



## INSPECTION REPORT

School: Thornleigh Salesian College  
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URN: 105264

Headteacher: Mrs A. Burrowes  
Chair of Governors: Mr J. Corrigan

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Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Salford  
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education  
Act 2005

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Date of inspection: October 2011  
Date of previous inspection: November 2008  
Reporting Inspectors: Mr A. Slade & Mrs T. Dervin

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades
Overall effectiveness of the school	1	1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3 = Satisfactory 4 = Inadequate
Capacity for sustained improvement	1	
Overall pupils' outcomes	1	
Leadership and management	1	
Effective provision for Catholic education	2	

### **Information about the school**

Thornleigh Salesian College is an 11-18 voluntary aided Roman Catholic co-educational comprehensive school under the trusteeship of the Salesians of Don Bosco and maintained by the Bolton Local Education Authority. It is also designated as a Sports College. It provides education for pupils living in the seven associated parishes of Holy Infants, St. Brendan, St. Columba, St. John, St. Joseph, St. Osmund and St. Andrew (BRIGHTMET) and St. Thomas of Canterbury. Post-16 education is provided for Catholic students from throughout the Bolton Local Authority. Learners come from a broad spectrum of socio-economic backgrounds but with a significant number from the Bolton North East ward which has significant socio-economic deprivation. The admission number is 230. There are 1504 learners on roll of whom 81.5% are baptised Roman Catholics. The proportion of learners who qualify for free school meals is at the national average as is the proportion of those identified as having special educational needs. However, the number with a statutory statement of special educational need is higher than normal. The proportion of Catholic teachers in the school is 51.4%.

### **Overall effectiveness**

#### **Grade 1**

Thornleigh College is an outstanding Catholic school. It has very many strengths, but outstanding ones include

- the quality of self-awareness along with an appreciation and provision of the means to make improvements.;
- effective leadership and management of the school as a living catholic institution, including the quality of collective worship;
- committed leadership and management for the provision and delivery of quality religious education.

This is furthered by the very good behaviour of the pupils. .

### **Capacity for sustained improvement**

#### **Grade 1**

Since the last Religious Education inspection in November 2008, the two main recommendations have been acted upon. These related to the improvement of achievement by boys and the development of the Bolton Catholic Education Partnership.

The school's Mission Statement is an under-pinning driving force in all aspects of the policies and life of the school. At the school entrance, there is a poster, "Fairness and Equality". This is no empty statement because these qualities inform the school's formal policies. The Mission Statement is developed further by wide-reaching aims which are based on a true Christian understanding of education.

The quality of self-evaluation is outstanding, based on an accurate and comprehensive awareness of what is happening and, using on this awareness, a shrewd provision of ideas and actions for the betterment of pupils, academically and spiritually. The school's Development Plan gives due priority to its Catholic nature. Policies on issues such as sex and relationship education are firmly embedded in line with catholic teaching.

### **What the school needs to do to improve further.**

Continue to develop and implement strategies, already in operation, relating to:

- consistent achievement and attainment at GCSE level ;
- ensuring that Key Stage 3 assessment data informs accurate levels of attainment;
- the inclusion of all stakeholders in the development of the school's spiritual ethos.

## **How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups.**

### **Grade 1**

The extent that pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. They have a strong sense of values and have the confidence to express their own viewpoints, whilst at the same being able to explain their understanding of the school's distinctive Catholic nature. Pupils treat each other with high levels of respect. Those from other faith communities and pupils who have particular needs or disabilities are thoroughly integrated into the school community.

The school's wide ranging model for chaplaincy links working with care, guidance and support, senior leadership and the Religious Education teams. It has an immense, positive impact on the spiritual, moral and academic development of the pupils. Pupils express their own views and beliefs with confidence in and out of lessons. Pupils also respond well to the strong sense of community which is engendered by engaging with and responding positively to a wide range of charitable activity. They are proactive in taking responsibility for fundraising and appreciate being able to select their individual form good causes. They are generous in their support for those less fortunate and suffering from the effect of global disasters e.g. support for CAFOD, Fairtrade, St Joseph's Penny with concerts by the schools' bands. A recent staff and pupil visit to a school in Tanzania in East Africa provided funds for a primary and secondary school and local clinic.

Pupils of all ages take responsibility for themselves and their actions, demonstrating mutual respect, which results in a calm, harmonious and safe environment. They are justifiably proud of their chapel, showing respect when attending liturgies. They act with reverence and respect, keen to participate in prayer life. They engage in singing at all major liturgical feasts and join in traditional prayers with confidence.

In Religious Education, the majority of pupils make good progress based on the challenging targets set. At KS5 students achieve well with 67% of year 11 pupils staying on in the sixth form. The school is well aware of a small cohort at KS4 who do not always achieve their targets, and has strategies in place to deal with this. There has been a positive impact on the performance of boys and more able pupils and some year 11 pupils achieved AS Religious Education. KS4 results show a firm trend that the percentage of pupils on and above target is coming into line with other core subjects. This reflects good achievement in relation to pupils' varied starting points in Religious Education on entry to the school. At KS3 robust data and tracking is ensuring good progress and provides genuine grounds for belief that results will continue to improve. Most pupils concentrate very well and are rarely off task. Pupils work steadily and at times show high levels of enthusiasm and interest, as well as a keenness and commitment to succeed. A key feature of lessons was pupils' ability to use religious language in a meaningful way alongside their understanding of the implications of belief for their everyday lives.

