

Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Mary's Catholic College, Wallasey

URN: 143554

Carried out on behalf of the Right Rev. Mark Davies, Bishop of Shrewsbury on:

Date: 1-2 November 2023

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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 school motto 'Christ within us all' is central to all that takes place at St Mary's Catholic College and underpins the inclusive and welcoming nature of this community. The Arc and Hub revisions are particular beacons of hope
- Outreach to the local community and partnership with the local parishes are a great strength
- The curriculum for religious education is well led, planned, and resourced
- There are many examples of student groups engaged in the life of the community such as the youth SVP (St Vincent de Paul) group and the diversity group
- The training and induction of new staff in the Catholic nature and prayer life of St Mary's is a strength

What the school needs to improve:

- Ensure greater consistency in marking and feedback at Key Stage 3 so it matches that at Key Stage 4
- Improve outcomes for students in external examinations
- Strengthen opportunities for pupil leadership of prayer and liturgy across school. There is limited opportunity for this currently.

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

1



'Christ within us all', the school motto, is at the heart of St Mary's Catholic College. It is written across the main entrance and is evident in the inclusive nature of the school. There are many ways in which groups of students engage in the Catholic life and mission of St Mary's, these include the youth SVP group, the diversity group, the school council and the sixth form leadership team. These students enjoy taking on these roles and show pride in them. The pilgrimage group is preparing for the diocesan Lourdes pilgrimage in 2024. There is also a regular school pilgrimage to Rome. St. Mary's students are active members of Mini DASH (Diocesan Association of Secondary Heads). This is an outward facing community with a commitment to Catholic social teaching. This is clear through the practical action and initiatives in which groups of pupils and staff are engaged. These include Cafod charity walks, and a food bank based in school, and run in partnership with the local parishes. Most pupils recognise that they are loved, valued, and cared for at St Mary's and there is a sense of family in this community. As one parent put it 'this school really helps build character with Catholic values'. Student understanding of the core values of respect, courage, pride, determination, and compassion is in development.

The recent mural of Our Lady, painted on the side of the main school building, is a beacon for the local community. Signs of witness to the Catholic heart of St Mary's include the beautiful chapel. Chaplaincy has a positive influence within the school. With a dual teaching chaplaincy role, the community chaplain uses form time to support prayer across the school. Working with the youth SVP group, they are involved in church cleaning, gardening in the parish and in the transformation of an outside courtyard in school as a space for quiet reflection. Staff new to the school appreciate the induction programme they receive and the understanding of the school mission and liturgical life. The school is in the process of a two-year review of its mission and values, led by the headteacher, who seeks to transform school culture through this. Staff have an increasing sense of the renewal of this and now speak of a shared vision. They aspire to model these values in their day-to-day interactions. It is also evident in the work of the Hub and Arc provisions. Further

development of this vision is planned to enhance and strengthen current provision across the whole school community.

Governors have a passion for this Catholic school and a determination that it should be a place of welcome to all. The Catholic life and mission of the school is a regular focus for their meetings, and they are most recently involved in the quality assurance processes in place to monitor this. Governors worked positively with the local authority to create the Arc as an authority wide hub for those with specific learning needs. It is evident that the Arc and Hub provisions which meet the need of more vulnerable members of the community are fully rooted in the mission of the school. Governors and staff recognise the impact of the headteacher's leadership as both transformational and inspirational. It is widely appreciated and is making a difference. His vision empowers other leaders to do the same. Staff feel valued and supported for the work they do. Relevant staff development is in place, and governors and staff take an active role in working alongside and with the MAT (Multi-Academy Trust) and the Diocese of Shrewsbury.

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.....

3

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



Most students enjoy their religious education lessons, speak positively about them, and are engaged in the learning activities. Relationships between students and staff are positive and reflect mutual respect. Student voice indicates that the majority find lessons engaging and that their experience of learning in religious education is much improved when compared to previous quality assurance data. Most students benefit from the well-structured curriculum programme that is in place across all key stages. Religious knowledge and language in most lessons observed is sound. This planning means that overall, students are growing in confidence in their religious literacy as they move through school. For example, Year 7 students are confident and sure in their use of key words such as transcendence and omnipresence. They use them well to express their understanding of God and deepen their thinking. In the most effective lessons, the quality of questioning and brisk pace enables students to make sound progress in their learning. This is a particular strength at Key Stage 4. However, this is not yet seen consistently across all lessons. As a result, there are missed opportunities for further challenge to extend and enrich students' understanding, particularly at Key Stage 3. Marking is not yet consistent across all key stages, again this means that opportunities to challenge misconceptions and deepen student learning are not always grasped. Outcomes at Key Stage 4 are not yet good particularly for boys, and the department has a strategic plan to ensure improvement. Staff focus is relentless on teaching strategies classroom culture and behaviour. Data from across school shows improvement in religious education and supports the evidence that there is an improving trend. In the sixth form, students enjoy their learning. Teacher knowledge and challenge supports the learners to make sound progress in A level Philosophy and ethics. General religious education provision is appreciated by students as thought provoking. Their responses show the impact of the Catholic values that are developed across the school. The opportunity for more debate can further enhance and deepen the student experience at this level.

