



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Inspection

Blessed William Howard Catholic School

Rowley Avenue, Stafford, ST17 9AB

Inspection date	6 th & 7 th December 2017
Reporting Inspector	Louisa Craig
Assistant Inspector	Alex Darby
Shadow Inspector	Debbie Huxtable

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Academy
Age range of pupils	11-18 years
Number on roll	860
Appropriate authority	Board of Directors
Chair of Academy Committee	Mrs Lyn Cycles
Telephone number	01785 244236
E-mail address	headteacher@bwh.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4 th & 5 th December 2012
DFE School Number	860/4607
Unique Reference Number	142193

Headteacher	Mr P Smith
Previous inspection:	Good
This inspection:	Requires Improvement

Evidence

- The inspection was carried out by two Diocesan inspectors and a shadow inspector.
- The focus of the inspection was on the quality, leadership, and impact of the school's provision of Catholic life, collective worship, and religious education (RE).
- The inspectors observed teaching across eleven RE lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They also completed a spiritual, moral and vocational (SMV) learning walk across school.
- The inspectors completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic life, worship, and the impact of teaching on their learning over time.
- Meetings were held with members of the Academy Committee (LAC), parent representatives of the Academy Committee, a member of the Board of Directors (BOD), a parent group, the headteacher, person in charge of Catholic life of the school (PICCLS), the RE subject leader, priest chaplain, pupils and the lay chaplain.
- The inspectors attended tutor time, a house group assembly, staff briefing, devotional prayers in the chapel and a post 16 Mass. They also undertook a tour of the school to look at aspects of learning and teaching in RE and the presentation of the Catholic life of the school.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, data about pupils' attainment and progress, Analyse School Performance (ASP) data, the school development plan, teachers' planning and records of aspects of Catholic life across the curriculum.

Information about the school

- Blessed William Howard is a smaller than average-sized secondary school, which is part of the Stafford 6th form partnership of schools. The school serves the parishes of St Anne's, St Austin's, St Patrick's, St Dominic's, St Mary's and St John the Baptist situated in Stafford and the surrounding areas.
- The majority of pupils in the school are white British.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic origins is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The percentage of Catholic pupils is currently 36%.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or

disabilities with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health care plan is below the national average.

- Attainment on entry is slightly above the national average.

Main Findings

- Blessed William Howard is an inclusive and welcoming community with a strong family ethos. Whilst both collective worship and Catholic life of the school are good, religious education requires improvement.
- All members of the school community share the vision for the school and work hard as a team to provide a caring community with Christ at its centre.
- There is a warm atmosphere and the quality of relationships between all members of the school community are a particular strength.
- Pupils and staff are friendly, helpful, polite and welcoming to visitors.
- There is a high priority given to pastoral care and personal development, offering pupils a welcoming, safe and secure learning environment.
- The Catholic life of the school is good. Pupils are keen to participate in the varied opportunities provided to contribute to the Catholic life of the school and benefit greatly from them.
- There are systems in place for the monitoring and evaluation of the Catholic life of the school. However, it is important to ensure that this process feeds into further improvement, if it is to have a strong impact.
- The quality of collective worship is good, and pupils response to and participation in collective worship is also good. There is a need to increase the opportunities for more pupils to plan and prepare worship across the school community.
- The quality of religious education requires improvement. Teaching across the department is not consistently good. As a result, some pupils throughout the school, particularly the disadvantaged, are not being provided with sufficiently challenging work to enable them to achieve higher standards and so their progress is limited.
- In some lessons questioning is too closed and the teachers' expectation that pupils will explain and justify their answers is not high enough. As a result, pupils' engagement is often lacking and teachers have not sufficiently developed ways to engage pupils more.
- The school is part of the Holy Trinity Multi Academy Company (MAC) and benefits from strong governance at both local and board level. Governors have a clear vision for school improvement and there is a palpable desire for, and commitment to, improvement in developing the progress of students in religious education and the quality of teaching across the department.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

Catholic life, collective worship and spiritual, moral and vocational development: provision and outcomes

