



St Alban's Catholic Voluntary Academy

URN: 146253

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Nottingham

30 September 2026 – 01 October 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

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education RE

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 diocesan directives

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

2

1

2

1

Yes

Yes

Fully

What the school does well

- Pupils are friendly and enthusiastic members of the school family who live out Gospel values through their commitment to serving others and the common good, contributing to the school's warm, inclusive and welcoming community.
- Strong partnerships between the school, parish and governors are a notable strength, enriching the school's Catholic life and mission and enabling pupils to experience faith in action, develop a strong sense of belonging and actively contributing to the wider community.
- The headteacher is an inspirational Catholic leader whose unwavering commitment to the dignity of every person fosters a highly inclusive community where pupils and staff flourish spiritually, morally and academically.
- All staff are deeply committed to the school's Catholic mission and provide a powerful witness to Catholic social teaching through their daily actions, creating a nurturing and inclusive community in which all can flourish.
- Prayer and liturgy are at the heart of school life, with pupils' joyful and uplifting singing enhancing acts of worship.

What the school needs to improve

- Confirm a consistent, whole-school approach to high-quality religious education teaching in line with the school's agreed pedagogy.
- Provide feedback in religious education lessons which consistently promotes pupils' reflection, independence and capacity for deeper theological thinking.
- Ensure pupils actively contribute to the continual evaluation and development 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

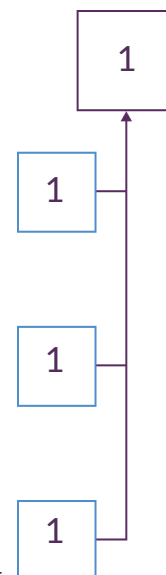
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



St Alban's is a deeply nurturing Catholic school where pupils have a strong sense of belonging, recognising their shared mission to follow in Christ's footsteps. Many pupils describe the school as 'like home' and that we are 'one big family', reflecting the highly inclusive and caring culture that permeates school life. Pupils are cheerful, respectful and compassionate, demonstrating their understanding of the school's 'virtues to learn by' and 'virtues to love by' through their relationships and daily interactions. Rooted in their understanding of human dignity, pupils show genuine respect for those of different faiths and for peers with additional needs. Pupils feel safe, valued and listened to, enabling them to flourish personally and spiritually. Catholic social teaching is increasingly embedded across the school. Through charitable fundraising and the school's impactful partnership with Cherish School in Kenya, pupils learn to put faith into action and develop a strong commitment to solidarity, justice and the common good. Pupils take great pride in their leadership roles, serving the school and parish communities with commitment. One pupil shared that, through their ministry role, they aim to 'bring a little bit of heaven to earth'.

The mission of St Alban's, 'learning, loving and living together, side by side with God', is central to every aspect of school life. Parents recognise and value the school's distinctive Catholic identity. As one parent commented, 'I am incredibly grateful for how St Alban's has helped my child grow in faith and fully embrace all aspects of Catholic life'. Staff demonstrate an unwavering commitment to the school's mission, and so pastoral care is a significant strength. The school knows its families exceptionally well and provides highly effective support, particularly for the most vulnerable, exemplified by its newly established 'enhanced resource

base' as well as providing mother and toddler sessions each week. Reflecting the views of many staff, one colleague commented: 'At St Alban's, we live out our faith; it is not just something we pay lip service to, but something that inspires all that we do'. The school environment powerfully reflects its Catholic identity and inspires all who enter. Catholic life is enriched through the dedicated work of the lay chaplain and priests of the parish. Leadership of relationships, sex and health education is strong, responsive to pupils' needs and fully aligned with diocesan expectations through the 'Life to the Full' scheme.

