



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for **St Benet Biscop Catholic Academy, Bedlington**

URN: 141814

Carried out on behalf of the Most Rev Malcolm McMahon, Archbishop of Liverpool and Apostolic Administrator of the diocese of Hexham and Newcastle on:

Date: 29-30 March 2023

Overall effectiveness The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....	3
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.....	3
Religious education (p.5) The quality of curriculum religious education.....	3
Collective worship (p.7) The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.....	3
The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	x
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	x
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Partially

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- The school has an unwavering commitment to social action, providing students and staff with a range of opportunities to become involved in charitable initiatives.
- There is a strong chaplaincy provision which is deeply valued by staff and which continues to strive for an ambitious vision of inclusive prayer and liturgy for students.
- Staff are positive role models for students and live out the school's Catholic life and mission, being committed to wanting the best for all students.
- Sixth form students have a strong sense of community and feel highly valued as individuals in the sixth form.
- Effective curriculum planning from the religious education lead creates a well-sequenced curriculum journey for students across all key stages.

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:

- Ensure students are able to share in, embrace, and articulate the school's vision for Catholic life and mission of the school.
- Implement effective strategies of adaptive teaching so that all students including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the disadvantaged are able to make sustained progress.
- Improve student engagement and participation in prayer and liturgy.

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:.....	3
Pupil outcomes The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school	3
Provision The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school	3
Leadership How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school	3

Leaders and staff have a vision for the Catholic life and mission of St Benet Biscop School but students do not yet fully share in this. The school's mission statement, 'To seek wholeness through faith, quest and learning to be what God intends us to be' is not yet known or lived out by students. As a result, students are indifferent to the school's Catholic identity and struggle to understand what it means to belong to a Catholic community. There are opportunities to become involved in social action which have been carefully planned to ensure that all students can participate in charity work. Both students and staff speak of their involvement in helping a local charity, the Matthew Project. There are increasing numbers of students who participate in 'Justice and Peace Club' and take part in award schemes such as Faith in Action and the Pope John Paul II award. Retreats are becoming increasingly popular amongst students, with over 60 students in Year 9 participating in a residential retreat to the Emmaus Youth Village. Students in Year 7 are particularly aligned with the school's desire to pursue the common good and to serve those in need. This demonstrates how the school can win the hearts and minds of students in living out the ambitious vision for Catholic life and mission. However, not all students fully invest in the school's chaplaincy provision. At times, the behaviour of students is challenging which consequently can result in a lack of consideration shown for themselves and others.

The school has prioritised displaying the school's Catholic character across the school site. The mission statement and the core values of the school are creatively displayed in the main hall in the form of a vibrant and engaging wall wrap. The chapel has been moved to be at the heart of the school. It creates a prayerful and quiet place of reflection which students across all year

groups voluntarily use. However, key signs of the school's identity, mission and charism are yet to inform and inspire students in their own personal sense of belonging to the school community. Staff are positive role models and seek to provide a good level of pastoral care to all students. They aim to create a supportive and joyful community which is known and valued by many students. Some students, however, are resistant to fully committing themselves to the ethos of the school and, as a result, express themselves as being unhappy and having a lack of confidence in, and understanding of, their role and value within the school community.

Leaders and governors can effectively articulate a highly ambitious vision for the Catholic life and mission of the school which holds Christ at the centre of the running and development of the school. There is an effective partnership between school leaders, members of the Trust and the local governing committee who are passionate about providing a high-quality Catholic education for all students. The implementation of this vision has not yet been successfully lived out as there is a discrepancy between how students and adults bear witness to the school's mission. Leaders have devised creative ways to engage parents and families through the form of the weekly newsletter which provides regular updates linked to the school's ethos. Links with the local parish have been re-formed after the pandemic hindered regular opportunities for the school and the parish to work cohesively. Leaders and governors have developed systems of monitoring and evaluation to quality assure the Catholic life and mission of the school. This however has not extended to students taking a leading role and, as a result, their contributions are inconsistent and lack impact.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

3

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.....

3

Leadership

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

3

Students work well to remember previously taught content during individual lessons through strong routines that have been embedded into the start of lessons. Prior content is revisited regularly allowing most students to know and remember more. In the most effective lessons, students are highly engaged and challenged. However, it is not yet the case that consistently high expectations are evident in all classes meaning that engagement and behaviour can vary. Students are given opportunities to think ethically and theologically but not all students can make the link between their study of religious education and the impact this can serve for them as individuals. Recent examination data shows that attainment has significantly improved from previous results, but this is not the case for all cohorts. Individual needs of students are not always catered for, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Some students have a limited interest in religious education and gave inspectors mixed responses when asked about their enjoyment of the subject.

