



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Inspection Report

ST BEDE'S CATHOLIC MIDDLE SCHOOL

Part of the Our Lady of the Magnificat Multi Academy Company
Holloway Lane, Redditch, Worcestershire, B98 7HA

Inspection dates:

4-5 July 2022

Lead Inspector:

Ben McArdle

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS:

Good

Catholic Life:

Outstanding

Religious Education:

Good

Collective Worship:

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection:

Requires Improvement

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

This is a Good Catholic school because:

- The mission statement is the beating heart of the school. It is lived and breathed by all members of the community.
- Pupils enthusiastically engage with Catholic Life and chaplaincy activities, actively aspiring to be like Jesus.
- Pastoral care is first class. Everybody is valued as a creation of God and supported to thrive as His children.
- Leaders are accurate in their self-evaluation of standards within the school. They celebrate strengths and have an accurate knowledge of areas for development, particularly concerning teaching and learning.
- Parents are highly supportive of the school's work. They are steadfast in their praise of the personalised and welcoming approach leaders and staff offer and the speed with which the school responds to their queries.

It is not yet Outstanding because:

- Pupils, particularly the more able, are not always challenged appropriately in Religious Education.
- Feedback in Religious Education is limited in its effectiveness.
- Coverage of the Religious Education curriculum is not consistently thorough.
- There is a capacity for further opportunities for pupil-led prayer.
- Pupils' understanding of the liturgical year is not deeply embedded.

FULL REPORT**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Challenge all pupils to the next level of learning rapidly in all Religious Education lessons, particularly the more able.
- Secure consistency in feedback in Religious Education so that all pupils are told what they need to do to improve the quality of their work.
- Cover all applicable elements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory in sufficient depth.
- Reignite a full range of opportunities for pupils to design and lead prayer.
- Develop pupils' knowledge of the liturgical year and the impact this has on the prayer life of the Church.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

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

CL1 The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school**CL2 The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school**

- In response to the Archdiocese of Birmingham's previous monitoring visit, the school has done excellent work reshaping its mission statement. It has been condensed, thus making it effective. It is inspiring for all stakeholders, as demonstrated by its prominence within the school: it is deeply embedded and is central to the school's work.
- Pupils' comprehension of the school's mission statement is a real strength of the school. They know it and understand how it relates to their lived experience. They speak about it with enthusiasm and articulate their understanding of the concepts of love, learning, service, and worship with confidence. This is often underpinned by pupils asking themselves, 'what would Jesus do?', ensuring they always place Christ and His teachings at the centre of their moral choices.
- Evaluation of some aspects of Catholic Life involves pupils. Their views are collated through questionnaires, to which their responses are overwhelmingly positive. Their opinions are considered by leaders when planning improvements to Catholic Life; however, pupils need to be given the autonomy to lead more aspects of it. Leaders have acknowledged this as part of their Catholic Life evaluation and are reigniting opportunities.
- Participation of pupils in Catholic Life activities is very good. For example, the mini vinnies choose charities they want to support, and members of the sanctuary group held a raffle to raise money for local refugees.
- Behaviour around the school site is excellent. This is because pupils understand and respect the concept of the dignity of the human person. They talk enthusiastically

about reconciliation and are keen to seek forgiveness and support each other. A pupil told inspectors, 'It is ok to make a mistake here; we have a responsibility to forgive each other.'