Governors and leaders are united in their vision for St Alban's and promote and monitor the Catholic life and mission of the school with exceptional commitment. Local governors have deep and longstanding connections to the school, enabling them to provide highly effective support and challenge. Leaders engage proactively in professional development with the diocese and the St Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi-Academy Trust, and generously share their expertise. The headteacher played a significant role in the diocesan working party to develop '*Meet in My Name*', a resource for implementing the new *Religious Education Directory*, thus demonstrating recognised leadership within Catholic education beyond her own school. Leaders, governors and the St Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi-Academy Trust work collaboratively to monitor and evaluate the impact of Catholic life and mission. Evidence is used to inform strategic planning and drive continuous improvement. Partnership between school and the parish are particularly strong. Many leaders and governors are active parishioners and work closely with clergy to nurture a strong sense of belonging and shared faith. Parents are engaged through baby and toddler sessions, invitations to celebrations of the word and through daily interactions in the playground. New staff benefit from thorough induction and formation programmes, including diocesan and trust training, enabling them to confidently embrace and actively promote the school's distinctive Catholic ethos.

Religious education

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 key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

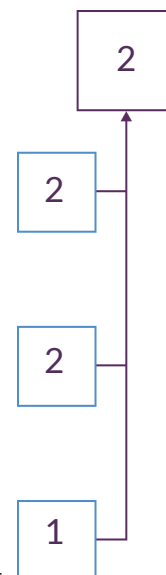
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



The new religious education curriculum is now in its second year of full implementation at St Alban's, with pupils responding positively to the increased challenge and expectations. Pupils speak enthusiastically about their learning, and they value opportunities to deepen their knowledge of God and understanding of faith. Reflecting the views of many, one pupil commented, 'Religious education lessons are the best. I like learning about God, and we get to present our work really neatly'. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, high-quality interactions, storytelling and practical experiences provide strong foundations for future learning. Across the school, pupils benefit from a rich range of learning experiences, including scripture study, religious art, discussion, reflection and extended writing, which deepen knowledge and understanding of faith. Learning is carefully planned to enable pupils to explore meaning, consider different perspectives and make moral connections to their own lives. Teachers adapt learning effectively so that pupils with SEND and those with differing starting points can access the intended curriculum while maintaining high expectations. The curriculum engages most pupils and promotes religious education. Where the school's agreed pedagogy is implemented most effectively, learning is engaging, purposeful and challenging; however, this practice is not fully consistent across all areas of provision.

As a result of effective professional development, staff have grown in confidence in delivering the religious education curriculum. The school's religious education policy provides clear expectations and guidance for planning, lesson structure, assessment and pedagogy, establishing a consistent approach to teaching and learning. Where this is implemented

effectively, teaching is purposeful, expectations are high and pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. In line with the school's agreed approach, pupils are given opportunities to respond to feedback and improve their work. In most cases, this supports progress and helps pupils to develop increasing independence as learners. However, feedback is not consistently used to deepen pupils' understanding or extend their thinking, and some pupils are unable to articulate how it has helped them improve their learning. Teaching assistants are highly valued and make a significant contribution to pupils' progress, particularly for vulnerable pupils and those with additional needs. Through targeted support, they enable pupils to access learning successfully and achieve the intended outcomes. Relationships between adults and pupils are positive and respectful, creating an environment in which pupils feel supported and challenged. Work in pupils' exercise books is consistently of a high standard and reflects the pride pupils take in their religious education lessons.

Leadership of religious education is a significant strength of the school. The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide highly effective and inspirational leadership, ensuring that religious education is at the heart of the school's Catholic mission, and enjoys full parity with other curriculum subjects. Leaders are passionate advocates for the subject and have created a curriculum that is engaging, challenging and inclusive, enabling pupils to flourish academically, spiritually and personally. Through effective monitoring, accurate self-evaluation and responsive action planning, leaders have a secure understanding of strengths and areas for development and are highly effective in driving further improvement. Staff value the extensive professional development and support they receive and speak positively about the culture of collaboration and learning. Consequently, teachers are increasingly confident and skilled in delivering the curriculum, contributing to positive outcomes for pupils. Governors share the school's vision and demonstrate a strong commitment to promoting excellence in religious education. They provide both effective support and appropriate challenge, ensuring that standards remain a priority. Governors are actively involved in monitoring and evaluating provision and outcomes through visits, discussions and scrutiny of information. As a result, religious education continues to thrive and make a substantial contribution to pupils' formation and achievement.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

