



DIOCESE OF  
**SHREWSBURY**

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**St Mary's Catholic College,  
Wallasey**

**URN: 105110**

**DfE No: 344 4611**

**3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> May 2016**

**Report on the  
Inspection of Denominational Education**

**Lead Inspector: Mr John Mc Cann**

**Link Inspector: Mr John Wilbraham**

**The inspection of the denominational education of  
St. Mary's Catholic College, Wallasey  
was carried out at the request of the governors of the school  
in fulfilment of their obligation under the requirements,  
and according to the directives of, the School Inspections Act 2005.**

**The school was inspected within the framework  
approved by the Bishop of Shrewsbury  
for the conduct of inspection of the denominational education of  
Catholic Secondary Schools within the Diocese.**

**Key for inspection grades**

**Grade 1 Outstanding**

**Grade 2 Good**

**Grade 3 Requires Improvement**

**Grade 4 Inadequate**

## **Description of the College**

St Mary's Catholic College is a large 11-18, voluntary aided, co-educational secondary school with a sixth form. The College is under the trusteeship of the Diocese of Shrewsbury and within Wirral Local Education Authority. The College has specialisms in performing arts and applied learning. St. Mary's mainly draws pupils from the many parishes it serves and the Roman Catholic and Joint Faith partner primary schools within them. There are 1,509 pupils on roll including 247 in the Sixth Form; 62% of the pupils are baptized Catholics with 24% from other Christian denominations and 2% from other world faith traditions. There are 124 members of teaching staff including the Head, 42% of whom are Catholic. The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium, which in this school provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is high. The number of students supported on school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.

The inspection team observed teaching in each key stage and all teachers of Religious Education who were timetabled on the days on inspection. Eleven lessons, at least one from each year group, and eleven teachers were observed. Students' work was sampled in each lesson as well as a scrutiny of students' work provided by the RE department together with pupils' subject reports. Inspectors spoke to students in their classes as well as conducting structured interviews with representative groups from each key stage. Inspectors took into account the 71 parents questionnaires which were returned concerning the Religious Education Department and the Catholic Life of the College. Discussions were held with the headteacher, Chair of the Governing Body, two deputy headteachers, head of Religious Education, college chaplain and a newly qualified teacher. Throughout the inspection the team had access to College and Departmental documentation and development plans.

### **Overall Effectiveness:**

**How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education**

**Grade 2**

This is a good college which has many strengths and effectively lives out its mission statement. The college has effectively met all but one of the recommendations for development raised in the last Section 48 inspection and has acknowledged this in its documentation and in discussions.

**The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the School**

**Grade 2**

This area is a strength of the college. Pupils are proud that they attend here and they are appreciative of all that is being done on their behalf by all staff. Many take on responsibilities and participate constructively in the Catholic Life of the School

far beyond curriculum lessons and activities .Examples of this include preparation of and participation in liturgies and assemblies; charitable fund raising; activities such as Operation Christmas Child; The Catholic Children’s Society; the annual pensioners Christmas Party and The Thursday Club; the sixth Form operate a ‘Guardian’ scheme supporting younger students. Many opportunities exist within the school day and in planned extra-curricular activities for all students to engage in prayer, reflection and enquiry. Some of the pupils are active within their parishes. The pupils show interest in the religious life of others and treat those of different beliefs with respect.

In most areas of the college, there are aspirational quotations and images of present and past students which celebrate their achievements in a range of fields. Within the college’s Mission Statement – ‘To Love and Serve Christ Within Us All’ seven areas of shared responsibility are identified which exemplify how the Mission is to be achieved. Commitment to the wider community and service for others runs throughout the college. The vast majority of pupils are considerate of others within the class and outside in the grounds. Incidents of bullying are rare and the pupils state they are dealt with efficiently, effectively and fairly. From parent questionnaires and pupil interviews it is overwhelmingly believed that this is a safe and secure place in which to learn where everyone is valued and success celebrated.

