



ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL AND SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

ASTLEY

Inspection Date: Thursday 27 June 2019

Inspectors: Deacon Paul Mannings and Mrs Barbara Melia

Unique Reference Number: 106538

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Acts 2005 and 2011

Type of School: Catholic, voluntary-aided, mixed comprehensive

Age range of pupils: 11- 18

Number on roll: 1,549

Chair of Governors: Mr Jack Farrimond

Headteacher: Mr Andrew Dawson

School address: Manchester Road,
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Date of last inspection: 4 & 5 June 2014

Introduction

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Acts 2005 and 2011

The report of the inspection is produced for the Archbishop of Liverpool (Code of Canon Law 804 and 806) and for the governors of the school.

The inspectors are members of the Christian Education Department and their associates approved by the Archbishop of Liverpool for this purpose.

Information about this school

- St. Mary's Catholic High School and Sixth Form College is a voluntary-aided, 11-18 mixed comprehensive.
- The school is under the trusteeship of the Archdiocese of Liverpool and situated within the Wigan Authority.
- There are 1,549 pupils on roll of whom 1,062 (68%) are baptised Catholics, with 321 (21%) from other Christian denominations and 44 (3%) from other world faith or religious traditions. There are 122 pupils (8%) who express no religious affiliation.
- The school draws pupils from partner primary schools within the local pastoral area.
- The school has 95 teaching staff, 38% of whom are Catholic.
- The Religious Education Department has six full time members. Five are qualified in Religious Education.
- The Director of Religious Education, who is also an associate assistant head, has been appointed since the last inspection.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires Improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

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OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

St Mary's is good in its provision of Catholic Education. There are outstanding features.

CATHOLIC LIFE

- The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.
- Those interviewed referred to the Mission Statement as their motivation to believe that most things are possible through personal achievement and by team work.
- Pupils fully appreciate and support the school chaplaincy because they are called to be part of it. An increasing number of pupil-Religious Education ambassadors assist the lay chaplain through their expression of living faith in action in the widest sense and as part of an Archdiocesan accredited process. They generously support a wide range of charities and support toward those in need in the local community, which in turn has increased their interaction with community life.
- Pupils take full advantage of the opportunities the school provides for their personal support and development. Those who require additional support for their own wellbeing thrive in the long-established Nurture Base overseen by well experienced and committed staff. There is much pupil support for all aspects of the school's commitment to zero tolerance of any form of bullying. The process for Safeguarding is secure and pupils know where to go to seek advice and support.
- Through Relationships and Sex Education, pupils have a clear understanding of the meaning of loving relationships within the context of a Catholic Christian understanding.
- Pupils appreciate the extent to which their views and thoughts count. They are encouraged to communicate with staff and leadership because they know that adults in the school are committed to pupils being the best they can. Pupils are enabled to participate in the whole curriculum package that supports their holistic development.
- Pupils highly appreciate *Mission May* as a useful time to reflect and evaluate their personal living of the schools' mission both in school and within the range of Archdiocesan celebrations, not least through their preparation for Synod 2020.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school

- The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.
- "I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me." This is the Mission Statement which is owned, understood and underpinned by supportive core values and aims, which provide the basis for its living-out.
- Staff are committed to the mission's implementation because it is inclusive of the diversity of religious beliefs and world views of the staff. They, too, are provided with supportive continued professional development.
- The school's environment reflects its Catholic character especially through the care taken to ensure that the chapel is an inspiring place for personal reflection. The memorial garden is much loved and well-tended. Creative art is well appointed. Routine high standards of care ensure the environment is both stimulating and welcoming.