- Pupils appreciate the school's approach to restorative justice; they understand the positive impact it has on their personal development. As a result, standards have been raised throughout the school and are reflected in the school's low exclusion rate.
- All pupils are keen to live out the school's mission and want to get actively involved with it for the benefit of others. For example, every school community member made sandwiches for a homeless charity under the leadership of the mini vinnies, which were distributed through the links the school has made with the parish's St Vincent de Paul volunteers.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to become involved in the school's chaplaincy provision, which is expertly organised and celebrated in displays around the school site. The lay chaplain works hard to engage all pupils and staff in her ministry. As a result, they are supportive of their own and others' spiritual development.
- Other members of staff take responsibility for leading other chaplaincy initiatives. For example, a teacher oversees the sanctuary group, which strives to highlight the plight of refugees and asylum seekers. The group seeks to raise financial support and awareness of their circumstances; they are currently filming a video to introduce refugees to the British school system and are considering overcoming language barriers to make their film inclusive.
- There is an excellent endorsement of the quality of care provided by the school, particularly its status as a Carnegie centre of excellence for mental health, securing a gold award, and its awarding of the Inclusion Quality Mark. These accolades result from outstanding pastoral care, resulting in pupils feeling safe, confident and happy. The Quo Vardis mental health and well-being resource is used to promote this important work further. One pupil told inspectors, 'Everyone is cared for by the pastoral team and tutors. They are really good at helping anyone with anything.'
- Strong relationship, sex, and health education (RSHE) reinforces pupils' well-being. All staff have been trained in RSHE, resulting in a common, shared vision, guaranteeing consistency in provision throughout the school, with pupils able to articulate a Christian understanding of love.
- A data-rich pastoral system enables leaders to react swiftly to pupils' needs. For example, an incident was recently identified through the behaviour management system data, which leaders remedied effectively through the Parable of the Good Samaritan and Catholic social teaching on equality.
- Some pupils articulate their understanding of vocation as 'a journey, a calling or job'. They mostly speak of jobs they may have in the future and other opportunities they are aiming towards. Others talk of vocation as 'a calling to what God meant us to be', though this understanding is not yet securely embedded.
- The parish priest is a regular visitor to the school and speaks of the increasing restrengthening of links between the school and parish following the disruption caused by the pandemic. Most recently, there has been a wonderful celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation and joint fundraising ventures. The parish priest explained, 'In all aspects of the faith in school, God is here.'
- Pupils are confident in expressing their cultural identity within St Bede's. This was characterised during the inspection by a Muslim pupil explaining to her classmates how she reflects her beliefs about Muhammed in her daily life and a separate occasion in which a Sikh pupil spoke about his beliefs. On both occasions, all pupils listened intently and were grateful to learn about another religion.

- The staff's commitment to the school's mission is outstanding. They speak enthusiastically about the continuing professional development (CPD) they've received. Consequently, there is a sense of pride and joy amongst the staff in belonging to this community. Staff speak of the extended school family, the essence of which is engrained into the very culture of the school at every level. A member of lunchtime staff told inspectors, 'This is a very loving school, and we are included in absolutely everything'.
- The outstanding pastoral care extends beyond pupils to all community members. A staff member recalled, 'The school's leaders found me a job during lockdown when I was going to struggle, but they didn't have to. They check on me regularly now as my mum is very poorly; they go the extra mile'.
- The school's expression of its Catholicity through its buildings is excellent; communal areas are a celebration of Catholic Life. The values of the Catholic school pupil profile (CSPP) are attached to scripture quotes, prominently displayed throughout buildings and help pupils understand their meaning. Pupils' work is celebrated and displayed throughout the school with pride, further adding to the strong sense of community.
- Staff are consistently fantastic role models; they model appropriate values and gestures and take full part during prayer and liturgy. The concept of restorative justice works here because all staff members uphold it as an aspirational Christian attitude. They want to live out the message of the Gospel for the pupils: Christ is at the centre of St Bede's.
- The multi academy company (MAC) promotes the seven strands of Catholic social teaching and has identified the need for these to be embedded more deeply at St Bede's. The Religious Education curriculum has established clear links with Catholic social teaching, with other subjects having initially identified CSPP values before establishing connections with Catholic social teachings. The school is in a good place to move forward with this initiative to ensure that pupils use the language of social teachings to complement their understanding of CSPP values.
- Spiritual, moral, social, cultural, and vocational development (SMSCV) is another area where leaders have plans that aim for deeper embedment next year. Currently, there are many opportunities for SMSCV, driven through teachers' insightful questions within Religious Education and during Weekly Word sessions. Time for reflection is given regularly in school, and there are opportunities for pupils to share their thoughts. Consequently, pupils feel they are being taught how to be the type of person Christ wants them to be.
- Chaplaincy is effective in supporting the development of pupils. Prayer leaders are exceptionally keen about their work, as demonstrated by the commitment of long-standing members. Pupils are asked to think and reflect on scripture and how it relates to their life.
- As a result of excellent communication from the subject leader, any anxieties experienced by parents concerning RSHE are fully resolved before each topic is taught, resulting in all pupils engaging with the entire programme.