Teachers are committed to religious education and all staff have secure subject knowledge. However, not all planning is always linked to students' current assessment; the progress that can be made is limited as most students complete the same task to the same expectation level, regardless of prior attainment. In the best lessons, questioning is targeted to individuals and aids them in enhancing their knowledge and understanding. Teachers do provide a variety of learning activities for students. However in some lessons there is too much teacher-led input. Student work is marked in accordance with the marking and feedback policy but there are inconsistencies in the expectations of when students should respond to feedback. This means there are missed opportunities for students to focus on their areas for development. Student work is celebrated in books but some students are unable to articulate what they need to do

to improve their work and to raise their progress.

The curriculum lead is a highly skilled and experienced leader who has a clear vision for the department. Meticulously planned curriculum schemes of learning have been carefully crafted and implemented across the department. Both curriculum plans and visual learning journeys demonstrate the well-sequenced topics of study which have been designed with the development of both content and application of skill alongside key points of the liturgical year. Leaders and governors ensure that religious education has parity with other core subjects regarding their focus and importance within the school curriculum. However, there are a small number of post-sixteen students who are not able to access the statutory study of religious education in the sixth form due to financial implications which have led to staffing issues. As all students in the sixth form do not yet receive 5% teaching of religious education, the school is not yet fully compliant with the requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference. Leaders have not yet ensured that the subject is consistently planned to meet the needs of different cohorts of students across all key stages; this includes special educational needs and/or disabilities, and disadvantaged and higher ability students. Whilst leaders have an acute understanding of the department's progress, this has not fully informed the self-evaluation of religious education.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

3

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

All students are invited to participate in the prayer and liturgical life of the school but the response from students is inconsistent. Many students respond well to experiences of prayer. However not all students do this with enthusiasm. Students can articulate that prayer is always a routine part of their day but not all students can link their daily experiences of prayer with how this can lead to action. Most students are reverent during worship, but others are passive and choose not to accept the invitation to participate. Some students understand the importance of the liturgical year and the different traditions experienced in school during different times. This knowledge is not widespread as other students struggle to recognise how the liturgical year informs the school's prayer life. Sixth form students appreciate the well-embedded opportunities for prayer and liturgy and regularly plan and prepare assemblies.

Prayer is central to school life and is a key part of daily morning routines. The chaplain is highly skilled in helping students to plan and lead prayer and liturgy. All form classes have an opportunity to lead on prayer during their assemblies to their year groups. The chaplain provides a range of creative experiences of prayer and liturgy which are carefully planned; each week has a relevant theme whilst also remaining fluid to respond to any emerging theme or need that may have occurred in the wider world. Key celebrations in the liturgical year are central to life at St Benet Biscop; for example Advent and Lent services are an integral part of school celebrations as a community. Staff speak very highly about the professional development that has been offered in helping to upskill staff to deliver daily worship and to support students in taking the lead on different occasions. As a result, the quality of assemblies delivered by staff and students are much improved. All students in Year 7 have experienced Mass and there are plans in place to facilitate this for other year groups. The work of the

chaplain is inspiring to staff who greatly value her contributions and share in her desire to provide authentic experiences of collective worship for the school community.

Prayer and liturgy are of great importance to leaders and governors. There are clear plans to evaluate and monitor prayer and liturgy. This is done on a holistic basis and creates an opportunity to reflect on the creativity and quality of the resources and provision that is in place. Governors have been involved in evaluating student-led worship and are passionate about continuing to strengthen this further. Students have been able to take part in a tutor-led student voice. However this has not captured the complete view of the student body. Leaders have not yet been successful in providing prayer and liturgy that inspires all students to actively participate in both daily prayer and other liturgical celebrations with complete reverence and respect. The approach to prayer and liturgy and expectations of staff delivering prayer and liturgy is well thought out and documented clearly in the school's policy. Staff are well supported and feel confident in asking for help when they are involved in planning assemblies. Due to the emphasis placed on prayer and liturgy by leaders, staff also place the highest priority on prayer within their daily routines. Governors do hold leaders to account regarding prayer but this is not yet rigorous in addressing the inconsistencies of how students respond and value prayer and liturgy by further considering the spiritual and educational needs of students.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Benet Biscop Catholic Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	141814
Full postal address of the school	Ridge Terrace, Bedlington, Northumberland, NE22 6ED
School phone number	01670 822795
Name of head teacher or principal	Kevin Shepherd
Chair of governing board	Christine Mills
School Website	https://www.st-benetbiscop.org.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Trustees	Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	25-26 June 2015
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Rosa Flanagan	Lead inspector
Rob Young	Team inspector
Lisa Ord	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