- Best standards of behaviour are promoted by the staff because of their leadership by example, practise of restorative justice and their capacity to value and believe in pupils.
- Catholic Social Teaching is promoted by the evidence of Gospel values being at the core of the School Development Policy. British Values too are underpinned by the gospel command to love and respect each other and to ensure that all can live their talents to the full.
- The full-time lay chaplain, assisted-part time by a long-serving religious brother are committed to ensuring that spiritual and moral development can be shared by the community working together, supporting each other and having time to reflect regularly on the meaning of the school's Catholic Life.
- Strong levels of pastoral care are evident within the school's policies and practice. There is on-site support from counsellors. Staff make time to track pupils' wellbeing through conversation and by rapport. This is why many parents are confident their children are well looked after, and pupils themselves feel safe and motivated to achieve.
- Relationships and Sex Education is rooted in the context of the Mission Statement. Content is delivered through a cross-curricular structure. The whole infrastructure is founded on conscientious coordination in accordance with Catholic Teaching, succinctly expressed in the policy document.

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

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors are outstanding in promoting, monitoring and evaluating the provision for the Catholic Life of the school. This is because of their own knowledge, understanding and faith practice, which together underpins their effective scrutiny of all supporting documents and strands of Catholic Life.
- Governors and leaders have ensured that Catholic Life is prominent on the school's website, prospectus and in all policies.
- The School Development Plan focuses on *St Mary's Child* as the means of ensuring that the gifts and talents of all pupils are developed at both local and Archdiocesan level.
- Consequently, the school continually seeks to enrich bonds between home school and parish. Much work has been undertaken to successfully maintain links with partner primary schools, especially through transition days. There is strong communication with clergy of the pastoral area, who attended during inspection to provide commentary about the successful extent of partnership and how this can be further developed. They believe in the school, a fact that is evident in their support through regular interaction. Governors regularly attend all aspects of Archdiocesan training. There is also ongoing communication between school staff and Archdiocesan Department for Education in all matters related to Catholic Life.
- The school is a founder member of Wigan and North West Catholic School Direct. Through its partnership in the sharing of skills and resources, there is provision of wide ranging continued professional development in Catholic Life. This includes the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies and sustained support of the Catholic Leadership Programme.
- It is for these reasons that the maintenance and upholding of Catholic Life is a vocational task for all stages of school leadership.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

- The extent to which pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is good. There are outstanding features: namely the process for monitoring of pupil progress and strategies for intervention.
- Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are making steady progress, in line with their individual capabilities and starting points. They benefit from strategic differentiation.
- Since the last inspection and up to 2017, the school has maintained its track record of GCSE performance in Religious Studies that exceeded national averages. In 2018 this took a dip due to the significantly increased demands of the new specification. Higher achievers performed well. Lower ability pupils reached their targets. The shortfall was amongst the middle-ability pupils.
- In Key Stage 5 achievement at Advanced Level is good or better. For the general course in Ethics and Values, rates of progress are commensurate with age-related standards for Post 16 students.
- Quality assurance has routinely signalled and provided evidence that improved pupils' progress is a growing strength. This is the result of regular academic health checks and consistent monitoring of classwork and homework. There has been a robust dual focus on literacy in Religious Education and practice in examination techniques and questions.
- Pupils enjoy Religious Education because they are encouraged to share their personal experiences. This ensures they are engaged, well-behaved and motivated. They value the content as relevant to their everyday lives. There is abundant scope for them to use their knowledge and understanding to reflect spiritually and to think ethically and theologically.
- In class, pupils are continually made aware of their rates of progress. They know how to improve because of clear step-by-step pathway they can readily access. This, too, ensures their confident perception that they can achieve in Religious Education.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education

- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- During inspection five full lessons were observed. All were good or better.
- Outstanding features are evident in areas where there are high teacher expectations, pupils demonstrate a confident approach to and have positive attitudes toward learning. Lessons that are good aspire to the above criteria.
- Lessons are well planned. Teachers are confident in their approach. They employ a range of collaborative and individual styles of learning.
- There are effective levels of differentiation for all pupils. This was outstanding amongst those working with lower ability pupils, whereby progress was the result of calm, confident and joyful approaches that signalled trust and confidence that all could succeed.
- Overall there is efficient time management of lesson content. Pupils are asked searching questions. Their responses are celebrated and developed as appropriate. Levels of monitoring and intervention are particularly strong.
- There is high quality formative and summative assessment, together with diagnostic written feedback for pupils. Their books show varying and appropriate approaches to work and wide-ranging activities. There is evidence of scaffolding and support where it is needed. Understanding is checked in a variety of ways. Pupils accept and respond well to critiques of their work. They use their marked work to gain a clear knowledge of their skills and

