

The Ursuline Academy Ilford

URN: 137418

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Brentwood

06–07 March 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

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

Fully

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

Yes

1

Compliance statement

- The Ursuline Academy Ilford is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference
- The Ursuline Academy Ilford is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop
- The Ursuline Academy Ilford has responded to the area for improvement from the last inspection

What the school does well

- Attainment at GCSE religious studies across all groups is outstanding
- The exemplary student behaviour observed throughout the school leads to a high level of achievement in lessons
- The impressive standard of displays in classrooms, communal areas and corridors are an effective witness to the Catholic identity, mission and charism of the school
- The school is profoundly committed to supporting the wellbeing of students to the extent that all can flourish and grow
- Staff actively bear witness to the school mission through their daily interactions with students, participation in religious worship and commitment to *'Serviam'*

What the school needs to improve

- Develop form time prayer so that students become more aware of the wide variety of prayerful experiences
- Ensure that the level of monitoring carried out at GCSE religious studies is replicated at A level

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

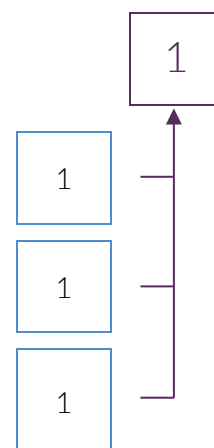
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 Ursuline Academy Ilford is an inclusive school where the motto '*Serviam*', I will serve, is fully actioned by students and staff. The Ursuline values are not just visible in the physical environment but also in the kindness, compassion and respect shown by students and staff towards each other. A student commented, 'There is a really supportive culture here where students are encouraged to pursue their interests and talents'. The Catholic identity is promoted on every corridor with wonderfully presented and maintained displays of students' work, displays promoting the rich tapestry of Ursuline life, the house saints and the principles of Catholic social teaching. Students take a leading role in responding to the demands of the school's values and Catholic social teaching. The Oscar Romero Award group of senior students are proactive in finding ways of responding to local, national and global issues and are excellent role models for the rest of the school. The 'Big Sisters' mentoring campaign enables older students to provide advice and positive role modelling to younger students and in so doing they fulfil the principle of Family, Community and Participation. Students repeatedly stated that they felt part of a family. One commented, 'Being in a smaller school enables us to know each other and for everyone to know us, including the teachers'. Students demonstrate a deep sense of respect for those of other faiths. The school leaders strive to create an inclusive environment where everyone can reach their full potential in all their endeavours. It was a privilege to witness World Book Day when almost everyone dressed up as characters from their favourite books. The sense of enjoyment was palpable and confirmed what 100% of staff had recorded in the survey that pupils behave respectfully in this school.

The staff commitment towards the mission and charism of the school is very reassuring. The staff survey revealed that 95% agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, 'Christ is at the heart of this school'. The embedded culture of welcome means that the school celebrates the presence

of those from various cultures and belief traditions. All students are invited to participate in assemblies, prayers and leadership opportunities. There is an explicit and concrete commitment to the most vulnerable. Staff have received training on autism and neurodiversity ensuring compassion and understanding are shown toward students with diverse needs. R(S)HE is delivered across science, PSHE and religious education lessons. Links are made between the dignity of the human person and the call to live in good relationships. This was reinforced by a teacher who said, 'The PSHE lessons and resources are grounded in Catholic teachings, providing a cohesive framework that we can all follow'.

Leaders and governors ensure that the school's charism blends with the aims of Catholic education. A governor-led training for staff on Catholic social teaching and how to embed it across the school has yielded amazing results. The enthusiasm shown by subject leaders to embrace the principles and incorporate them into curriculum plans is most impressive. This was confirmed by staff saying, 'Catholic social teaching and Ursuline values apply to all faiths and contribute towards shaping students to become the best of humanity'. The newsletter keeps parents fully informed about Catholic life with weekly contributions from the chaplain and the religious education department. The rights and dignity of workers are fully respected and the headteacher meets annually with every member of staff. The school has also invested in the Employee Assistance Programme which offers guidance and support to staff on a wide range of issues. The staff survey revealed that 100% agree / strongly agree with the statement, 'I enjoy working at this school'. Early careers teachers feel well supported and inducted into Catholic life. They feel comfortable asking for advice and help. One noted, 'I don't feel like an ECT here', while another observed, 'It doesn't feel like work, coming to this school, because there is such a good working atmosphere'.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

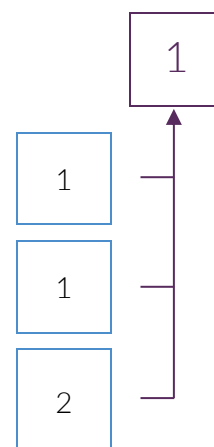
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Students at the academy meet the learning requirements of the *Religious Education Directory* but also develop an understanding of Catholic social teaching and how it relates to Ursuline values. Students at the school are developing excellent knowledge skills in religious education. GCSE results are outstanding and demonstrate the progress students make as they move through the school. Consequently, students, including disadvantaged and SEND students achieve the best possible results. Fully focused in all lessons observed, students repeatedly spoke about how they enjoyed religious education. In an excellent Year 10 revision lesson on the Jewish tradition of *pikuach nefesh* (Saving and Preserving Life), the students were fully engaged in answering sample questions and providing detailed feedback to the teacher. The atmosphere in the room made it feel more like a Year 11 revision lesson because the students treated the revision so seriously and intensely. In an impressive Year 7 lesson a student displayed her religious literacy and knowledge of Catholic social teaching when she suggested that Jesus' fasting in the desert was fulfilling the principle of solidarity and humanity. Teachers have a profound understanding of the impact of religious education on the moral development of students and their ability to meaningfully make sense of their experience of the world. This was illustrated in a Year 12 A-level lesson on St Augustine and the Fall. Clear learning had taken place prior to the lesson enabling students to answer and fully develop their opinions and explain how the teachings relate to today. This excellent practice now needs to be cascaded to the other members of the A-level team.