There is well structured provision with a strong curriculum intent. Curriculum sequencing is clear and there is consistency across the department in adhering to the schemes of learning. The department is fully compliant with the *Religious Education Directory* and has fully implemented this in the Key Stage 3 curriculum. Working within the wider Holy Family Catholic Multi Academy Trust there are training opportunities for staff to enhance pedagogy and practice in the classroom. Staff in the department welcome these opportunities. They go the extra mile for their students and provide extra learning opportunities beyond timetabled lesson for examination classes, including a Saturday school revision programme. The religious education department ensures that lesson materials are shared in good time with teaching assistants to the benefit of the students' learning.

The head of department has a strong vision for religious education, is passionate about it and communicates this effectively. Under her positive leadership she has a united and mutually supportive team. Expectations are high and collaborative planning and the quality assurance procedures in place enable a curriculum which aims to meet the needs of all learners. At the end of each day the department meets to review student progress and attitude. This contributes to a very dynamic and formative approach to supporting student learning. Governors and senior leaders are now using internal school, trust and external quality assurance and validation processes to support ongoing improvement in religious education.

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

3

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



There is a clear sense of the rhythm and routine to the prayer life at St Mary's with the opportunity for a variety of liturgical experiences for students across the school year including retreats and reconciliation. Form prayer and celebration of the word assemblies are rooted in the school's mission and link to the liturgical themes and Gospel reading. Each morning form time begins with the school prayer and a brief reflection which staff lead. Most students are attentive and respectful during this prayer and can link the positive impact that this has on their day. In the afternoon a longer opportunity for prayer is facilitated either through year assemblies or the Inspire form-based programme. In the best examples observed these are well structured occasions that encourage a prayerful reflective mood. Again, most students listen respectfully. Thoughtful reflections by the student diversity group in assembly spoke of their sense of belonging and staff linked this to the theme 'do the right thing', and to the school mission and values. The new chaplaincy group works with the community chaplain to prepare liturgies and prayer, for example for Advent and for Mass on the school's feast day, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. They are enthusiastic advocates for this involvement and are active in their parishes. These students speak warmly about Masses with the whole school celebrated at key liturgical points in the year. Some students are involved in preparing Masses including music and liturgical dance. Overall however, student leadership of prayer is currently limited. Opportunities for deeper reflection are not yet always fully grasped but in the best examples students are given time to pause and engage in quiet reflection.

The school's partnership with local parishes is a real strength and St Mary's is blessed by the opportunities this brings. The four priests from local parishes ensure there is a weekly celebration of Mass and Mass on holy days of obligation. All are welcome to attend, and this opportunity is cherished. The chapel is a calm and prayerful space. Staff speak of how they feel supported in their delivery of prayer. There is ongoing and relevant training in place to enable them to support the students they serve. There is regular support from the community chaplain and other training has

been provided by national Catholic leaders. Local clergy are involved in this training which has included a walk through the structure and elements of Holy Mass. Such training is appreciated and as a result staff are growing in confidence in their delivery of prayer and liturgy.

Leaders are ambitious for the St. Mary's community to experience an excellent Catholic education with prayer and liturgy central to this. It is a priority for governors and leaders. Most recent changes to the structure of prayer and liturgy mean that this is now routine, planned, resourced, and embedded in the day-to-day life of the school. There is a programme of quality assurance of form time including the delivery of prayer. Twice weekly briefing meetings begin with prayer which is led by staff on a rota basis. This gives staff a sense of mission and service to the week. Leaders recognise that student leadership and development of prayer in school is at an early stage. They have clear plans in place to embed this further. This is detailed in the newly adopted prayer and liturgy policy.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St. Mary's Catholic College, Wallasey
School unique reference number (URN)	143554
Full postal address of the school	Wallasey Village, Wallasey, Wirral CH45 3LN.
School phone number	0151 639 7531
Name of head teacher or principal	Mr. Kevin Maddocks
Chair of governing board	Mr. Charles Donnelly
School Website	www.stmaryswallasey.com
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Holy Family Catholic Multi Academy Trust
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Trustees	Diocese of Shrewsbury
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The inspection team

Mrs Jane Beever	Lead Inspector
Mr Martin Reynolds	Team Inspector
Mr Carl Fisher	Team Inspector

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