



DIOCESE OF  
**SHREWSBURY**

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DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT:

**THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL  
AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

School:	St John Plessington Catholic College
Address:	Old Chester Road Bebington Wirral CH63 7LF
Tel No:	0151 645 5049
URN:	139031
Headteacher:	Mr S Rylance
Chair of Governors:	TBA
Date of Inspection:	10 & 11 July 2019
Inspectors:	Mr J Wilbraham Mrs A-M Appleton

## **Our College Mission Statement**

**At St John Plessington Catholic College we aim to be:**

***'Always faithful to Christ'***

**Our College is a community where we strive to:**

- **Ensure that faith and worship is lived, taught and celebrated**
- **Provide a curriculum that enables all to experience fullness of life**
- **Be a witness to Christ as we work with our parishes and the wider community**
- **Value and celebrate the achievements of all**
- **Communicate effectively and work in partnership with each other**
- **Support all our College community as we journey together**
- **Protect the environment for future generations**
- **Commit to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of Children and Young People.**

## **SCHOOL: St John Plessington Catholic College, Bebington, Wirral**

Date of last Section 5 Inspection – April/May 2013.

Outcome - outstanding

Date of last full denominational inspection – November 2007

Date of last denominational inspection monitoring visit – November 2013.

Outcome - outstanding

It was recommended after the **monitoring visit of 2013** that the college:

- **Continue to aspire to the implementation of the school's mission as presented within its Academy goals and values**
- **Ensure the continued implementation of the rigorous programme to regain the momentum of the upward trajectory of performance at GCSE**

### **PROGRESS MADE WITH AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT FROM THE PREVIOUS INSPECTION**

- The school has continued in its application of its declared aims and values to the welfare and achievements of its students. It has also maintained upward progress in Religious Studies at GCSE. Both of these are commented upon in the relevant sections of the main part of this report.

**OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS: how effective is the school in providing Catholic Education.**

2

*The above judgement on overall effectiveness is based on all the available evidence following the evaluation of:*

**CATHOLIC LIFE**

2

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

2

**COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

1

## Summary of key findings:

### **This is a good Catholic school**

- St John Plessington Catholic College is a good, popular Catholic mixed comprehensive school with some outstanding features and provides a supportive, well-ordered, enriching and challenging experience for its pupils.
- Some issues relating to governance and staff welfare are currently being addressed but appear not to have impacted negatively on the welfare and progress of students.
- The Mission Statement and derivative aims are significant factors in enabling pupils to make progress in their learning and personal and spiritual development.
- Pupils are well supported in making the most of the opportunities provided for them.
- Pupils are proud to be part of the school community and willingly contribute to, and benefit from, the Catholic Life of the school. They have a wide variety of opportunities to put their faith into action within and beyond the school community, and are able to broaden cultural experiences in activities such as visits to Swaziland, along with other residential and extra-curricular experiences.
- Standards of pupil behaviour in classrooms and around the school are very good, as is the respect and courtesy shown by pupils to each other.
- Most pupils make good progress in Religious Education and results in Religious Studies GCSE continue to improve.
- The school provides a rich and varied range of opportunities for Collective Worship, prayer and reflection, following the Church's liturgical year, its feasts and seasons and other relevant themes. This is all well-coordinated by, and supported by, the work of the School Chaplain.
- Links with some of the parishes the school draws from build on pupils' experiences and have a positive impact on their spiritual development. The school's congratulation of and support for those being confirmed, and links with parishes for events for the elderly are examples of this.
- Partnerships with other diocesan schools over a number of years have been developed, and students participate in diocesan events.

## What the school needs to do to improve further

- Ensure that the curricular RE time requirement is met in all key stages and is in place by September 2020
- Increase the number of specialist RE teachers delivering the Sixth Form General RE programme
- As the new GCSE becomes more familiar and settled develop strategies to increase the number of higher grades. This may assist in increasing the numbers at A level.
- Leaders and governors to ensure that the school's declared aims and values fully embrace all members of the school community, including staff

## Information about the Inspection

The Inspection of St John Plessington Catholic College was carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Shrewsbury Diocesan Framework and Schedule for Denominational Inspections approved by the Bishop of Shrewsbury. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation and the inspection schedule follows the criteria set by the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers (NBRIA 2017).

The inspector reviewed in detail the following aspects:

- The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school
- The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school
- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education
- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship
- The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education, Collective Worship and the Catholic Life of the school

The inspection was carried out by two inspectors over two days:

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 10 classes, seeing all of the RE department teach.
- Meetings with the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Assistant Headteacher (RE line manager), Parent Governor, the Chaplain, leaders from the pastoral, inclusion and

safeguarding teams, the Head of RE, a newly qualified teacher, pupil representatives, a visiting member of the Multi Academy Trust, a telephone interview with the school improvement partner and a variety of other discussions with various members of the school community.