- The Catholic life of the school is good.
- The school has a very clear mission statement, distilled in the core principle of 'Love'. Pupils of all ages are aware of this mission statement and can relate it to their own lives.
- Pupils are beginning to become more involved in actively shaping the school's mission and ethos. They have a strong sense of belonging to their school community and display very positive relationships with each other. They are very enthusiastic about taking on responsibilities for activities which promote the school's ethos, both within and beyond the school community.
- The number of activities the pupils undertake to fundraise for a wide variety of outside causes is excellent.
- Pupils have the opportunity to take on a range of responsibilities for developing Catholic life of their school through the school house system and the informal chaplaincy team.
- Some pupils are active in their own parishes, including those who are altar servers and those who participate in parish based events.
- Pupils are generous when supporting others in need and have a well-developed sense of justice both within the school community and beyond. This is evidenced by the school raising thousands of pounds each year for a variety of local, national and international causes. This is predominately driven by sixth form pupils.
- Pupils are secure and ready to express their own views and beliefs and understand the importance of key celebrations in school.
- Pastoral care is a real strength of the school. Pupils display care and concern for their peers, and staff are prepared to go the extra mile to ensure that pupils are well supported and have access to a variety of support strategies.
- The strong pastoral support in school has been strengthened further by the schools involvement in the Youth Mental Health First Aid Programme. By having a First Aid Champion the school has enhanced an overall approach to promoting staff and pupils' well-being.
- The school provides a wide range of activities and opportunities to support personal development. Pupils are happy, confident and secure in developing spiritually and emotionally.
- The school actively promotes high standards of behaviour, and has recently updated a very clear behaviour policy and student code of conduct. This is strongly linked to the school mission statement. As a result, all members of the school community act in harmony, and pupils are very clear about the difference between right and wrong.
- Pupils respond well to the opportunities the school offers for their own spiritual and moral development, such as the new vertical house system. The older

pupils are enabled to develop a strong sense of responsibility for ensuring the welfare of the younger pupils. Older students also have a good understanding of vocation and commitment.

- Parents are consistently positive about the school and appreciate how well informed they are about school life through the school website and social media. They report how welcoming the school is and there are “no barriers between staff and parents.”
- Parents are grateful for the experiences and opportunities provided by the school to support their children’s spiritual and moral development, believing passionately that the school is a very caring and inclusive community.
- Pupils’ knowledge of traditional prayers of the Church is varied. There is a real opportunity to work across the MAC to develop and embed the traditional prayers and build upon previous experience of pupils transferring from Catholic feeder schools.
- Music is a strong focus in school where all pupils are given the opportunity to play an instrument and these talents are shared in festivals, liturgies and Masses. A recent music festival raised over £70 for the Katherine House Hospice.
- Pupils commented that they have many opportunities to express their own opinions about their beliefs, whilst being open to discussion about the beliefs of others. They are reflective and have a good understanding of moral, cultural and social issues.
- Many pupils across the school community have achieved their Arts Award Bronze Level One. The final project for this involved performing at the carol service at St Austin’s Church.
- There are currently processes in place for the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of Catholic life and collective worship. This needs to show more impact through a robust quality assurance process that is checked and challenged.
- A member of the RE team has the responsibility for providing weekly prayer resources for house tutors. There is a need to develop the quality of some aspects of house group provision. Closer monitoring of the current provision will help identify where additional support and training for house tutors would be beneficial.
- There is a great range of opportunities for spiritual development of all members of the school community through the retreat experiences. Many pupils have attended Alton Castle, Soli House and The Briars.
- The location of the stunningly beautiful chapel at the heart of the school ensures it is available at all times for private prayer and prayer groups. The chapel is well used by a number of pupils.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership of Catholic Life and Collective Worship

