



# St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic High School, a Voluntary Academy

URN: 149873

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Salford

24th January–25 January 2024

## Summary of key findings

### 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

Yes

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

## What the school does well

- There is a strong sense of community at St Cuthbert's which is evident in the quality of relationships across the school.
- Students can articulate the social teaching of the Church and as a result, seek opportunities to serve those most in need.
- The Religious Education department is well resourced and is at the heart of the school.
- Pastoral care is identified by staff, students and families as a strength.

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## What the school needs to improve

- The school would benefit from dedicated chaplaincy time, either through the appointment of a chaplain or additional dedicated time for school staff to undertake this valuable role.
- In religious education lessons, teachers do not always use assessment effectively in lessons so that gaps in learning are not identified which can hinder progress. Strategies to check all students' understanding of key prior knowledge should be developed.
- Develop collective worship so that there is greater variety of prayer, making use of the *Prayer and Liturgy Directory*.

## 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

**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

2

The distinctive Catholic identity of St Cuthbert's is understood by students, staff and governors. The school has recently reviewed its mission statement which encourages all students to 'make Christ known' and 'be the best we can be in everything that we do'; this is known and lived out by the school community. The mission statement is supported by the St Cuthbert's CARE values of Catholic, Aspiration, Respect and Excellence which are referenced widely around school in lessons and in assemblies. Students can articulate the social teaching of the Church and seek opportunities to serve those in need. This is evident in fundraising activities for the local community which are planned by the student chaplaincy team, supporting local charities such as Rochdale Foodbank and Springhill Hospice, as well as national and global charities such as Macmillan Cancer Research and Cafod. Student chaplains are also integral in the preparation and delivery of the school's collective worship programme. Following the pandemic, whole school Masses have been reintroduced, providing opportunities for students to become more involved in the Catholic life of St Cuthbert's.

The school's buildings and classrooms reflect its distinctive Catholic identity and are well maintained. There is a dedicated chapel and an impressive suite of classrooms for religious education. All classrooms have a 'sacred space' that is used during collective worship. Students value the school's chaplaincy provision which is well supported by the member of staff with responsibility for Catholic Life and the Faith in Action staff group. This work would be enhanced by the appointment of a chaplain, or through additional dedicated time for existing members of staff. St Cuthbert's serves a diverse community, admitting a significant number of students who have recently arrived from abroad, and there is a strong culture of welcome for all. Students are happy, confident and feel supported by the pastoral team. The school puts a significant resource

into caring for some of the most vulnerable students through its special needs provision and inclusion unit. A majority of students are not Catholic and the spiritual needs of students of other faiths are taken into consideration in school plans. Students demonstrate a strong sense of respect for all, including those of other faiths and this is a strength of the school community. While behaviour in lessons is generally compliant, self-respect and respect for others is not always evident in unstructured times.

Leaders and governors are committed to a distinct Catholic vision of education and the link governor for Catholic Life provides regular detailed reports to the local governing board on the quality of religious education and the liturgical life of the school. These reports provide valuable evidence for governors to monitor progress against development plans. A recent priority has been incorporating Catholic social teaching into the curriculum. The school is in the process of embedding Catholic social teaching into the curriculum and building the confidence of staff in its delivery. Policies and procedures in school demonstrate a Catholic identity and the school's individual charism is seen through the celebration of saints' days and a strong focus on catering for the needs of the local community. This is particularly evident in the Skills for Life course which is tailored to the specific issues facing young people in the area. The strong sense of community is reinforced by a commitment of staff to implement the mission statement and support students during their time at St Cuthbert's and beyond. The provision for relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) is well planned and meets the statutory and diocesan requirements and is faithful to the Church's teaching. The implementation of the course is not as effective as leaders have planned with non-specialist staff less confident in delivering the material. The school communicates well with parents via a regular newsletter with a dedicated section on Catholic life.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

**Pupil outcomes**

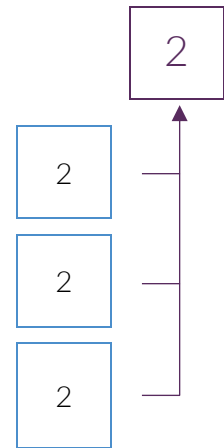
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

**Provision**

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

**Leadership**

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



Students are developing secure knowledge, understanding and skills that reflect the learning required by the *Religious Education Directory* and make good progress when measured against the planned curriculum for each year. As a result, students including disadvantaged students and students with special educational needs and/ or disabilities (SEND), achieve well in all year groups. Students make good progress when compared with other core curriculum subjects and, over time, outcomes are moving towards the national average for GCSE Religious Education. Students enjoy their religious education lessons and are becoming increasingly religiously literate, using key concepts and subject specific vocabulary. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, students were able discuss the role of Jesus’s divinity while being fully human. Students contribute to class discussion and can speak with confidence about what they have learnt, but opportunities remain to develop students’ fluency and confidence in talking about what they have learned. There are only limited opportunities for independent and creative work. Books are well presented with students taking a pride in their work and most students engage well in the lessons. Behaviour in lessons is generally very good with minor disruptions dealt with effectively by staff in religious education lessons. Students can see the links that exist between what they are learning in religious education and their lives, including links to ethical issues. Students are able to articulate how religious education helps them to develop their faith and they are confident to ask searching questions. One Year 10 student commented ‘in RE I can discuss what really matters to me’.

Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge. The school has invested in a specialist team of staff who are well led and committed to providing high quality religious education lessons. However, in lessons teachers do not systematically check the understanding of prior learning of all students before new content is taught, which can affect progress. Where questioning was

used effectively, teachers were able to elicit detailed answers from students and identify misconceptions. The approach to questioning and assessing prior knowledge is not consistent and this is an area for development. A central bank of lesson plans in the religious education department provides an excellent resource for all staff. However, there is a tendency for starter activities to extend too far into the lesson leaving less time for new learning and insufficient opportunities for periods of reflection around the important spiritual and moral issues that are covered in the curriculum.

Leaders and governors ensure that the school curriculum for religious education is an expression of the *Religious Education Directory* and the department has been given time to plan the new curriculum with support from diocesan advisers. Religious education has parity with other core curriculum subjects in relation to resourcing, timetable, staffing and accommodation and subject specific professional development is seen as a priority for the department. The additional whole school responsibilities of some members of the RE department is recognised by school leaders and plans are in place to support additional capacity in staffing. The subject leader has a clear vision of the department and is improving outcomes in religious education over time. The curriculum is well planned and the needs of individual students are catered for. However, there are only limited opportunities for enrichment to enhance students' learning in religious education. This is already an area identified by the curriculum leader for development.

## Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

### Collective worship key judgement grade

**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

3

**Leadership**

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

2

2

Students participate in regular prayer and worship which is well structured with centrally provided resources based on the themes of the liturgical calendar. There are a significant number of non-Catholic children at the school and they appreciate the Catholic ethos, enjoy religious education lessons and are responsive to the opportunities that teachers give them to pray. The school's student chaplaincy team have been involved in the construction of morning prayers and are proud of their contribution. The school prayer is known by all students. Students value the opportunities available for prayer and liturgy and can articulate why this is an important aspect of their school life but there is a lack of variety in the type of worship with limited opportunities for periods of quiet mediation or spontaneous prayer. School leaders plan to utilise the *Prayer and Liturgy Directory* to develop the building blocks of prayer, including symbol, scripture, music, silence, and space. All students are given a chance to respond to collective worship through individual prayers that are placed in the 'sacred space' created in every classroom. However, few were able to articulate the importance of prayer in the life of the school, with most describing it as part of school routine. A small number of students are involved in evaluating the quality of prayer and liturgy and this could be further developed. The reintroduction of whole school Masses this year is very welcome with one student describing their first experience of a school Mass as 'meaningful time spent together'. Students spoke with enthusiasm about the participation of the school choir in Mass.

Prayer and liturgy are well planned and key events are marked in the school calendar such as Holocaust memorial and remembrance services. The daily pattern of prayer is limited to morning prayers and leaders may wish to consider prayers before lunch and at the end of the school day to enhance provision. The current structure follows a common pattern which is understood and followed by students and incorporates scripture; however, the daily structure limits the range of

types of praying used with little experience of mediative prayer, silence, singing or music in form prayer. The school chapel is permanently dedicated as a space for prayer and the celebration of the sacraments and is used for chapel assemblies. Staff have had recent professional development on prayer and liturgy and they feel supported. Responses to staff questionnaires recognise the priority given to collective worship as an important development in school in recent years and that this training is increasing their confidence in supporting students to lead prayer. The appointment of a chaplain or dedicated chaplaincy time for another staff member would be beneficial for the school, allowing more time to prepare for a wider variety of approaches to prayer and liturgy.

The school's policy on collective worship identifies the key features required for effective prayer in school and is fit for purpose. Staff feel supported in applying this policy with new staff describing a supportive environment in which they understand their responsibilities as educators in a Catholic school. Leaders have planned prayer and liturgy in line with the liturgical year alongside other significant events through the year and quality assure the delivery of these plans on a regular basis. Governors play an active role in prayer and liturgy and regularly attend celebrations and events in school. The recent re-introduction of school Masses has been welcomed by leaders and governors, with the conduct of the majority of students commented upon positively by those present. Leaders and governors ensure that prayer and liturgy remains a priority when setting budgets and allocating resources.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic High School, A Voluntary Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	149873
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3544612
Full postal address of the school	St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic High School, Shaw Road, Thornham, Rochdale, OL16 4RX
School phone number	01706647761
Head teacher	Shaun Shields
Chair of Governors/Trustees	David Conlon
School Website	<a href="http://www.scrchs.com/">http://www.scrchs.com/</a>
Trusteeship	Diocese of Salford
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Teresa of Calcutta Catholic Academy Trust
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Voluntary Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	1 <sup>st</sup> March 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

## The inspection team

Michael Wright	Lead
Helen Hall	Team
Ed Allanson	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

