

Our Lady's RC High School

Address: Alworth Road, M9 0RP

Unique reference number (URN): 105576

Inspection report: 11 November 2025

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Achievement

Strong standard ●

Pupils achieve very well across the curriculum. Over time, pupils' progress in national examinations has been above average in many areas. This positive picture of pupils' progress is consistently evident across a number of subjects and groups of pupils. It reflects the highest aspirations that leaders and staff have for all pupils.

Disadvantaged pupils achieve particularly well. In recent years, their outcomes have been consistently above the national average. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well from their starting points. Leaders ensure that these pupils, and other vulnerable pupils, receive the support that they need to achieve their full potential.

Pupils recall their learning well and produce work of high quality. They develop detailed knowledge across subjects and are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education. Almost all pupils move on to appropriate education, employment or training that matches their interests and abilities.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders promote the importance of high attendance consistently well. They have established systems of support that enable them to help pupils and families when attendance needs to improve. The attendance team works closely with the designated safeguarding leads to ensure that vulnerable pupils receive the support they need. Leaders' analysis of attendance data is forensic, and they respond swiftly to pupils' changing circumstances. As a result, attendance rates are high and persistent absence is low.

Leaders have established a culture where pupils flourish. Clear routines and high expectations are understood and embedded. Staff model positive behaviour consistently, and pupils respond with respect and self-discipline. Pupils learn how to manage their own emotions and how to resolve conflict with others. As a result, bullying is rare. Pupils show dedication to their learning and rarely need reminders about their behaviour.

Leaders provide proactive support for pupils who need help to improve their behaviour. External interventions, including boxing and meditation, are effective. Pupils who have accessed short-term off-site direction return successfully to school with appropriate support in place. Leaders maintain a clear focus on analysing patterns in behaviour data to inform their actions, which are routinely in pupils' best interests.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

Leaders have a clear and detailed understanding of the curriculum. They have designed a curriculum that prioritises the development of foundational skills and knowledge across all subjects. Leaders build flexibility into their planning to ensure that staff have the time to revisit important concepts when pupils need this.

Leaders give careful thought to the training that they provide to staff so that all pupils access ambitious learning with success. Leaders have established a thorough programme of quality assurance that ensures that classroom teaching and intervention programmes prepare pupils extremely well for each stage of their education.

Teachers use their subject expertise to design activities that help pupils to make sense of difficult concepts. Across the school, teachers use assessment strategies effectively to ensure that pupils gain a deep knowledge of the subjects that they study. Positive relationships and clear routines create an atmosphere in lessons that helps pupils to learn well.

Leaders maintain a sharp focus on any gaps in pupils' knowledge. Highly trained staff provide pupils with the teaching that they need to close any gaps that they may have and to secure the language, communication and mathematical foundations that they need to achieve very well.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

The school identifies pupils' needs swiftly and accurately. Leaders oversee a rigorous system for assessing pupils' needs. Staff receive detailed information about the needs of pupils who may be vulnerable. Leaders provide staff with targeted professional training that ensures that staff have the expertise to meet pupils' diverse needs effectively.

Leaders work closely with external agencies, including to support those pupils that may be in care and children in need. Regular reviews ensure support remains appropriate and impactful. Support staff provide highly effective targeted assistance in classrooms, with clear strategies in place to encourage vulnerable pupils to become independent young people.

The school's pupil premium strategy is implemented with rigour. Leaders hold high expectations for all pupils. Leaders' focus on securing pupils' foundational skills and knowledge reflects their strong moral purpose. Staff monitor and assess the impact of support very well, and they use this information to inform their decisions that are routinely in the best interests of pupils.

Leaders make appropriate use of alternative provision. Systems and structures for tracking these pupils ensure they continue to make progress and remain safe.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders use their detailed and insightful analysis of the school's performance to evaluate the effectiveness of their provision. They accurately identify, monitor and act on priorities for improvement. This has led to consistently high standards across most areas of the school's work.

Those responsible for governance carry out their statutory duties effectively. They have a clear understanding of the school's performance and provide appropriate support and challenge to leaders. Governors hold leaders to account for the quality of education that pupils receive and for the impact of resources, including the use of pupil premium funding.

Leaders ensure that decisions are routinely made in the best interests of pupils. They pay particular attention to the needs of disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those known or previously known to children's social care, and those who face other barriers to their learning.

Leaders have established a high-quality professional learning programme that builds staff expertise effectively. The programme is evidence-informed, sustained and coherent. Teachers at all stages of their careers are supported very well, and many are retained by the school, progressing to take on middle leadership roles.

Staff feel valued and involved in the strategic direction of the school. Leaders provide meaningful opportunities for staff to share their perspectives and to contribute to decision-making. Staff appreciate the care that leaders take to manage their workload and wellbeing. Leaders have built flexibility into their systems, including adjustments to the timing of professional development sessions, which staff report has made a positive difference to their work-life balance.