- Attendance at 2 year assemblies and 2 form tutor periods.
- A sample of RE books and other work and departmental documentation from all RE teachers were scrutinized, together with assessment and tracking data.
- Responses to pupil, staff and parent questionnaires were collected and analyzed.
- A wide range of documentation was made available prior to and during the inspection for scrutiny, including Diocesan Self Evaluation Form (DSEF), departmental and whole school development plans, staff handbook, departmental handbook, Collective Worship and prayer resources, monitoring and evaluation data, sex and relationships and safeguarding policies and the school prospectus.
- Learning walks were undertaken throughout the school covering all teaching areas to inspect the presentation of the Catholic Life of the school and pupils' behaviour and attitudes.

### **Information about this school**

- St John Plessington Catholic College is an above average sized and expanding non-selective comprehensive mixed Academy 11-18 school in Bebington. It is in the Diocese of Shrewsbury and located in the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral.
- Due to increasing demand for places, the school now has an annual admission number of 270, and there are currently 1579 pupils on roll, with 305 in Sixth Form. The school has 152 pupils from minority ethnic groups. 232 are on the Free School Meals register and 208 are on the SEND register. 35 students have Educational Health Care Plans.
- The overriding majority of students come from the following schools and their parishes:  
Christ The King Catholic Primary School  
Our Lady & St Edward's Catholic Primary School  
St Anne's Catholic Primary School  
St John's Catholic Junior School  
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School (Birkenhead)  
St Michael & All Angels Catholic Primary School  
St Peter's Catholic Primary School  
St Werburgh's Catholic Primary School  
Plus students from a wide range of other Primary schools
- The college's proportion of Catholic pupils is 75%.
- There are 145 full time teachers and 15 part time teachers,(FTE 157.5) with 14 teaching assistants
- 8 full-time teachers teach in the RE department, with one part-time teacher (0.6) with 6 non-specialists delivering the Sixth Form General RE.

## Full report – inspection judgments

### CATHOLIC LIFE

**The Catholic Life of the school is Good**

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The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	1
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school	2
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school	2

- The Mission Statement is brief and clear and seeks to underpin the life and achievements of the school. The importance given to the Catholic Life of the college is evidenced in the policy, planning and review documents and the variety and quality of activities available to the students. Some recent issues have impacted upon aspects of the life of the college community and are being addressed; responses in the staff questionnaires and points raised during interviews were considered during the inspection. However, current structures and systems in place in the school, along with the commitment of the new Headteacher and staff, have ensured the continued and uninterrupted provision for pupil welfare and progress. Leaders and governors need to ensure that the declared gospel values are consistently and appropriately applied to all members of the college community, including staff. Strategies are being undertaken to address these issues.
- School Development and Self-evaluation documentation indicate the aspiration to integrate the school’s mission and values into all aspects of the school’s work.
- Almost all pupils appreciate, value and actively participate in the Catholic Life and mission of the school. They respond positively and are often keen to participate in or lead those activities that promote the Catholic Life of the school, both within school and in the wider community. This is evident in students’ attitudes, ‘student voice’ responses, community and charitable activities, prayer and worship, relationships and the whole approach to learning and achievement.
- Pupils are not only proud to be part of their school family, but demonstrate this by their consistent acceptance of the required standards of behaviour and work. Almost all pupils believe that they attend a good school and appreciate the care and support offered by the staff at all levels.
- Pupils see the school as a family which is concerned with the development of the whole person. Almost all pupils show a deep respect for others and are often articulate in seeing this as an integral part of the Christian faith.
- Pupil behaviour in and around the school is very good. This makes for a calm and ordered atmosphere conducive to learning and personal development
- The school’s effective chaplaincy and other pastoral provision is highly valued by the pupils, as are the regular and varied opportunities it provides for reflection, worship and celebration on an individual, small group, year group and whole school basis.
- The school offers opportunities for voluntary and whole school Mass, along with a variety of opportunities for prayer and reflection.

- Almost all pupils take full advantage of the opportunities for personal support and development and appear happy, confident and secure in their physical, emotional and spiritual development. Pastoral and spiritual provision, along with safeguarding, is well-coordinated, comprehensive, effective and appreciated. The Assisi Centre effectively provides support and reintegration for pupils experiencing difficulties. The form system bears names of saints and other inspirational figures bringing the school's mission to the fore.
- Teaching staff, on appointment, are provided with induction into the Catholic Ethos of the school and its demands and implications. They are also provided with resources for praying with pupils.
- The school supports local homeless charities such as the Wirral food bank appeal. This year's target of £10,000 has been reached. Collection for CAFOD also take place and the work of CAFOD is integrated into the taught curriculum. Many other activities take place, for example, Macmillan mornings, shoebox and hamper Christmas appeals and Lourdes pilgrimages

