



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Bede's Catholic High School, Lytham

URN: 119788

Carried out on behalf of the Right Rev. Paul Swarbrick, Bishop of Lancaster on:

Date: 9-10 March 2023

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....

2

Catholic life and mission (p.2)

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.4)

The quality of curriculum religious education.....

1

Collective worship (p.6)

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

2

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

✓

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

✓

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

Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- The Catholic ethos of the school pervades all it does, with a culture of faith, hope and love.
- Religious education is of the highest quality, leading to exceptional outcomes for students.
- Retreat and sacramental provision engages a significant number of students, and has been developed in ways that open it to all.

What the school needs to improve:

- Involve students more in reviewing Catholic life and mission, and the mission statement.
- Help students link Catholic Social Teaching with their efforts to help other people.
- Bring students into the planning and leadership of retreat days and assemblies.

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:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

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

2

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

At St Bede's Catholic High School, students clearly feel part of a community where they are valued as unique individuals. Inspection found that they readily bear witness to the ways in which they are supported and cared for by senior leaders, the whole staff team, and each other. They appreciate the distinctive Catholic nature of their school, speak warmly of it, and value being part of the St Bede's family. This sense of belonging has an impact on their confidence and aspirations. Both students and parents are able to talk about specific ways in which the ethos and commitment of the school has resulted in personal and spiritual growth.

The school's mission statement and the idea of 'Being a Bede' are centred on Gospel values, particularly those emerging from the Beatitudes. This helps focus students on imitating St Bede in daily life, through study, kindness, and commitment. (It was encouraging to hear younger students speak of the saint as an inspiring example, as a result of details of his life being shared with them during induction.) This positive attitude extends to wider community engagement, through proposing, supporting, and being involved with charities, singing in local care homes, and bringing the love of Christ home to their families in practical ways. Students now need to become more involved in the review of St Bede's mission statement and the Catholic life in order that they can further contribute to this. In religious education, students are already helped to link this practical love with Catholic Social Teaching. This needs to be further developed so that students understand the church's teaching more fully. Staff strongly support and enthusiastically contribute to the mission. This is evident in the powerful sense of welcome that visitors, new staff, students, and parents experience, and the clear value placed on each person.

Vulnerable students and those from other backgrounds and cultures speak highly of the attention given to their needs. Personal testimony from students underlines the effectiveness of the well-

organised and well-resourced pastoral care team. Excellent relationships with outside agencies and parents promote progress, with a particular care for those who have suffered disadvantage. The school site is also well-maintained, cared for and marked by a high quality of Catholic signs and symbols, effectively arranged. This helps to create a sense of value and worth among students. The school is fortunate to have a fine stone statue of St Bede near the main entrance, where flowers can be placed on special days.

There is a well-planned chaplaincy programme, supported by senior leaders, in which both the priest and lay chaplains, as well as the religious education team, play important roles. The school enjoys generous commitment from the priest chaplain, whose sacramental ministry is highly valued by students. This commitment extends also to the support and further formation of the lay chaplain and head of religious education, leading to a coherent and varied chaplaincy offer. All students now benefit from day retreats, a recent innovation, which have greatly extended access to spiritual reflection. Similarly, an annual professional development day has been introduced for staff to deepen understanding of the school's Catholic ethos. This is in addition to other input throughout the year. It was pleasing to witness staff at different stages of their careers and with varied levels of experience being supported to lead assemblies effectively. The head teacher leads by example in this area.

Leaders and governors give the highest priority to the Catholic ethos of the school, resourcing it well. The head teacher and governors ensure policies in this area are central, regularly reviewed, and result in practical outcomes such as strong pastoral care and professional development. They also take a strong interest in the mission being reflected across each curriculum area, presenting a coherent and Catholic vision. Recent work by the head of religious education with curriculum leaders, signposting Gospel values across subjects, has been particularly valuable in this regard. The school's self evaluation of its Catholic life is consistently honest and perceptive.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....	1
Pupil outcomes How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....	1
Provision The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....	1
Leadership How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....	1

Leaders and managers, by wise appointments and mentoring, have facilitated a considerable transformation in the standard of religious education compared with the last inspection. The level of student knowledge, understanding and skills in the subject is very advanced, with students using complex religious language fluently and confidently. Indeed, religious literacy is of a high level across the range of theological, ethical, and spiritual topics, and highly effective questioning reinforces this. Every lesson begins with a '12 box' starter activity which promotes recall of prior knowledge. This is highly valued by the students and leads genuine continuity in teaching and learning. The department's academic results are consequently exceptional, bearing witness to thorough planning and the high degree of subject and teaching expertise among staff. Indeed, the results in religious education compare very favourably with those of the highest-achieving areas. Pupil work is organised and generally of a very good standard. Even small matters – such as the labelling of books – personalise and assist learning, and link it to the Word of God, with QR codes and excellent class materials to facilitate learning. The atmosphere in all classes is one of concentration and engagement, with students readily testifying to their enjoyment of the subject. Self assessment is constant in the way workbooks are used for knowledge retrieval, and homework is marked with guidance on areas to improve, techniques and approaches to use, and advice on spelling, grammar, and expression.