understanding. Pupils are given clear guidance on how they can improve through the variety of proformas used. Teachers' feedback sheets are tailored to different tasks and focus on *What Went Well* and the challenge that work could be *Even Better If!* These feedback sheets give detailed information on points that should have been included in the tasks. As a result, pupils are encouraged to improve their written work. They are helped to judge their work and that of their peers through collaborative marking activities and to set targets for improvement.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education

- Leaders, governors and their appointed link governors, together with the headteacher as line manager, are good in promoting, monitoring and evaluating the provision for Religious Education, which is firmly secured at the core of the school's provision for Catholic Life in Key Stages 3, 4 and for Advanced Level.
- The departmental management of Religious Education is outstanding.
- In Key Stage 3 there is 8% curriculum time, with the required 10% for GCSE, the required one lesson per week for the Post 16 general course, with 10% for Advanced Level.
- *People of God – Called to Serve* is in full use in Key Stage 3. For GCSE all pupils undertake *Catholic Christianity*, with *Judaism* as the second religion. In Key Stage 5 the general course, *Ethic and Values*, is subject to diocesan validation. The Advanced Level course is that of *Religion, Philosophy and Ethics*. Consequently, the content meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory (2012).
- The Director of Religious Education and the Lead Teacher (who undertook a substantial period as acting Head of Department) have re-defined the department so that it continues to develop as a committed and successful team of hardworking professionals. There are regular progress meetings with the headteacher and thorough analysis of pupil performance. The departmental tracker, feedback grids and a *critical friend* approach to the secure analysis of data is ensuring the effective use of assessment in monitoring and securing pupil improvement.
- The department has implemented a variety of teaching and learning strategies including Key Stage 4 work books for the lower ability pupils, knowledge organisers and revision planners.
- Consequently, the continued enrichment of the departmental collaborative approach is striving well toward a refreshed curriculum that is well suited to the demands of national reform in Religious Education.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship

- Pupils' response to and participation in Collective Worship is outstanding. This judgement is the result of observations on the day of inspection and through consultation with pupils.
- During interview, pupils referred to Collective Worship as time to reflect upon the things they appreciate as well as what they need to address now and in the future. They regard it as a time when there is a sense of community. One pupil commented on the fact that others congratulate them when Collective Worship has gone well. This encourages the building of personal confidence. All felt that the content and context is made relevant to their lives.

- These aspects were highlighted within the two acts of worship celebrated during inspection. Pupils responded with reverence. Indeed, they presented with confidence and enthusiasm. There was creative use of the school prayer which pupils themselves have created. In one of the gatherings there was music and joyful singing. Overall, they set the scenes and used them well.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of the Liturgical Year because the Religious Education Ambassadors assist in coordinating Masses and services in addition to their daily celebration of prayer and worship. The content they prepare, reflects thorough understanding.
- The fact that school is a place where its members can be part of a faithful, praying community, has a positive impact on the spiritual and moral development of pupils. They understand that Collective Worship provides them with scope to reflect on the presence of God in their lives. For others who do not profess a religious belief, these are occasions for reflection on how they can and do contribute to the Catholicity of the school by using times of prayer for personal recollection, as occasions to use their own skills in leadership and in presentation.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