CL3 How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school

- Leaders' commitment to Catholic Life is outstanding. The principal rightly has huge pride in all the school achieves because everything links back to the mission statement; this energises the community.

- Catholic Life is a core responsibility of leaders, as reflected in their development plans and the extensive quality assurance and monitoring work they undertake. An 'apostolic core' staff group lead in this area.
- There are regular reviews of Catholic Life, which the MAC externally moderates. Governors levy challenge through link governor meetings; however, this needs to be shared more widely with the full governing body to offer robust challenges to leaders. The MAC has planned for increased scrutiny of leadership documentation and actions to celebrate their work's joy and rigour.
- Half-termly round table reviews ensure regular dialogue focused on Catholic Life between the school, the Catholic senior executive leader (CSEL) and school improvement officers from the MAC's central team. The school also meets half-termly with a named company director who scrutinises Catholic missions. Lines of accountability are excellent.
- CPD for non-Catholic staff is excellent. Furthermore, the MAC arranged and provided for induction for all new staff. Relevant staff are released from school commitments to attend training provided by the Archdiocese of Birmingham. Consequently, St Bede's is up to date in its developments relating to Catholic Life and effectively promotes it as a core responsibility for all staff.
- Parents regard the school's leadership as outstanding. They say that leaders are incredibly supportive because they listen and respond to their concerns and always communicate effectively. As a result of personal home-school communication, one parent told inspectors that the school has 'helped make my family better'.
- Governors are very active, have a good understanding of the school's mission, and are passionate about it. Catholic Life is a priority in their work. The link governor is incredibly effective.
- St Bede's fully and proactively embraces all decisions of the Archbishop of Birmingham about Catholic Life.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

RE1 How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

RE2 The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education

- Most pupils make good progress. The school's most recent data shows that at least 93% of pupils made expected progress in the spring term. Such progress gives them the resilience and ability to succeed at high school once they have left St

Bede's because they've had a strong foundation here, as demonstrated by data analysis undertaken by the MAC.

- All groups of pupils make good progress in Religious Education, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), despite often starting from low entry points.
- Pupils' religious literacy is excellent. Because teachers insist on the proper use of vocabulary in context, pupils are articulate in their oracy.
- Pupils are very involved in their lessons. They want to do well in Religious Education, as demonstrated in their obedience to teachers' instructions.
- Because pupils enjoy their lessons, behaviour is very good.
- Challenge in lessons is inconsistent. Teachers must ensure that all pupils, particularly those who are more able, are consistently challenged to progress to the next level of attainment.
- Pupils are not always confident in locating passages in the Bible. This is because there is sometimes an over-reliance on providing texts on worksheets. Pupils need more first-hand experience of using the Bible.
- Feedback and marking need to consistently inform pupils on areas for improvement so they can be confident in explicitly identifying what they need to do to make further progress.
- Attainment in Religious Education has been on an upward trajectory over the last eighteen months; teachers ensure that most pupils are recovering well from the disruption to learning caused by the pandemic.
- Pupils' presentation and pride in their exercise books are outstanding because of the subject's status within the school. However, there need to be more opportunities for extended writing and deeper thinking regularly to further improve the quality of pupils' work in Religious Education.
- Teachers' planning of lessons is mainly good. In the best lessons, all pupils are challenged at an appropriate level, though this practice is not consistent throughout the department. Teachers use bronze, silver, and gold learning objectives to match work to different levels of need. However, these are often not referred to again once introduced at the start of a lesson; at other times, lessons aren't pitched at the correct level for the needs of individual classes.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is confident mainly. However, care must be taken when teaching other religions and faiths by not comparing with Catholicism, as this causes confusion and does not facilitate an authentic study of them. Systems need to be in place, so Christian theology is consistently clear and accurately imparted to pupils.
- A range of teaching styles contributes to pupils' enjoyment of Religious Education, although teachers do not provide enough opportunities for extended writing. In many lessons, there are too many 'short response' activities, which add little value to pupils' knowledge and understanding; these are at the expense of tasks which allow for a deeper level of understanding to be demonstrated by pupils.
- Opportunities for self-assessment have been recently introduced through the 'green sheet' initiative, enabling pupils to reflect on their learning at the end of each unit of work. Teachers must support this self-assessment with evaluative rather than purely affirmative comments; their focus must be on aiding pupils to move on to the next step in their learning.
- Time is not always used effectively to drive forward pupil progress rapidly; this is because learning does not start quickly enough in some lessons.
- Some teachers use questioning well to adapt explanations, reshape learning, and probe pupils' more profound understanding of the issues covered by the curriculum. However, in other classrooms, questioning is not optimised for extending pupils' knowledge and understanding.

