

Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School

URN: 401797

Carried out on behalf of the Most Rev. Mark O'Toole, Archbishop of Cardiff on:

13-14 July 2023

Overall effectiveness

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

2

Catholic life and mission (p.3)

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.....

2

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education.....

2

Collective worship (p.7)

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

- Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School offers an inclusive welcome to all, where students feel valued for who they are and what they achieve.
- Students understand fully how Catholic virtues apply to their everyday lives and articulate this effectively. This is a living example of faith in action and is a strength of the school.
- Chaplaincy is at the heart of the school and provides a variety of meaningful opportunities for all students to grow in faith.
- The religious education department is well lead and all members of the department make a significant contribution to students' spiritual and moral development.
- Relationships between staff and students are strong which creates an environment where students are able to learn in a purposeful way.

This Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection was carried out under canons 804 & 806 of the code of canon law. For maintained schools and academies in England it fulfils the statutory requirements of s.48 of the Education Act 2005. For maintained schools and academies in Wales it fulfils the statutory requirements of s.50 of the Education Act 2005.

What the school needs to improve:

- Further embed the feedback policy in religious education so that students are confident in knowing precisely what they need to do to improve their work and achieve the best possible outcomes.
- Continue to develop strategies to narrow the gap in the attainment of boys at key stage 4.

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:.....

2

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

2

Leadership

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

2

Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School offers an inclusive welcome to all, where students feel valued for who they are and what they achieve. Students are extremely proud of their school and speak enthusiastically about the school's distinctive Catholic nature. They understand and fully embrace 'EVE – Empowered, Virtuous, Employable'. Students best understand the mission of the school by the emphasis placed on Catholic virtues. This is a strength. They are encouraged to demonstrate these virtues every day and consequently speak confidently about when they have been 'curious' or 'truthful' or have been 'intentional' or 'wise'. Students value opportunities to take on leadership responsibilities through the youth chaplaincy team and religious education ambassadors. Students participate in numerous fundraising activities including those for First Give, Cafod, Velindre Hospital, Headways and Barod. They research a variety of charities and select those that they wish to support each year. This work is celebrated in parish newsletters and letters home. However, this would be enhanced by a regular newsletter home to ensure that all parents feel fully informed about school life. Students respond to Catholic Social Teaching in a practical, meaningful and enjoyable way. As a result, they share a growing awareness of their responsibility to others which also demonstrates their moral development well.

Catholic life is at the centre of the strategic direction of the school. Training has been provided for departments which has developed understanding of how their subject contributes to the Catholic ethos. Staff commitment at all levels is very good: they readily serve the community and participate in activities and routines which promote the school's standards, and especially those which reinforce the virtues curriculum. The school's environment reflects its mission and

identity through signs and images which are visible throughout. Students are aware of, and make use of, the postbox in reception to contact the priest chaplain when they need so speak with him. Relationships and sex education (RSE) meets all statutory requirements and is firmly rooted in Church teaching. Students benefit from themes being mapped and 'Ten Ten' and 'A Fertile Heart' are the programmes used to develop understanding. Student well-being is promoted effectively in various activities and students are encouraged to be healthy and safe and articulate this well. A recent example has been the promotion of the need to eat healthily. Consequently, students make informed choices about remaining safe and have a strong sense of right and wrong.

Leaders and governors have a shared understanding of their responsibilities in leading a community of faith and are committed to developing it further. The headteacher has a clear vision for Catholic education and provides meaningful leadership for all members of the community. Very good relationships exist between students and staff, and parents regard the school highly. Students contribute to the evaluation of Catholic life through questionnaires and governors are kept fully informed through the headteacher's report. The chair of governors has detailed knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The religious education link governor plays a vital role and visits the school to review procedures and discuss progress against targets and barriers to improvement. Leaders and governors ensure there are good working relationships with the archdiocese. Outreach work includes collaboration for the Mass at St Mary's and providing musicians for the Advent Mass and other celebrations across the archdiocese. Parish links are developing although the school acknowledges that there is further work needed. Training is provided each September to develop teachers' understanding of the school's educational mission and ethos.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

2

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....

2

Students engage in a variety of activities and most enjoy their religious education lessons. Behaviour in lessons is typically very good. In the best lessons, not a moment of learning is wasted, and students immediately engage in challenge. Students make progress broadly in line with other students nationally, although religious education did not perform as well as other core subjects in the school in 2022. Year 10 early entry results are 67% A*- C which is promising for outcomes in the summer. A significant gap remains in the attainment of boys at Key Stage 4 compared to outcomes achieved by girls. Progress is evident in exercise books and enables students to build on prior learning. Presentation in books is consistently high across all abilities demonstrating that students take pride in their work. Key vocabulary is revisited regularly, supporting students in becoming religiously literate and knowledge to become embedded. Students treat each other respectfully and nearly all listen attentively when discussing religious concepts and alternative views. Foundations for extended writing are built at Key Stage 3 and explicit links are made to examination content and skills. Work is scaffolded when appropriate and writing frames and evaluation templates are available to ensure that students succeed in their learning.