## **How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education Grade 2**

Students achieve well in all key stages, benefitting from appropriate and well-structured curricula. The ALPS performance measure indicates that A level achievement has improved significantly from level 6 in 2014 to level 3, indicative of current excellent achievement. The numbers of students taking A level in Year 13 are, over the past three years, 18, 15 and 16, with most students having continued from AS. The percentage of students achieving grades A\*-C over the same period are 67%, 80% and 75%. At GCSE, performance is broadly in line with English and Mathematics, with the following being the percentage of students achieving of A\* - C over the past three years: RS – 52%, 46% and 51%; English 68%, 57%, 55%; Mathematics 64%, 45%, 49%. The higher grades of A\* and A closely match performance in English. In 2015, 26.5% of students made 4+ levels of progress ( English 24.6% for comparison). At the end of key stage 3, the percentage of students achieving level 6+ was 41% in 2014 and 64% in 2015, with improvement in the ‘pupil premium gap’; girls continue to outperform boys. The structure, resourcing and delivery of the curriculum, supported by an effectively applied assessment policy have enabled improvement. There are opportunities for further success in the ‘GCSE- driven’ key stage 3, especially if students are able to develop skills within the philosophical explorations, not only to achieve at the higher end but also to enable all students to become fully engaged in the subject. The majority of students of all ages speak positively about religious education and see its relevance to their own lives and the wider world; they also take pride in their work which is very well organised and presented and they benefit from excellent classroom environments.

## **How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship** **Grade 2**

In whole year groups pupils respond with respect, reverence and improving levels of participation and ownership. They listen well and relate much of their prayer and reflection to the needs of local and wider communities and service to others. Pupils benefit greatly from the availability of the well- appointed and resourced chapel and an active and effective chaplain, During the inspection, whole year Acts of Collective Worship were observed which, indicated positive levels of engagement and attitude and full acceptance of worship as a key element of the life of the school. Many staff appreciate and draw regularly upon the comprehensive materials provided on a weekly basis by the chaplain to support prayer and reflection in form time. Staff value the support provided by the chaplain and, as necessary, members of the RE team and pastoral staff. All staff has access to a published calendar at the beginning of the year of weekly themes to support collective worship and assist tutors in forward planning. However the approach to, and the provision of, form base acts of collective worship is not consistent throughout the college and needs to be addressed. Events and liturgical seasons are appropriately marked, often through the celebration of the Eucharist and/or with the use of Scripture, artefacts, and music. There is a chaplaincy team which meets five times a year under the leadership of a deputy head which focuses on strategic planning.

## **How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan and implement improvements to outcomes for pupils** **Grade 2**

Leaders, governors and managers demonstrate a strong commitment to the Church's mission in education, with spiritual and moral development a priority. The college sets out its vision under seven areas of shared responsibility in which it seeks to make an impact and which is at the heart of all it does. There is evidence that it is striving to make a positive and effective impact in each of the areas.

The college has a dedicated chaplain who is highly regarded by the whole school community for the opportunities that are provided with the support of others to develop the pupils' spiritual and prayer life. Monitoring systems are in place to check on provision and outcomes. Leaders and managers are aware of the strengths and areas for further development, especially in relation to consistent provision and developing pupil participation in the planning and delivery of Acts of Collective Worship.

There is a strong and effective pastoral support system in place to support students with different needs. It is clear from pupils' interviews that there is a high regard for the Catholic Life of the school and the encouragement for everyone to be involved in it.

**How well leaders, governors and managers resource, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvements to outcomes for pupils** **Grade 1**

Leaders, managers and governors are highly committed to developing the quality of Religious Education to the highest level. Levels of departmental funding are commensurate and appropriate with other core subjects. An effective range of systematic monitoring and training activities are in place which have succeeded in very significant improvements. Issues are identified and strategies implemented to ensure rapid improvement; for example, in order to improve outcomes at GCSE the whole curriculum in Key Stages 3 and 4 has been developed with the GCSE assessment process at their core; this has resulted in students' familiarisation with the methods of successfully answering the different types of questions.

Outstanding use of the assessment process results in well targeted planning and strategic action taken. The Chair of the Governing Body is also the link governor for the Religious Education Department. The Chair together with 2 other governors meet with the core subject leaders 3 times a year to receive data and discuss academic progress within each subject. The college has a protocol for link meetings and the Chair has the intention of developing a more structured approach to meetings with the Head of Department.

Curriculum provision in each Key Stage meets the Bishops' Conference requirements.

