



## Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for **Bishop Walsh Catholic School**

URN: 140524

Carried out on behalf of the Most Rev. Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham on:

Date: 12-13 July 2023

Overall effectiveness The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....	<b>1</b>
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.....	1
Religious education (p.5) The quality of curriculum religious education.....	1
Collective worship (p.7) The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.....	1
The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	✓
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	✓
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

### Summary of key findings

#### What the school does well

- The principal is a faith-filled witness to the gospels. She authentically embodies their values in her highly successful and strategic leadership.
- A remarkable degree of consistency, resulting from effective staff training, enables all students to experience excellent Catholic life and mission, religious education, and prayer and liturgy.
- The outcomes students achieve in religious education are very strong.
- Every aspect of school life is permeated with a welcoming and fully inclusive ethos.
- Chaplaincy work is wide-reaching, vibrant, and successful.

What the school needs to improve:

- Increase the scope of students' prayer leadership, allowing them to raise their hearts and minds to God in autonomous and creative ways.

## 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:.....

1

### Pupil outcomes

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school .....

1

### Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school .....

1

### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school .....

1



Students are acutely aware of the need to respect one another because God has created them. This is manifested in the excellent standards of behaviour and the many spontaneous acts of kindness they demonstrate. Students of all ages know the Gospel values promoted throughout the school and seek to emulate them in their attitudes and actions. Participation in chaplaincy activities has significantly increased to such an extent that the team has been restructured into three focused branches. All three are active in the school and prolifically contribute towards the spiritual and moral development of all. They provide opportunities for the community to live out its mission authentically.

The school's mission, 'Guided by Christ, we aspire to achieve', results from a recent re-evaluation involving all stakeholders. It is the key driver in all aspects of the school's work, including reflecting on it as part of behaviour management strategies. Furthermore, staff are unanimously passionate about supporting it; consequently, it infuses the school community. A palpable sense of community is centred on Christ's teachings. Its catalyst is the Gospel values, promoted around the site and referred to consistently and frequently. Staff are exemplary disciples of Christ; they evangelise all with whom they work, resulting in an exceptional level of pastoral care, love, and academic guidance. This also permeates the mentoring work undertaken in the Damascus Centre, which enables students to reflect on their behaviour choices, considering Jesus' teachings. Parents, staff, and students know everybody is valued and listened to; they say, 'You know that you matter'. God's word touches the hearts of all who enter Bishop Walsh. Age-appropriate chaplaincy initiatives abound. For example, whilst all sixth formers are required to undertake ten hours of 'Christian duty' in which they selflessly serve others, many take up the option of achieving 'silver' and 'gold' awards by going beyond this requirement, helping them to achieve the Pope John Paul II Award. High regard is given by all leaders, including middle leaders, to staff's well-being, which is always the first item in

any discussion. Consequently, staff are constantly refreshed, empowered, and invigorated to promote the school's Catholic ethos.

The principal has an inspiring vision for the school's mission and expresses this with confidence and clarity. She exemplifies her high aspirations for Bishop Walsh, which energises the whole community. The person in charge of Catholic life (PICCL) is a highly skilled, compassionate expert, who consistently models outstanding practice and tirelessly supports colleagues in delivering a high-quality experience of Catholic education for all. Her vision to enable students to 'walk the talk and talk the walk of Jesus' is successfully achieved. Leaders, including governors and directors, have taken action to ensure that Bishop Walsh Catholic School authentically expresses His Grace's vision for Catholic education in the archdiocese. Governors are highly ambitious for the school's Catholic life, as reflected in their diligent work. They are exceptionally knowledgeable about the school's achievements and work to keep this current and accurate. They are present in school to witness first-hand its work and offer appropriate assistance to develop Catholic life further. The multi-academy company (MAC) is steadfast in its support of them. Self-evaluation is frequent, robust, and forensic. Leaders analyse findings to form well-targeted strategic development plans that enhance the school's outstanding outcomes. Students are routinely involved in this process and also value leaders' responsive approach. For example, students expressed a desire for opportunities for creative expression in Mass, which led to the frequent inclusion of drama and dance in the school's liturgy celebration. Student feedback has also enhanced the scope of the relationship, sex, and health education (RSHE) curriculum.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

1

### Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

1

### Provision

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

1

### Leadership

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

1

Students make excellent progress in religious education at Bishop Walsh. This is because they routinely and frequently recall and build upon prior knowledge. Consequently, the outcomes in public examinations are outstanding for all groups of students, especially at Key Stage 4. Because of a consistent priority on developing their religious vocabulary, students use appropriate terminology with ease and accuracy when discussing the knowledge they acquire in lessons and how it relates to their life experiences. Students also reflect on their learning and, in doing so, actively pursue links with their lives, exploring the extent to which religion influences their choices. Because they enjoy the issues they study, students are highly motivated to achieve well in religious education and are curious learners. Students concentrate exceptionally well during lessons and can work independently for extended periods, remaining fully engaged. Because they are continually and consistently involved in reviewing their achievements, students clearly understand the knowledge and skills in which they are secure and those which they need to develop. Their work is of a high standard, and exercise books are neatly presented, often meaning religious education work is students' best. Attainment in religious education has been significantly above national and diocesan averages for many years and continues to be so.

