

Upton Hall School FCJ

URN: 137929

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Shrewsbury

15–16 May 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

- The school allocates the correct amount of time to religious education including in the sixth form.
- The school delivers personal, social, health and economic education through a Catholic lens using appropriately adapted resources.
- All areas for improvement from the last inspection have been addressed fully.

What the school does well

- The school's charism, mission, and ethos are deeply embedded in every aspect of school life.
- In response to high quality prayer and liturgy, students clearly articulate how scripture, theology, and charism impact on how they live their lives.
- The academically rigorous teaching in religious education means students make excellent progress whilst thoroughly enjoying their learning.
- The Catholic curriculum is evident in every subject area so that students connect ethical, moral, and spiritual aspects of learning with real-world issues.
- The unwavering commitment and passion of staff contributes significantly to the personal formation of students in a culture of trust and joy.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure the policy for prayer and liturgy fully aligns with practice. This should be supported by staff training for weekly prayer
- Develop a formal skill strategy which ensures differentiated prayer and liturgy to engage all students.
- Develop and implement a strategy to ensure that marking and assessment are consistent across all religious education teachers.

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

1

Provision

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

1

Leadership

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

1

1

Upton Hall is a joyful Catholic community: the school's ethos, and the values of the Faithful Companions of Jesus (FCJ) are celebrated, embraced and lived in every aspect of life. Upton Hall is forming young women to have the skills, knowledge, compassion and faith to make the world a better place. Students are confident Catholic leaders with a 'zest for life', playing an active role in living the mission of the school. Year 12 student leaders give rich, authentic testimony about how the FCJ values permeate all aspects of school life and beyond: 'We don't switch them off when we leave the school'. Student leaders visibly promote and live Catholic ethos and charisma across prayer, formation and outreach. Students respond to the demands of Catholic social teaching through a range of activities which include: raising significant funds for FCJ projects in the Philippines in addition to a global charity in Kenya; support of local charities including a neonatal unit and foodbank; visiting care homes and Amnesty letters; the 'Too Good To Go' project, and a St Vincent de Paul group. Students' lived faith is seen through their daily interactions and behaviours: They can articulate why this is, 'because we follow Jesus's example.' Students greatly value the chaplain, engaging enthusiastically in initiatives she has introduced.

Upton Hall's mission is clear, lived, and based on the word of God. Staff fully embrace and live out the school's values in a spirit of service: 'I am very proud to be part of this school, and I believe we are giving our girls the best possible foundation for a meaningful life.' The strength of community is tangible. There is a strong culture of inclusion and belonging with behaviour management rooted in Gospel values and a personalised approach to pastoral care. Students and staff are well supported by the chaplain and she is supported by a staff chaplaincy team, student chaplaincy leaders and senior leaders. Students and staff appreciate that the school's

environment reflects their own value and the value of creation. Relationships, sex, and health education complies fully with diocesan requirements.

Leaders, including governors, ensure mission and charism are deeply embedded throughout school life; Christ is truly at the heart of this school. Leaders are well supported, participating fully with both the diocese and the FCJ who are very influential in the development and formation of students and staff. Links with parishes are extremely strong: students attend weekly Mass at St Joseph's; several priests support the school, including through providing an opportunity for Reconciliation; local clergy support the Year 7 Mass of Welcome and the Mass for Year 13 Leavers. Parents are regularly invited to join their children for Mass as well as other key events in school including parental drop-ins twice a year. Parents appreciate the school, 'It is an example of a great school, with great partnership with parents and the community.' Catholic social teaching is embedded in every curriculum across the school including: the preferential option for the poor in *Jane Eyre* in English; social justice through fair trade data in maths; and stewardship of creation through the study of malaria in science. Staff speak warmly of an open-door leadership culture, responsive chaplaincy support, thoughtful gestures such as 'kindness buddies' and regular staffroom treats. Formation opportunities, professional trust, and shared spiritual practices contribute to a working environment where staff feel cared for personally and professionally. Professional development of staff, especially new staff, is enhanced by opportunities from the FCJ. Leaders and governors systematically evaluate all aspects of school life and students have a prominent role in this. Upton Hall demonstrates a clear, lived, moral and spiritual vision shaping the whole community's desire to serve the common good.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

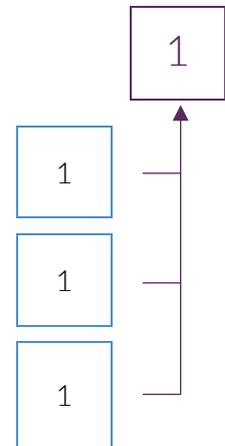
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 of all ages, including in sixth form, enjoy and value religious education. They enjoy being able to debate and share opinions, learn about other faiths and ‘gain a better understanding of our own religion.’ They make excellent progress across all year groups and achieve outstanding results. In formal examinations, Upton Hall students perform well above national levels. Students achieve as well in religious education as they do in other core subjects. Students’ religious literacy is excellent, and they confidently articulate their learning and its impact on their lives and values. They accurately and confidently use philosophical and theological vocabulary. Behaviour, engagement, and concentration in lessons is exemplary. Students think for themselves, work independently and with resilience. Students explain clearly what progress they are making and understand what they need to do to improve their work. Students’ work shows progress, curriculum coverage and pride in their work; the work of students with special educational needs is the same as all other students. There are, however, some minor inconsistencies in the quality of written feedback. In lessons, students demonstrate a thirst for knowledge, independence, and commitment to their own progress.