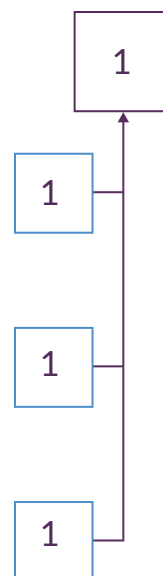
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

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



Prayer and liturgy are at the heart of the 'St Alban's Way' and permeate the daily life of the school. Pupils speak with confidence and enthusiasm about the importance of prayer and worship in their lives. During a celebration of the word led by Year 6, pupils enter reverently, listen attentively and participate fully, with their joyful singing making a significant contribution to the prayerful atmosphere. Celebrations of the word are carefully planned to be highly inclusive, ensuring that all pupils can engage meaningfully. The effective use of visual prompts, Makaton, drama and other interactive approaches enables every pupil to participate confidently and respond thoughtfully. Consequently, pupils and families feel valued, included and empowered within a welcoming, worshipping community. Pupils understand that prayer is a conversation with God and confidently articulate its different purposes, including praise, thanksgiving, forgiveness and intercession. They demonstrate a secure understanding of the liturgical year. Pupils have benefited from experiences such as Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the introduction of visio divina which have deepened their spiritual understanding. There is now an opportunity to further broaden the range of contemplative as well as spontaneous prayer experiences, enabling pupils to encounter God in diverse and creative ways while enriching spiritual development.

Prayer is central to the daily rhythm of school life and is fully inclusive. The lay chaplain and prayer and liturgy leader play a pivotal role in developing the confidence and competence of both pupils and staff in planning, preparing and leading prayer. As a result, pupils willingly and enthusiastically contribute to worship, demonstrating increasing independence. Parents affirm the impact of this strong prayer culture, commenting that their children remind family

members to pray at bedtime and confidently teach prayers to younger siblings. Through carefully planned support and coaching, pupils become skilled leaders of prayer, confidently selecting scripture, symbols, music and opportunities for reflection that deepen their peers' understanding of faith. The school makes excellent use of its environment to nurture a rich culture of prayer. Dedicated indoor and outdoor prayer spaces provide meaningful opportunities for both spontaneous reflection and planned acts of worship. These experiences enable pupils to develop a personal relationship with God and a strong sense of belonging to the faith community. Strong links with the parish further enrich pupils' spiritual development. As one parent commented, 'Being at Mass and hearing the children read and sing is a joy; it was something I particularly missed during Covid'.

Leaders and governors are committed to ensuring that prayer and liturgy are central to the life and mission of the school. Working closely with the parish, they ensure worship is meaningful, reflective and firmly rooted in Catholic tradition, a commitment reflected in the carefully planned annual programme of provision. The prayer and liturgy leader has established a clear, progressive and inclusive pathway for pupils' spiritual development that is fully embraced by staff. As a result, pupils grow in confidence, knowledge and independence in prayer and worship as they move through the school. Prayer is a particular strength in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where skilled practitioners model reverence and joyful participation, enabling children to engage confidently and enthusiastically. Leaders ensure all staff receive diocesan and school-based training, creating a shared understanding of the importance of prayer and liturgy. Staff new to the school particularly value this training. Leaders and governors actively support the parish community through sacramental preparation, children's liturgy and being extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist. Governors provide effective challenge and support through regular monitoring visits. As a result, parents have high confidence in the school's leadership which is reflected in comments such as, 'I wouldn't trade this school for any other'.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Alban's Catholic Voluntary Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	146253
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8313543
Full postal address of the school	Newstead Avenue, Chaddesden, Derby, DE21 6NU
School phone number	01332 673823
Headteacher or Head of School	Tammie McNamara
Chair of Governors	Stuart Olivier
School Website	www.stalbansderby.srscmat.co.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Ralph Sherwin CMAT
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non Selective
Age-range of pupils	3 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	29 January 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The Inspection Team

Angela Mary Phillips Lead

Lucy Gunton

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