Personal development and well-being

Strong standard ●

Leaders have designed a personal development programme that is carefully tailored to the school's context. Pupils develop secure and detailed knowledge across the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, relationships and sex education (RSE) programme and citizenship curriculums. Teachers identify and address gaps in pupils' PSHE and RSE knowledge effectively.

The enrichment programme is extensive and thoughtfully designed. A Year 7 residential trip helps all pupils to develop independence, confidence and resilience soon after joining the school. Leaders maintain a sensitive approach to identifying barriers to participation and ensure that these are reduced or removed. As a result, pupils benefit from the school's wide offer.

Pupils benefit from meaningful leadership opportunities. The student council works collaboratively with school leaders to shape the school environment. Pupils develop a strong sense of community spirit through activities such as organising tournaments for younger year groups.

The school celebrates diversity through language and culture days, where pupils share information about their own cultural heritage. Pupils develop a deep understanding of fundamental British values and show respect for protected characteristics. Pupils behave with integrity and cooperate consistently well with others.

Leaders and staff understand their pupils deeply and provide highly effective pastoral support. They anticipate and identify which individuals or groups might need additional help and ensure that this is put in place so that pupils succeed.

Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to learn about their options for education, employment and training. The school engages well with employers in the local area, and former pupils return to share their experiences through a legacies programme. This helps

current pupils to visualise themselves in these roles and raises their aspirations. Pupils are very well prepared for life beyond school.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils are happy and proud to be part of this school. They know that leaders have high expectations of them, and they rise to meet these. Pupils feel a strong sense of belonging, which is evident in the positive relationships they have with staff and with each other. Many pupils who previously experienced difficulties in education, now thrive at this school because they feel welcome and free to be themselves.

Pupils achieve very well. They enjoy their learning and engage positively in lessons. Teachers help pupils to understand difficult concepts, and pupils produce work of high quality. Typically, over time, outcomes in national examinations have been above average. Disadvantaged pupils achieve particularly well, and almost all pupils progress to appropriate education, employment or training.

Pupils benefit from a rich and extensive personal development programme. They take on meaningful leadership roles and contribute to their community through activities such as organising tournaments for younger pupils. The broad range of experiences that the school offers helps pupils to develop independence, confidence and resilience. Pupils celebrate diversity and develop a deep understanding of fundamental British values.

The school is a calm and orderly environment where pupils show respect and self-discipline. Pupils' attendance is high, and they are punctual to lessons. They learn how to manage their own emotions and how to resolve conflict with others. Pupils feel safe and know that staff will deal with any concerns swiftly and effectively.

Vulnerable pupils receive highly effective support. Staff have a deep understanding of pupils' needs and identify barriers to their learning, which are then reduced or removed. Pupils benefit significantly from being at a school where leaders make decisions that are routinely in their best interests.

Next steps

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should sustain the effectiveness of their work in all areas. They should seek continued improvement, overcoming barriers and challenges, in order to drive a transformational impact for all pupils. This includes disadvantaged pupils, who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or wellbeing.

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Michael Campbell.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, senior leaders, members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and a representative from the diocese and from the local authority.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character. The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place in October 2023.

The school makes use of two alternative provisions, including one that is unregistered.

Headteacher: Lee Ormsby

Lead inspector:

Andy Cunningham, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Amanda Downing, His Majesty's Inspector

Rebecca Sharples, His Majesty's Inspector

Sally Rix, His Majesty's Inspector

Jenny Jones, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 11 November 2025

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,050

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

900

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,152

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

44.57%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

4.86%

Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) support

11.71%
Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Well above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25	45.9%	45.2%	Close to average
2023/24	46.0%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23	45.4%	45.3%	Close to average

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25	49.1	45.9	Close to average
2023/24	48.6	45.9	Close to average
2022/23	49.9	46.3	Close to average

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	0.33	-0.03	Above
2022/23	0.35	-0.03	Above
2021/22	0.07	-0.03	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25	36.3%	25.6%	Above
2023/24	40.9%	25.8%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23	35.1%	25.2%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25	46.7	34.9	Above
2023/24	45.9	34.6	Above
2022/23	44.5	35.0	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	0.04	-0.57	Above
2022/23	-0.17	-0.57	Above
2021/22	0.01	-0.55	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25	36.3%	52.8%	-16.6 pp
2023/24	40.9%	53.1%	-12.2 pp
2022/23	35.1%	52.4%	-17.3 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25	46.7	50.3	-3.6
2023/24	45.9	50.0	-4.2
2022/23	44.5	50.3	-5.8

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24	0.04	0.16	-0.12
2022/23	-0.17	0.17	-0.34
2021/22	0.01	0.15	-0.15

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022 leavers	94%	93%	Average
2021 leavers	91%	94%	Average
2020 leavers	92%	94%	Average

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (1 term)	4.0%	7.7%	Below
2023/24	4.9%	8.9%	Below
2022/23	4.7%	9.0%	Below

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (1 term)	10.7%	21.1%	Below
2023/24	10.7%	25.6%	Below
2022/23	10.7%	26.5%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standards expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standards set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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