Teaching is academically robust, theologically confident, and inclusive of all learners including those with special educational needs. Teachers have extremely high expectations which students meet. Teachers are committed to their students. This is reflected in careful planning which successfully builds on assessment and a detailed knowledge of the level at which students are working. Teachers’ authentic subject knowledge is a strength, matched by their passion for religious education and expertise in communicating that knowledge; this is why students respond so positively. Students’ efforts are constantly praised as part of detailed feedback. Teachers’ deep understanding of the impact of religious education on the spiritual and moral development of their students is evident. That impact is shown through students’ responses. In

lessons, teachers' consistent use of incisive questioning pushes students to think more deeply, giving them time to consider their answers and to reflect on their learning. Students are encouraged to respond in a variety of ways: through discussion; reflection; paired work; extended writing; and analysis of texts.

Leadership of religious education is strategic and inspiring. Subject leaders are experts in their subject, in curriculum design and in pedagogy. Senior leaders and governors have ensured that religious education is the core of the core curriculum: it is properly resourced to the same level as other core subjects including for professional development and is subject to the same level of monitoring and challenge. Leaders have ensured that the *Religious Education Directory* is being thoughtfully and progressively embedded and explicitly mapped across the curriculum. The curriculum is carefully designed and sequenced and meets the needs of all learners; teachers are successfully implementing the school's 'Disadvantaged First' policy. The curriculum offers rich, creative opportunities through art, storytelling and reflection which encourage both personal growth and analytical depth. The curriculum systematically builds knowledge and skills in a challenging, yet enjoyable and engaging way. The development of the innovative and engaging sixth-form religious education curriculum benefits from student input: students greatly value this aspect of their education. The religious education link governor has a detailed knowledge of the curriculum and student outcomes and regularly supports and challenges the subject leader. Religious education at Upton Hall is not just a core subject; it is valued, loved, and impacts on the lives of 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

1

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

2

1

Students engage deeply with prayer and liturgy. They are respectful and prayerful. Students write frequently used class prayers. Form groups undertake ministries of reading, greeting and music, writing bidding prayers and the offertory procession for weekly Mass at St Joseph's. Their behaviour and reverence are exemplary. Meaningful prayer takes place at the start of formal examinations. Students understand how prayer and liturgy align with the liturgical year and describe how this influences prayer and liturgy in school. The involvement of the student council and the ethos representatives in evaluating prayer and liturgy shows the impact of their work with the lay chaplain through the prayer wall in the chapel. Students of all ages articulate the range of prayer activities they engage with and how this influences how they think about themselves, their school and the world. They are very clear about how their prayer life influences their actions, behaviours and informs their contributions to the Catholic life of the school. Students appreciate and value the sacraments including Eucharist, Reconciliation and Confirmation. The head girl's team regularly leads and contributes to prayer.

Prayer is central to the life of this school: class prayers are said twice a day; celebrations of the word happen weekly; and all students attend Friday morning Mass at St Joseph's on a rota across the year. Students experience a rich variety of prayer opportunities including 'rosary walks,' remembrance services in the peace garden, Stations of the Cross, themed liturgical seasons, and cross-curricular links including *Laudato Si* in biology and 'earth prayers' in geography. Scripture is central to prayer but there is not always opportunity to reflect on its meaning. Staff pray together regularly and are visible and inspiring role models in supporting students in the practice of their faith. Staff are highly skilled in supporting students' prayer life. School choirs regularly enhance liturgy, and each year group has a small instrumental ensemble to support communal singing. Stations of the Cross prayers are said in different languages. Upton Hall is blessed with

excellent facilities for prayer including the chapel, peace garden, orchard, and prayer stations. The chapel is particularly well used and accessible to all during break and lunchtime. Links with families and parishes are excellent: parish priests support the prayer and liturgical life of the school and parents are regularly invited to school liturgies and attend in significant numbers. Parents say they value this, especially the annual school Mass at the cathedral.

The school has a carefully formulated and accessible prayer and liturgy policy, but it is not always followed consistently in delivering celebrations of the word. However, leaders are highly skilled and show considerable impact in other aspects of prayer and liturgy. The school's liturgical calendar is carefully planned so that all members of the community have opportunities to fully engage with all aspects of the faith. Leaders and key staff know the students well and plan liturgy which is appropriate and accessible, however there is not a clear strategy for this. Staff benefit from extensive, regular and inspirational training and support in delivering prayer and liturgy as part of the school's staff training schedule, informally from the chaplain and senior leaders, and from the network of FCJ schools. Leaders, including governors and the FCJ, ensure that the highest priority is given to prayer and liturgy, and this is seen through the passion and commitment of students and staff in engaging and shaping it. Governors systematically review the quality and impact of prayer and liturgy, ensuring its priority. Prayer and liturgy are a natural and inclusive part of the school's culture, practice, and procedures.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Upton Hall School FCJ
School unique reference number (URN)	137929
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3445901
Full postal address of the school	Upton Hall School FCJ, Upton, Wirral, CH49 6LJ
School phone number	01516777696
Headteacher	Andrea Gaunt
Chair of governors	Patricia Young
School Website	http://www.uptonhallschool.co.uk/
Trusteeship	Faithful Companions of Jesus
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Upton Hall School FCJ
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Selective
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Date of last denominational inspection	14 March 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Ivan Gaughan	Lead
Rebecca Geoghegan	Team
Andrea O'Callaghan	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