- Teachers' expectations of pupils are good; they know what they want them to achieve and motivate them to do so. Even better, a faster-paced lesson start and a greater degree of challenge in all classrooms are needed.
- Feedback is frequent but is limited in effectiveness because there is too much concentration on affirmation by teachers at the expense of diagnostic comments. As a result, pupils don't always know what they need to do to improve. Pupils' responses to teachers' written feedback are limited because they lack depth, especially when compared to those made by pupils in other core subjects.
- Celebration of pupils' effort and achievement are a regular feature of lessons, leading to good motivation levels for all pupils.

RE3 How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for Religious Education

- Governors give parity to Religious Education regarding resourcing, CPD and staffing compared to other core subjects.
- Leaders and governors have implemented plans to ensure that the required curriculum time is allocated to Religious Education from September 2022.
- The Archbishop of Birmingham requires that the 'Learning and Growing as the People of God' curriculum be delivered in full to pupils in Key Stage 2. Whilst all scheme units are taught, some are covered in significantly less detail than others. Leaders have identified that the extra time allocated to the subject from September will rectify this.
- Self-evaluation of Religious Education is mainly good because it is tracked on a half-termly basis by the subject leader and head of faculty, who work well together. More rigour is needed in the challenges levied against the subject so that it further drives change in the department and positively impacts classroom developments and pupils' exercise books.
- The subject leader for Religious Education has a clear vision for how she wants her department to be. She listens attentively and responds well to advice and guidance. As such, she has the capacity to lead improvements in the department by sharing her excellent practice with colleagues.
- Through the work of the link governor, the governing body ensures that Religious Education is planned to meet the needs of most learners. Specific monitoring of the progress of more able pupils is required.
- Representatives from the MAC showed robust plans for their support of teaching and learning in Religious Education to inspectors. St Bede's receives skilled support from the central team.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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

CW1 How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship**CW2 The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school**

- Pupils act with reverence during prayer and liturgy, especially during larger-scale events in the school hall. They demonstrate their ability to reflect in silence and to join in confidently with their responses. In acts of worship in classrooms, some pupils are passive in their responses to prayer and lose concentration.
- There are regular opportunities for prayer and liturgy leaders to design and lead their acts of worship, which they do with great zeal. Their peers respond well to these moments of prayer. Opportunities to engage a broader range of pupils in prayer leadership are needed now that restrictions enforced by the pandemic have been lifted.
- Staff who help pupils design and lead their own prayers are skilled in assisting them.
- Pupils enjoy a good variety of prayer styles: communal prayer, spontaneous prayer, Reconciliation, Benediction, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Mass, and the Weekly Word are all utilised regularly. As such, pupils at St Bede's are exposed to a good sample of the Church's traditions surrounding prayer.
- Response to voluntary worship is good: the chapel is open for free prayer every day of the week, with resources and prompts made available to aid prayer. Pupils and staff utilise this opportunity, which has become a cherished feature of school life.
- All pupils understand the cycle of seasons and feasts within the Church in terms of liturgical colours, but only a few can go beyond this; many lack knowledge of how the liturgical year influences the prayers and traditions within the Catholic heritage.
- Pupils are acutely aware of how prayer influences their spiritual and moral development. This is because prayer is at the school's core, and all staff are skilful in the links they make with everyday life. The Weekly Word is an opportunity for reflection made available to all pupils. However, it involves a long period requiring pupils to sit and listen, thus inviting a degree of passivity amongst some pupils. Leaders have recognised this and plan to change its format next academic year.
- Prayer is at the centre of school life and is a daily experience for all pupils and staff. There are four opportunities to pray formally together each day, as well as moments in individual lessons, and collectively as form groups, year groups and as a whole school.
- The mission statement is used as the school prayer, further cementing its contribution to pupils' spiritual development.
- Prayer and liturgy always have a clear theme, message, and direction. The newly appointed vice principal has introduced a new structure to prayer, currently being

embedded throughout the school. This ensures a common approach to worship and that themes and messages are always rooted in the Word of God.