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

### Religious Education is good

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How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education	3

- Pupils enjoy their learning in Religious Education; this was evident in lesson observations and meeting with members of the college council. For example, pupils said that they enjoyed being able to evaluate moral issues and understand other faiths and cultures.
- The GCSE results have improved over time; however, last year, as with many schools, there was a decline in outcomes. The national average for GCSE Religious Studies (Eduqas) in Catholic schools was 71% grades 4-9 in 2018. The school achieved 62%, indicating good performance when taking into account value added and whole-cohort entry. GCSE results are similar to English and the gap between boys and girls has been closing.
- A level results are good (VA 0.11) but with a very small number of students. With greater confidence in the new specifications and exam technique embedded into Years 7-9 curriculum, in time the results should increase. This in turn may encourage more students to study Religious Studies at A level.
- Over the inspection 10 lessons were observed. All Religious Education staff were observed and all year groups who were in school. The teaching seen over the inspection was outstanding, with numerous examples of highly effective practice. There is consistency across the department which allows the department to run smoothly and efficiently. Staff are creative and their lessons engage the pupils. In all lessons observed, pupils were stretched and challenged, and in discussions with pupils they felt that their teachers wanted to really push them. In addition the pupils felt that their Religious Education teachers were approachable and always willing to help them.
- During the work scrutiny a wide range of books was inspected; boys/girls, ages, abilities, EAL, SEN and PP. There was a selection of books from each member of the department. The books indicated that there is a culture where students are encouraged to take pride in their work. The Head of Department has robust systems in place to enable continuous assessment in all learning programmes. The outcome of this assessment informs further teaching and learning. The school is confident that the systems, strategies and personnel in place will lead to improved examination success.
- The Religious Education department is extremely well led. The Head of Department has a clear vision of how she sees Religious Education in a Catholic school. She is very hard working and organized and has motivated the Religious Education department and all staff have responded positively. She leads by example and she takes her department with her on the journey. As well as formal observations twice a year and work scrutiny, she also completes “snapshots” that allows for further

evaluation of the department. The Head of Department is supported by her line-manager and she has regular meetings with him to monitor and evaluate the department.

- Despite the foregoing comments about the highly effective leadership of the department, the school governance and leadership have not been meeting the time requirements for curricular RE, as specified by the Bishops' Conference. Provision does not meet the 10% required for years 7, 8 and 9, and the 5% for Sixth Form General RE (currently not taught by RE specialists). Plans are in place to address these issues but may not be fully effective immediately. Sixth form General RE lacks specialist Religious Education teachers delivering the programme.

## COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

### Collective Worship is outstanding

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How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	1
The quality of provision for Collective Worship	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship	1

- Worship, prayer and the liturgical life of the school are seen as vital components of its success in enabling pupils to achieve and develop personally. It is well structured, and accepted as the norm by pupils and staff.
- Pupils are able to make contributions to, or lead, prayer and Collective Worship depending upon their age and experience. Their contributions are varied in style and presentation and pupils are always respectful to whoever is leading prayer or worship.
- Through the local clergy the school provides a weekly voluntary Mass and other celebrations of Mass for other occasions. Classes of pupils are also timetabled to attend weekly Mass and this gives them a positive experience of preparing and participating in liturgy. Effective guidance and support is given as appropriate by the Chaplain.
- The experience of living and working in a community which accepts prayer as part of daily life is evidenced in its effect on the pupils. They have a respect for those of other faiths and this is reflected in the manner in which pupils prepare and participate in prayer or liturgy.
- Praying together is part of the daily experience for and fosters in them a keen sense of social responsibility.
- The Chaplain prepares and disseminates high quality resources to help staff with leading pupils in prayer, although staff and pupils are welcome to use their own resources too. Many staff contribute actively to prayers and assemblies. Music and singing are part of the provision for worship and the pupils have provided such for diocesan celebrations.
- Collective Worship has a clear purpose, message and direction. The themes chosen for worship reflect a clear understanding of the liturgical seasons and the Church's mission, along with appropriate responses to disasters and other global issues.
- Prayer and worship are effectively and regularly monitored and evaluated with findings being recorded and reported on. This ensures that pupils are given their entitlement to appropriate and high value experiences and opportunities.
- The Chaplain's work does not only impact upon prayer and worship but is also very supportive of the college's pastoral and curricular provision. He has a significant impact on the provision for worship and prayer, along with broader aspects of the religious life of the college.
- Some further attention needs to be given to providing more training to staff in leading pupils in prayer and worship. A planned programme for this would be a beneficial addition to the CPD prospectus. An Ethos Day for staff is planned for the forthcoming academic year.