- The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is good with outstanding features. There is a strategic plan for its ongoing development.
- There is outstanding provision for pupils to be part of para-liturgies, which enrich their knowledge and understanding of Collective Worship as occasions which can be celebrated in a variety of styles, places and occasions. Another key example herein, is the rising level of pupils' participation in the annual Archdiocesan Lourdes Pilgrimage, which currently includes fifteen students from Year 12.
- There is prayer before staff briefings. Daily prayer for pupils and staff takes place either in form or year and house groups. The Chapel is available for public and private reflection. The provision of the Emmaus Room offers a base for those of other world faiths and religions. However, both prayers spaces are completely available for the whole community which is a powerful indicator of the inclusivity of St Mary's.
- Weekly themes have been carefully produced and link well to the Liturgical Year. These are well resourced and the whole package shared with staff to serve as starting points that can be adapted and used to assist pupils with their planning and participation. The themes include other world faiths and religions. The content provides challenge to contribute in school projects that serve the needs of the common good.
- Clergy are consistent and interactive in their attendance to lead Masses and services. There is a varied team of guests regularly invited to add their own dimensions to Collective Worship. Parents, too, participate in year and house group services and celebrations.

How well leaders, governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship

- Leaders are good in promoting, monitoring and evaluating the provision for Collective Worship.
- Governors and leaders are outstanding in their commitment and capacity to continue improving the whole package of provision for Collective Worship as an integral contribution to the school's high-quality Catholic Life.

- The policy document clearly sets the context for prayer and worship, the elements to be included and the schedule for delivery. The document clearly states the requirement for the worshipping community to experience quality time for gathering, listening and responding.
- Governors and leaders have a good understanding of the Liturgical Year because of their own faith practice and participation. They receive feedback from senior leaders and from Student Council. During inspection, this enabled their confident provision of examples as to how the Collective Worship themes are applicable to the contemporary lives of pupils.
- There is a process for the monitoring and evaluation of Collective Worship. Governors are prepared to take a more frequent role in this provision to enable them to more accurately assess levels of participation and quality.
- In addition, several have taken part in Archdiocesan governor training in Collective Worship and seek to enrich this by participating in the planned development of existing training in school.
- A key emphasis in the school's training provision is to exemplify how Collective Worship is inclusive and adaptable to embrace the needs and experiences of staff and pupils. The coordinator is particularly skilled in meeting this area of provision.
- Consequently, the coordination of Collective Worship is committed, careful and well set for ongoing development. Significant and successful progress has already been made in outcomes for pupils.

What the school needs to do to improve further

The last inspection identified one key area for action namely, that the marking and annotation of pupils' work should provide clear information about progress and how to improve further. This has been addressed with precision.

During the last monitoring visit the school had maintained and enriched its good and better standards in many areas.

The current Section 48 Self Evaluation Document contains clear and concise details of the school's strengths, together with supporting evidence. These are accompanied by identified areas for development, together with targets, timescales and clear lines of accountability. Therefore, this document is fit for purpose as the key ongoing development plan for Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship. The areas listed below provide key signposts for improvement.

Continue to maintain the high standards in Catholic Life by:

- Ongoing development of school links which are forging the strong home, school and parish partnership;
- Conducting a thorough audit of the cross -curricular provision for Relationships and Sex Education.

Sustain the rigorous development of Religious Education by:

- Maintained strategic use of quality data informed monitoring and intervention, to increase rates of achievement for all pupils;
- Continued practice with GCSE style techniques and questions aimed at improving performance within all levels of ability;
- Restoring the overall 10% curriculum allocation for Religious Education;
- Addressing the dip in attendance rates for Post 16 General Religious Education (Ethics and Values) so ensuring the school is fully-compliant with the requirements of the Curriculum Directory.

Further enrichment of the strength of Collective Worship by:

- Increasing input and participation in Key Stage 3 by pupil-Religious Education ambassadors;
- Tighter monitoring which ensures that all form groups participate in daily Collective Worship and pupils share their composed prayer at the end of each school day;
- Development of training to include a specific focus on the needs of year groups during form time;
- The inclusion of governors in all aspects of training.

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education	2
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CATHOLIC LIFE

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	1
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school	1

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education	2
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education	2

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	1
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	2
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship	2

Key to judgements: Grade 1 is Outstanding, Grade 2 Good, Grade 3 Requires Improvement and Grade 4 Inadequate