The teaching of religious education at Bishop Walsh is exceptional: teachers know the ingredients of excellent teaching and consistently provide them in all lessons. Their subject knowledge is deep and secure, enabling them to answer students' questions and reshape explanations to correct misconceptions sensitively, competently, and confidently. Teachers have very high expectations in lessons, enabling students to meet these by nurturing their confidence and resilience. Consequently, students are always confident to 'have a go' and learn graciously from mistakes. Teachers understand deeply the needs of every student, planning

lessons which optimise progress. Such is their expertise that they also adapt learning dynamically during lessons to ensure every student is supported and challenged to learn more. Questions are frequently used to challenge all students to explore their peers' opinions and to elicit a deeper understanding of the curriculum; for example, in a Year 9 lesson, a teacher targeted a student with special educational needs (SEND) with a question as to why birds of prey are not kosher in Jewish food laws. Students are given specific feedback in various ways, including modelling good practice with ICT and written comments, showing them what they need to do to progress their learning. Extensive work has been undertaken to ensure that a well-resourced curriculum faithfully reflects the demands of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*.

Per the desire of Pope John Paul II, religious education is treated as 'the core of the core curriculum' at Bishop Walsh. This manifests in the resources governors and directors make available, their investment in training opportunities, and the rigour with which they support and challenge the department, which leads to long-sustained outstanding outcomes. All whole-school policies are fully implemented within the subject; the department is frequently identified as a beacon of excellent practice within the school, especially regarding teaching and learning, and is used to lead the way for other subject areas. The subject leader is an inspirational, expert practitioner; the leadership, support, and care she provides for her team result in a consistent drive for high standards, which all teachers deliver. The Key Stage 3 religious education leader is meticulous in her pursuit of designing a curriculum that supports students to demonstrate creativity and individuality in their work. Monitoring and evaluation are planned carefully to ensure well-targeted improvements are reliably identified and further enhance the quality of provision.

## Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

1

### 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 .....

1

### Leadership

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

1

Students engage reverently with prayer and liturgy. They use gestures confidently and join in with responses well, particularly when praying as part of a larger group. Whilst students join in with singing, leaders have accurately identified the need to develop this and have devised a plan which aims to address this. Students experience prayer in a variety of ways. For example, they pray different traditional prayers at certain times of the year, use silence to meditate, and regularly use various visual stimuli to help focus their intentions. Students are not yet confident in understanding why traditional Catholic prayer forms are used and are important. The Rosary group meets regularly to pray for intentions recorded in a book by fellow students and staff. Prayer and reflection are well-planned throughout the curriculum, contributing to students' spiritual development. For example, students reflect on the Catholic belief that life begins at the moment of conception in science and use portraiture in art to contemplate the impact of The Holocaust. Whilst staff plan prayer to complement the Church's liturgical year, students struggle to articulate how it influences and shapes the prayers they use because this is not always made clear to them. The liturgy leaders are enthusiastic experts with a strong sense of vocation to support their peers and lead the school. With a genuine sense of vocation, they skilfully undertake this ministry with confidence, which other students highly appreciate.

Worship is an essential part of the rhythm of every school day. The school community prays together each morning before separating into form groups, and the vice principal routinely prays with students before examinations. Form tutors use high-quality resources provided by the chaplaincy leader to relate prayer to students' current experiences and the world in which they live. In this way, faith is made vibrant and accessible to everyone. All staff talk with genuine enthusiasm and knowledge about the issues covered each day because they understand the importance of doing so. Staff are remarkably inspiring models of good practice because they are confident, knowledgeable, and feel empowered by the training they receive. This enables them to be excellent

role models for pupils, who, in turn, are becoming more confident too. Staff work hard to enhance worship using art, dance, drama, and music. The subject leader for music regularly leads hymns in year group prayer; as he does this, he also explains the meaning of the words students sing. Students see the chapel as 'the school's heart', and it is always available for use by students and staff; the Blessed Sacrament is reserved there, making it an extraordinary place, as is the centrally located and attractive prayer garden.

The school's prayer policy is useful and fit for purpose because it clearly defines the expectations of staff in providing varied opportunities each day. This includes expectations for the SAINT curriculum; staff appreciate that support is always available to enhance its implementation. The chaplaincy lead is phenomenal in her leadership of prayer. She is highly skilled in nurturing liturgy leads' confidence and developing their prayer skills. Staff, students, governors, and the MAC are indebted to her proactive drive and commitment. This is because she makes prayer contemporary and accessible, shown in her provision of exemplary resources. Well-targeted and frequent opportunities for training and skill development are provided to staff. New staff particularly appreciate the support they receive, enabling a highly consistent approach to prayer across the school. Governors and directors ensure the school is fully resourced for prayer. It is one of their highest priorities, as demonstrated by the MAC's commitment to resource vibrant prayer opportunities and resources.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	Bishop Walsh Catholic School
School unique reference number (URN)	140524
Full postal address of the school	Wylde Green Road, Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham, B76 1QT
School phone number	0121 351 3215
Name of head teacher or principal	Natalie Brodie
Chair of governing board	Maria Stirrop
School Website	www.bishopwalsh.net
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St John Paul II Multi Academy
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	11 to 18
Trustees	Archdiocese of Birmingham
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	October 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

## The inspection team

Ben McArdle	Lead inspector
Caroline Cirino	Team inspector
Andrew Maund	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