- Good quality resources are produced to aid prayer. These result in almost all members of the community being engaged in worship. PowerPoints, live music, and prayer focus areas are used to good effect.
- Parents sincerely appreciate the opportunities they have to join their children in worship and expressed a desire to inspectors for more opportunities to be made available.

CW3 How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship

- Leaders and chaplains have expert knowledge in how to plan quality Collective Worship. Their delivery is always good and, in the best cases, captures pupils' hearts and minds so that they are enthused by it.
- Leaders' and the lay chaplain's understanding of the liturgical year is extensive. They usually make this accessible to pupils in a contemporary context, though pupils cannot always articulate their knowledge clearly or confidently.
- Leaders are good role models of prayer. Question-answer sessions sometimes interrupt worship, and sessions become Religious Education lessons. Care must be taken to ensure that acts of worship allow pupils to raise their hearts and minds to God without being 'assessed' by staff.
- The lay chaplain promotes pupils' planning and leading acts of worship.
- CPD leads to increased staff confidence in leading prayer; consequently, pupils benefit from good quality prayer every day, and the school fully implements the requirements of the Archbishop of Birmingham regarding prayer and liturgy.
- Collective Worship is regularly reviewed as part of the governors' and leaders' self-evaluation processes; they regularly seek the views of pupils, parents, and visitors to the school. A system to synthesise these views needs to be developed so that monitoring practices have a more direct bearing on the school's evaluation of prayer and that all informal verbal comments are captured and included in this.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Unique reference number	141064
Local authority	Worcestershire
<i>This inspection was carried out under Canon 806 of Canon Law and under Section 48 of the Education Act (2005).</i>	
Type of school	Middle
School category	Academy
Age range	9-13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	654
Appropriate authority	The board of directors
Chair	Yvonne Brennan
Headteacher	Lloyd Roberts
Telephone number	01527 525916
Website address	https://www.st-bedes.worcs.sch.uk
Email address	stb-office@stb.magnificat.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	June 2018

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS SCHOOL

- St Bede's is a Catholic middle school serving the parish of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Redditch, south of Birmingham.
- The percentage of Catholic pupils is currently 55.2%.
- The percentage of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The percentage of SEND pupils is above the national average.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic origins is below the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with EAL is above the national average.
- Attainment on entry is average.
- Since the last inspection, the school has become an academy and is now part of the Our Lady of the Magnificat MAC. A new vice principal and subject leader for Religious Education have been appointed. There have been significant changes to the local governing body, including the election of a new chair.

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

- Two diocesan inspectors undertook this inspection: Ben McArdle & Sarah Hatfield. A shadow inspector, David Bayliss, observed the inspection team as part of his training and induction into the inspectorate.
- The focus of the inspection was on the impact, quality, and leadership of the school's provision of Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship.
- The inspectors observed teaching across eight Religious Education lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. All these lesson observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspectors completed work scrutiny and held discussions with different groups of pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic Life, the impact of Religious Education teaching on their learning over time and their experience of Collective Worship.

- Meetings were held with representatives from the MAC, the Catholic Life link governor, the principal, the person in charge of Catholic Life (who is also head of the faculty), the Religious Education subject leader, lay chaplain, parish priest, parents, RSHE subject leader, the well-being and mental health leader, a representative staff group, early career teachers, SEND co-ordinator and learning mentors.
- The inspectors attended class and year group Collective Worship. They undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of learning and teaching in Religious Education, the presentation of the Catholic Life of the school and pupils' behaviour. Groups of pupil leaders were observed undertaking leadership in aspects of Catholic Life.
- The inspectors reviewed various documents, including the school's self-evaluation, data about pupils' attainment and progress, Analyse School Performance (ASP) data, the school development plan, the Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship action plans, teachers' planning and worship journals.