The religious education department is a strong team and is well lead by a dedicated and committed subject leader. Relationships with students are strong and teachers are authentic witnesses to their faith. This creates an environment where students are able to learn in a purposeful way. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and, as a result, ask incisive questions to test and develop student understanding in lessons. Lessons are well planned and there are many opportunities for creative work at Key Stage 3. Where questioning is used effectively, it provides appropriate challenge and promotes higher level thinking. However, an

overreliance on closed questioning sometimes results in missed opportunities to develop students' understanding further. Feedback has been a focus for the department, however, inconsistencies in assessment remain. Teachers do not always provide sufficient detail to enable students to understand precisely what they need to do to improve their work. This needs to be addressed through the 'evaluation and accountability pathway' being introduced next year. Although usually high, the number of students choosing to stay on and study religious education in the sixth form was low this year. Those who do stay on are taught extremely well and make excellent progress over time.

Leaders and governors have ensured that religious education receives the curriculum time allocation required by the Bishops' Conference. The resourcing of religious education is broadly in line with other core subjects when additional funding for faith development is included. Teaching and learning remains a focus for the department next year and accurately reflects the needs of the school so that they are able to continue to improve. The department would benefit from bringing classrooms together in one area of the school to facilitate improved communication between teachers and the sharing of good practice. The curriculum is planned coherently to build on knowledge and skills and follows the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. Department improvement planning is reviewed annually. The monitoring of learning and teaching is regular and varied: learning walks, work scrutiny and student questionnaires are all used effectively to inform future planning for the development of the department. Plans are already in place to extend this across the school next year. Moderation has been reintroduced and will include linked primary schools, providing leaders with confidence in their teachers' assessment of student achievement. Governor visits are recorded and presented at full governors' meetings contributing to effective support and challenge.

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

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

2



Prayer is central to the life of the school and there are many opportunities for students and staff to experience prayer. Students are respectful and engage thoughtfully in prayer. They volunteer willingly to read during tutor period prayer which enhances the sense of ownership that students feel in taking responsibility for, and leading prayer. The youth chaplaincy team lead the angelus, the stations of the cross and the rosary at appropriate times during the liturgical year. Students are involved in the planning, delivery and monitoring of prayer in all year groups. Form tutors acknowledge the importance of considering students' different experiences of prayer so that everyone feels valued and able to contribute. One student said that he had joined Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School from a non-faith school and that religious education had 'opened his eyes to be curious' and that prayer was 'an opportunity to speak with God'. The chapel is a calm, reflective space and is open to students to pray throughout the day. Students report that the school is a calm and safe place where they are encouraged to 'consider everyone and never ignore those who are without friends'.

Praying together is part of the daily experience for all students and staff and embedded into daily routines. Prayer is always in keeping with the Catholic tradition and scripture is routinely referred to. Students are aware of the school's structure for prayer – 'we gather, we listen, we respond, we go forth'. Themes are appropriately linked to the liturgical year supporting the school's Catholic identity well. Reflection is used effectively to allow students to make connections between current issues being experienced by communities around the world and the impact that these have on students' daily lives. Leaders resource worship well and additional funding is made available for faith development. Masses, in-house retreats and retreats to Kintbury take place and important celebrations in the church calendar are all

observed. All students have the opportunity to attend World Youth Day and the diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes. Mass was celebrated for all year 10 students during the inspection and this was a truly joyous occasion for everyone involved.

Leaders and governors place a high priority on the prayer life of the school. The 'Spiritual and Moral Life of the School' policy is in place and sets out clear expectations for prayer and worship. Student leadership of prayer is positive and opportunities for students to contribute and participate are evident. However, this needs to be extended to include more students across the school. The work of the head of religious education and the senior leader for ethos is extremely valuable to the school's prayer life. They are excellent role models for students and staff. Leaders work effectively with the priest chaplain to ensure that Holy Days of Obligation and other significant days are celebrated in school. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is available to students during Advent and Lent. Students who cannot receive this sacrament are encouraged to speak with the priest during this time. The priest chaplain is an excellent role model to students and staff through his commitment to the school and engagement with the community. Staff articulate that good practice is shared resulting in further improved student experiences. The governing body is kept fully informed about the school's prayer life through the headteacher's report. The religious education link governor also monitors prayer closely and informs full governors' meetings of outcomes and evidence seen. The governing body is encouraged to visit the school to participate in key celebrations. Consequently, they are highly ambitious for the school's prayer life to continue to develop well.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School
School unique reference number (URN)	401797
Full postal address of the school	Oak Tree Way, Brackla, Bridgend, CF31 2DN
School phone number	01656 815500
Name of head teacher or principal	Mr Ashley Howells
Chair of governing board	Mr Kevin Pascoe
School Website	https://www.archbishopmg.co.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Not applicable
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Trustees	Archdiocese of Cardiff
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	4 – 6 February 2013
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The inspection team

Mr Garry Maher	Lead inspector
Mrs Bernadette Vella-Jones	Team inspector
Name of inspector	Lead/team
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