Ambition and expectation for the students are high across all phases – with complex theological concepts and language being introduced from Year 7. The *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* is faithfully adhered to and very well delivered, and the GCSE is well taught in Years 10 and 11, with a creative laying of the foundations in Year 9 – developing theological knowledge throughout students' time in the school. This reflects the expertise of staff. Students are highly motivated and strive to exceed expectations. Students are aware of where they are now and practical things they

need to do to improve. Lunchtime clubs and Sunday zooms bear witness to the remarkable commitment of staff and students alike. Such commitment has led to very high levels of success – both academically and in terms of student enjoyment and engagement.

The religious education team regularly turn to the chaplain who is a priest for expert advice on catechetical, spiritual, and liturgical matters. The subject leader is an inspiring and totally committed member of the school's wider leadership, who (in addition to ensuring lessons of the highest quality) promotes chaplaincy and spiritual life. She models excellence for her team, and experienced and new colleagues alike display the same passion. Good practice in the department is such that it could be shared with schools within and beyond the cluster.

Staff, parents and students themselves can readily tell the story of individuals whose lives have been deepened and changed by their encounter with religious education and chaplaincy. Students who have experienced great challenges particularly attest to this.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

2

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

2

Prayer and liturgy are evident in many aspects of school life, and their profile has been greatly enhanced in recent years. Assemblies and retreat days engage the students with well-planned reflection. It is commendable, however, that these are presented with expert student help on the technical side, as well as with musical students offering their distinctive contribution. (The work of the head of music with the Music Form is a particular example of good practice.) Students are given an opportunity to experience something of the riches and variety of Catholic life and culture. For example, a recording of Allegri's *Miserere* began an assembly which concluded with a well-sung hymn.

Students have experience of variety in worship, including prayer, liturgy, singing, reflection, presentations, and meditations. All have the opportunity to attend Mass on key occasions, and there are more frequent voluntary opportunities, linked closely to the celebration of the liturgical year, with careful preparation and well-instructed involvement. The uptake of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is particularly notable: this is a testimony to the chaplaincy and religious education teams and to the approachability and dedication of the priest chaplain. As in religious education, creativity and student artwork or music are encouraged and invited. During prayer group meetings in the chapel, led by the lay chaplain, younger students in particular are encouraged and helped to develop their prayer lives and reflect on how their faith affects their actions. Support is similarly given to tutors, with daily prayer materials for every session linking with the weekly assemblies for each year group. All of these are rooted in the Gospel readings of the week or season, and the appropriate points of the liturgical year. Prayer is also a feature of all meetings with students, staff and parents.

In addition to the retreat days for all students, significant numbers also enjoy residential experiences, such as the Castlerigg retreat. Students returning from Castlerigg during the

inspection were able to give immediate and enthusiastic feedback on how they had benefited. The presence of the Blessed Sacrament in the school chapel is appreciated by staff and students, and Exposition is a regular practice. The chapel itself is beautiful, cared for, well-suited to the Liturgy, and adaptable for more informal occasions. Well-chosen art work, particularly the stained glass, enriches the space. The religious education team supports the chaplaincy in developing the spiritual life of the students and the school, both in lessons and in cross-school activities in which the department plays a leading role. Other staff, too, are encouraged and supported to get involved.

Leaders and governors are deeply appreciative of these developing opportunities for young people to explore the role of worship and liturgy in their Catholic lives. They resource them well, and give encouragement. However there is room for more student leadership and involvement in the planning and execution of assemblies and delivery of liturgies.

Overall, leaders, staff and students at St Bede's demonstrate a strong sense of being a part of the Body of Christ and work hard to ensure that their school continues to move forward in its Catholic mission.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Bede's Catholic High School
School unique reference number (URN)	119788
Full postal address of the school	Talbot Road, Lytham St Annes, FY8 4JL
School phone number	01253 737174
Name of head teacher or principal	Paul Marsden
Chair of governing board	Ian Gili-Ross
School Website	www.stbedeslytham.lancs.sch.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Click or tap here to enter text.
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	11-16
Trustees	Lancaster Roman Catholic Diocesan Trustees Registered
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	June 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	1 - Outstanding

The inspection team

Dr Daveth Frost	Lead inspector
Philip Allan	Team inspector
Michael Hughes	Team inspector
Name of inspector	Lead/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