- The leadership of Catholic life and collective worship is good.
- The personal commitment of senior leaders provide good role models for their school community.
- Leaders are monitoring the impact of Catholic life of the school, although at the moment, this sometimes lacks sufficient detail to inform precise improvement planning. They know the school's major strengths and areas for improvement in respect to its Catholic character and have plans to further improve this.
- Governors demonstrate a deep commitment to the Church's mission in education. The governors are effective in their monitoring role in both supporting and challenging the senior leaders. They are kept informed through headteacher reports and through their regular visits to the school.
- Governors have completed the annual Catholic Education Service self-evaluation document as an individual school within the MAC and are currently in the process of combining the findings across all the MAC schools.
- The governors are fully committed to promoting the Catholic life of the school. Governors engage energetically in discussions around the school's strategic plan in which Catholic life features prominently.
- The school works well with parents and carers and they are invited to a range of school liturgies and Masses, although response to these invitations varies across the school.
- The financial priority given to support Catholic life is very powerful. This enables pupils to access a wide range of opportunities including retreats and guest speakers.
- The parish priest regularly celebrates Mass with the school and provides pastoral support. He plays a significant role in contributing to the Catholic life of the school alongside the lay chaplain.
- Pupils' views and opinions, through pupil voice and questionnaires, are taken into consideration when evaluating the school's provision for Catholic life. They welcome these opportunities to contribute, which makes them feel valued.
- Staff recognise the support given by the PICCLS and lay chaplain and enjoy the opportunity to celebrate Mass together.
- Staff enjoy and appreciate the annual October whole staff inset dedicated to Catholic life. However, there are limited opportunities for the professional development of knowledge and skills with regards to collective worship.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Leadership, outcomes from and provision for religious education

- Religious education in the academy requires improvement.
- Analysis of in-house Key Stage 3 data is identifying a significant gap between boys and girls. It is important the department looks at the

strategies from the 2017 cohort and identifies the strategies used here that secured a positive pupil progress for boys.

- Attainment of pupils in RE at GCSE in 2017 are in line with diocesan averages despite a drop in attainment from the previous year. However, pupil progress in RE at GCSE in 2017 showed a decline from the previous year and is below the diocesan average.
- A focus on pupil progress in RE especially the gender gap and disadvantaged pupils needs to be a major focus for school improvement.
- Outcomes and progress of pupils at Key Stage 5 are positive and have been for the previous two years. This is consistent with the strong teaching pupils receive at Post 16.
- The number of pupils opting to study RE at Post 16 is very positive and pupils speak with true passion about the subject and the staff that teach them.
- The school is rightly proud of its work with the sixth form and the extended project qualification. Pupils develop skills which prepare them extremely well for higher education and other career paths.
- Teaching of RE requires improvement. Where teaching is effective, the pace is fast, activities are varied and pupils' enjoyment is evident. In less successful lessons there is insufficient challenge, the pace is too relaxed and there is sometimes an over-reliance on teacher-led activities which inhibits the opportunities for independent learning.
- The recently appointed progress leader in RE is a strong classroom practitioner and it is important this practice is shared and spread across the whole team.
- The school have developed a new feedback and marking policy with a subject specific section. The quality assurance of this has seen an improvement in the regularity of marking and some evidence of dedicated improvement time being given.
- The school is using 'Show my Homework' to record homework for pupils; this has resulted in an increase in pupils consolidating and extending their learning.
- Following summative assessment in all year groups, pupils are given feedback sheets which model best practice. These are greatly valued by the pupils.
- The recently developed Catholic citizenship programme has allowed pupils the opportunity to reflect on what it means to live a Christian way of life in Blessed William Howard.
- There is a programme of monitoring the quality of RE in place, and leaders monitor teaching and scrutinise pupils' work. Records of this monitoring, however, are not sufficiently focused on how to specifically improve teaching and learning.

- Through the school's recording and tracking system, pupils' attainment and progress are monitored at regular intervals.
- The department analyses this data and ensures intervention support is provided to support learning as necessary.
- Spiritual, moral, and vocational education (SMV) is carefully planned and pupils understand how their beliefs and values impact on their lives.
- The school's relationship and sex education policy is delivered in line with the Church's teaching.
- The curriculum for RE meets all Diocesan requirements and is supplemented by links with the local parishes and other Catholic schools.

Recommendations

In order to improve the school should:

- Focus on pupil progress in RE at Key Stage 3 and 4 to address the gender gap and that of disadvantaged pupils.
- Further develop teaching in the RE department to raise the performance of all teachers to the standards of the very best.
- Improve the progress of learning in lessons by ensuring that the activities provided are challenging and carefully matched to all pupils, asking more probing questions in lessons which give pupils the opportunities to develop and explain their ideas further.
- Create a shared understanding of what a deeply spiritual collective worship experience looks like on a daily basis throughout school.