**The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education** **Grade 2**

Teaching at Key Stage 4 and 5 is never less than good and there are some examples of outstanding practice. All of the teaching in these areas is effective in ensuring that pupils are consistently interested in their learning and making good progress. As a result of good assessment procedures, teachers and learning support personnel plan well to meet the needs of all pupils. Support provided by other adults is effectively deployed. Teachers have strong subject knowledge which inspires and challenges most pupils and contributes to their good progress. As a result, in all lessons, the vast majority of pupils are keen to learn, concentrate well, enjoy their work and achieve well. Good and imaginative use is made of resources and activity, including technology to maximise learning. Due to the very structured nature of the courses provided across the years in KS3 and KS4 there could be times when extended discussion and writing opportunities for the most able are missed. All students are consistently provided with constructive and helpful written feedback at GCSE with examples of highly effective marking and feedback in KS5. Sixth Form students know how well they have done and can discuss what they need to do to sustain good progress. Achievement and effort are highlighted and personalized advice is regularly given and appreciated.

Greater consistency in the application of the college's literacy marking scheme in all years will assist in the achievement of even higher levels.

Some differences in the quality of teaching and learning in KS3 are more apparent as students' responses and engagement are more varied with a minority of students sometimes being content to adopt a passive role. As in other key stages the provision of materials to support learning is excellent as are the learning bases throughout the Department both in and outside of the classrooms.

**The extent to which the Religious Education Curriculum promotes pupils' learning**

**Grade 1**

The Religious Education curriculum is enriched through imaginative and well planned strategies to capitalise on the expertise within and beyond the college. The Religious Education curriculum provides many opportunities for spiritual and moral development. Extra-curricular opportunities are varied, have a high take up and are much enjoyed. Due to the very structured nature of the courses provided across the years in KS3 and KS4 there could be times when extended discussion and writing opportunities for the most able are missed. The curriculum is characterized by ready reference to local and world-wide social and ethical issues and opportunities for, and reflection on, service to others. The curriculum offered matches fully the requirements of Religious Education Curriculum Directory. The college's plans for the introduction of new curriculum developments at GCSE in 2016 are clear and appropriate.

**The Quality of Collective Worship provided by the school**

**Grade 1**

Year group and whole college Acts of Collective Worship are given high profile and are well delivered with expertise by staff, chaplain and clergy with the college seeking to increase ownership and participation by pupils. Staff and students are, for the most part, comfortable praying together. There is a range of formal and informal opportunities for daily prayer in form time, assemblies and chapel area. Attendance by parents and others associated with the school is facilitated and encouraged where appropriate. Staff review and plan improvements to the school's provision and are planning to develop ways of ensuring that pupils are skilled and equipped in leading prayer and owning aspects of collective worship. Staff value the prayer and reflection/discussion materials supplied by the chaplain to support them in form time although this significant resource is not always used. The Church seasons and feasts are well celebrated. Themes are consistent with the Catholic character of the college and take note of the religious diversity of pupils and the wider community when appropriate. The chaplain and local clergy significantly enrich and support the provision and their contribution is much appreciated by the staff, governors and pupils.

## **Recommendations for further development**

1. Revisit the Mission Statement with staff and students so that it is known and, more importantly, its implications understood within a Catholic College context.
2. Further develop pupil ownership and ensure effective delivery of Collective Worship in Tutor Groups. Make a focal prayer space/place in each form base which has a Christian symbol as one of its features.
3. Review the impact of the existing courtyard spaces and the potential to create places of prayer, reflection, and inspiration to further enhance existing indoor RE provision.
4. Apply the whole school literacy marking policy consistently across the Religious Education Department to provide further guidance for improvement and to give opportunities for students to respond to these targets.
5. Within Religious Education provide greater differentiation within lessons to enable extended and enriched writing and discussion opportunities particularly for the most able while ensuring the engagement of all students.



## INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<b>Key to judgements:</b>	<b>Judgement</b>
<b>Grade 1 = outstanding, Grade 2 = good, Grade 3 = requires improvement and Grade 4 = inadequate</b>	

<b><u>OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS:</u> How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship</b>	<b>2</b>

<b><u>LEADERS GOVERNORS AND MANAGERS</u> How effective leaders, governors and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the school</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>How well leaders, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils</b>	<b>1</b>

<b>PROVISION How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic Education</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school</b>	<b>1</b>

<b>OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS</b>	
<b>How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education</b>	<b>2</b>

