pupil explained that 'in politics we learn about human rights and some people don't have them, so I pray for them'. Pupils speak about their active participation in the Red Wednesday prayer vigil and the variety of prayer activities that were available to them during this time of prayer for the persecuted Church. Pupils are able to explain that prayer is important to them, particularly during times of difficulty, and that prayer helps them 'get closer to God'.

The centrality of prayer and liturgy is evident through the richness of opportunities provided by the dynamic head of chaplaincy and the chaplaincy team. There is a well-established pattern of daily prayer that faithfully reflects the rhythm of the Church's life. In addition to prayer times during the school day, daily Adoration, morning and evening prayer and Mass are available to all members of the school, parents and the local parish. Staff explained that 'tutors pray with the students and this underpins everything we do.' While rooted in tradition, the school also offers creative expressions of worship such as praise and worship sessions with live music. The creative and artistic expertise of pupils is nurtured and developed through the involvement of the dance,

drama and music departments which enhances major liturgies, as seen in the student-led Passion performance. The contribution of the seven organ scholarship pupils, who play at the school and in parishes, further reflects the exceptional provision. The Senior Divisions' chapel, the St Francis chapel in the Preparatory Divisions and the newly opened chaplaincy chambers, provide prayerful and flexible spaces for formal liturgy, and informal reflection. There is a robust relationship with the parish, and parents value the invitation to participate in Mass at the school.

There are clear prayer and liturgy guidelines readily available to staff on the school website. The annual plan of provision clearly shows that planned prayer and liturgy are always integral to routine gatherings. Holy days of obligation, Foundation Day and other key liturgical events are given high priority. The Sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation are offered on a daily basis. The principal has redesigned and grown the chaplaincy, to include a large lay team, led by the Head of Chaplaincy, as well as two resident priests and the resident community of Canonesses. This shows the commitment of leaders and governors to prioritising the provision of prayer and liturgy. Supported by the extensive chaplaincy facilities, this highly-skilled team are therefore able to provide consistently high-quality experiences of prayer and liturgy. Leaders and Governors place great emphasis on staff formation which is also provided by the chaplaincy team. Leaders and governors are highly skilled in their evaluation of the prayer and liturgy, reviewing this regularly and seen in governors' minutes.

Information about the school

Full name of school	New Hall School
School unique reference number (URN)	115387
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	881/6001
Full postal address of the school	New Hall School, The Avenue, Boreham, Chelmsford, CM3 3HS
School phone number	01245467588
Headteacher	Katherine Jeffrey
Chair of local governing body	Philip Wilson
School Website	newhallschool.co.uk
Trusteeship	New Hall School Trust
Phase	All Through
Type of school	Catholic Independent School
Admissions policy	Selective
Age-range of pupils	1-19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	December 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Gael Hicks	Lead
Bernadette Horton	Team
Elaine Warnett	Team
Lisa McDermott	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