Staff are confident, knowledgeable and have a good rapport with pupils, allowing them to articulate their knowledge and ideas and be praised for so doing. There is very good provision for the most vulnerable in the school through the Nurture and Intervention centres.

## **How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the School**

### **Grade 1**

The effectiveness of leaders in developing the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The headteacher leads the school with great dynamism and a very clear

sense of direction. She is exceptionally well informed on all aspects of school life. She is obviously inspired by Christian motives, particularly towards all vulnerable pupils who may require any special help. This is very much in line with the school's mission statement *"to respond to the needs of each individual child"*. The leadership team shares an equal commitment to the aims of the school. The governors are well-informed, supportive, and make pertinent challenges. They have a specific link with the Religious Education department and support the school's religious life, morally and financially.

One of the outstanding strengths of the school relates to community cohesion on all levels, locally, nationally and internationally. Non-Catholic children feel welcome and this includes many Muslim children. During Key Stage 3, pupils study Hinduism, Islam and Judaism and the GCSE syllabus includes a study of Islam. It also enables pupils to study a wide range of meaningful topics such as War and peace, Global Poverty, and marriage and Family Life. There are excellent relationships with local schools and parishes. There is massive financial support for a wide range of charities. The school recently hosted the Diocesan celebration of prayer as part of the preparations for the 2012 Olympic Games. School policies on a wide range of issues are cohesively and consistently linked to the school's Mission Statement and aims.

Support for the RE is seen in the provision of excellent resources, the number of high quality teachers, generous curriculum time, a chaplain and chaplaincy. The monitoring and evaluation of RE is exceptional. The department's subject leader is committed, well informed and enthusiastic is lead with outstanding levels of planning – purposeful bureaucracy. The support for the worshipping life of the school is outstanding. This is shown particularly in the appropriate allocation of time, as well human and physical resources.

### **How effective the provision is for Catholic Education**

### **Grade 2**

The school judges that the effective provision for Catholic education is outstanding but the inspectors judge it to be good with outstanding features. Leaders and managers of Religious Education have systematic monitoring activities, which ensure that they are well informed of the school's strengths and weaknesses. All of the Bishops Conference and local diocesan requirements are met. The Religious Education curriculum helps pupils develop an understanding of the Roman Catholic faith. Religious Education is enriched through well planned strategies which capitalise on the expertise of the chaplain and Salesian community. The many extra- curricular activities include Fairtrade, student council visit to Savio House, a bi-annual trip to Tanzania and retreats which are much enjoyed.

The RE curriculum makes a major contribution to the academic, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils. Schemes of work are in place, reviewed regularly and informed by the progress of pupils. Quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is good with some outstanding practice seen in a number of lessons across the year groups. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress as learners. In most lessons pupils are keen to learn, concentrate well and achieve. Interviews with pupils confirmed this: *"This is my best subject"* and *"I like to know about how other people live and makes you want to help them more"* demonstrates pupil engagement in the subject. Detailed planning of lessons demonstrates teachers' strong subject knowledge, which translates into lessons which inspire and challenge most pupils. Planning also ensures that pupils of different abilities are catered for. Timing and pace of the best lessons facilitates very good progression and learning as observed with a range of classes. Teachers routinely use ICT well to enhance

learning, for example through displaying well-selected audio-visual resources which capture pupils' interest. Pupils enjoy the opportunities provided for group work and to engage in active learning tasks. The relationship between teachers and pupils is based on mutual respect, students are well managed and their good behaviour allows learning to flourish. Pupils' work is systematically and positively marked. There is excellent display work in classrooms and public areas.

The inspectors agree with the school's judgement that the effectiveness of assessment and guidance in Religious Education is outstanding. The school's accurate and detailed information on pupil achievement is used effectively across the three key stages, to identify and tackle underachievement. Regular assessment including peer and self assessment ensures that pupils know how well they are doing and what needs to be done in order to improve. The RE department sets challenging targets and progress is monitored systematically. The senior management is now aiming for greater consistency in this, across all staff and key stages. There is good evidence that outcomes are improving strongly.

The quality of the school's prayer life is outstanding. Prayer is central to the life of the school and a key part of every celebration and meeting. Assemblies and other forms of prayer and worship make very good use of ICT, music and drama. Assembly themes are well planned and relate to the Church's Liturgical year. A wide range of resources for all forms of prayer is available to support staff via the Moodle system and 'Swat and Pray' Salesian resources. Everyone seems at ease when praying within their school community. The high quality year and form assemblies are regularly monitored. There is a weekly voluntary Mass.

The chaplain is developing the use of Student Voice to inform and enhance the different types of prayer experience. The Religious Education department and Chaplain have plans in place to attend a Salesian residential to develop further the prayer life of the school based on the feedback from pupils. It is planned to broaden the base of those involved and for them to take an over-arching view of worship for the whole year.

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