Students achieve well above the average attainment in religious education when compared to national, regional and diocesan results. Attainment in religious education at the academy also regularly surpasses the other core subjects at Key Stage 4. Teachers make good use of data and progress is tracked using termly assessments. At Key Stage 3 there were examples of GCSE-style questions which served to stretch students' thinking and develop their ability to produce extended answers. Effective questions were in evidence throughout the inspection. Incisive questioning enabled the teachers to expose any gaps in learning which were often filled with

the help of other students. Teachers probed deeper to get fuller responses and the slide presentations used in lessons were well planned and varied so that students' interest was continually aroused. The religious education department is generously funded and is clearly 'the core of the core'. There are three dedicated rooms with vibrant displays including exemplar student projects on topics such as the festival of Holi and British Church history.

Leaders and governors are committed to securing regular high-quality professional development. The school has adopted the Rosenshine principles for excellent teaching and learning as well as the use of metacognition to improve learning. The subject leader has a clear vision for teaching and learning and a good level of expertise to secure this vision. Enrichment activities have included a trip to a local synagogue and a visit to the Redbridge education project. However, opportunities have been missed to visit a wide range of places of worship in this very diverse locality as well as visits to local parishes. Leaders and governors evaluation of religious education is very good as evidenced by the impressive GCSE results in recent years. A-level religious studies results are above the school average but could be even better with more forensic monitoring of teaching and students' folders. This is an area for the school and the department to work on going forward.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

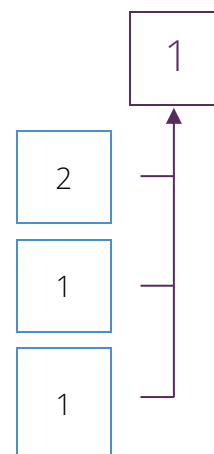
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

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



Students respond effectively to the daily opportunities for prayer. There is a reverent atmosphere and students of all faiths are respectful. They are aware that prayer is at the heart of the school and that everything the school does in relation to collective worship is invitational. The school prayer is said daily and is widely known. However, students did express interest in having a range of prayers, thoughts and reflections as well as the Ursuline prayer. There is a chaplaincy team who meet with the lay chaplain to help organise opportunities for collective worship. Their roles include being readers, servers and welcomers. A holistic approach to worship encourages students to reflect on their own faith and how it is interwoven with their learning experiences. Recently, a Year 7 form presented an assembly on the feast day of their house saint, Josephine Bakita. This should now be expanded so that every form class has the opportunity to plan, deliver and self-evaluate their presentations.

Prayer and liturgy permeate every aspect of school life at the Ursuline Academy Ilford. Form time includes the school prayer and the weekly celebration of the Word refers to the Sunday Gospel reading with links to Catholic social teaching and Ursuline values. Staff spoke with enthusiasm about the importance of prayer and worship. They feel supported in their role as form tutors. The authentic Catholic leadership of the headteacher was repeatedly highlighted in the staff and parent surveys: 'The headteacher is highly visible and prominent in her inclusive leadership of us all as a diverse and united community of faith'. The music, drama and art departments enable students to make significant contributions as their talents and gifts enhance the liturgical experiences. The school choir contributes to the carol service and Easter celebrations while the worship band leads hymn singing during weekly celebration of the Word. The Stations of the Cross displayed around the school were produced by art students and the formation of a new

faculty of Faith and Performance incorporating music and drama, led by the head of religious education, is nothing short of inspirational and will prove extremely beneficial when form classes are delivering year assemblies.

The school website contains a carefully formulated prayer and liturgy policy which is written in such a way that makes it accessible and useful to staff. Catholic leaders are skilled in presenting prayer and liturgy as well as assemblies which include prayer, Catholic social teaching and links to the half-termly Ursuline student profile. An example of good practice was a Year 11 assembly featuring the Ursuline values of 'truth and integrity' which was made relevant to our time by exploring the issues surrounding fake news and the dangers of believing everything we read on social media. The Sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation have a high profile in the school with opportunities for Reconciliation during the seasons of Advent and Lent. There is a weekly Mass every Thursday at lunchtime. Holy days of obligation and the feast of St Angela Merici are acknowledged by the whole school with the celebration of the Eucharist. Leaders, including the chaplain, have a thorough understanding of ways of praying that are part of the Catholic tradition including silent prayer, singing and meditation. Assembly evaluation forms have led to consistency in how assemblies are planned and delivered. The relevant governors attend key liturgical events and provide feedback to the rest of the governing body.

Information about the school

Full name of school	The Ursuline Academy Ilford
School unique reference number (URN)	137418
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3174605
Full postal address of the school	The Ursuline Academy Ilford, Morland Road, Ilford, IG1 4JU
School phone number	002085541995
Headteacher	Fiona Stone
Chair of governors	Ingrid Doves
School Website	www.uai.org.uk
Trusteeship	Ursulines
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	The Ursuline Academy Ilford
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Date of last denominational inspection	10 May 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Dermot O'Neill

Lead

Andrew Bull

Team

Josephine Erokwu

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