



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Inspection Report

BLESSED WILLIAM HOWARD CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Part of The Painsley Catholic Academy
Rowley Avenue, Stafford, ST17 9AB

Inspection dates:

10-11 May 2022

Lead Inspector:

Ben McArdle

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS:

Good

Catholic Life:

Outstanding

Religious Education:

Good

Collective Worship:

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection:

Requires Improvement

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

This is a Good Catholic school because:

- Pupils are acutely aware of their responsibility to contribute to the common good. They respond well when challenged to turn gospel values into practical action.
- The level of pastoral care afforded to every community member is very high.
- Governors are well-skilled and highly committed to ensuring that actions taken to further develop Catholic Life, Religious Education & Collective Worship are effective.
- Teachers of Religious Education have an intricate knowledge of their pupils' abilities and plan accordingly to meet their needs.

It is not yet Outstanding because:

- Catholic social teaching is not a feature of individual subject areas.
- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the liturgical year lacks depth and confidence.
- Opportunities for pupil-led prayer and worship need to be widened to include more of the pupil population.

FULL REPORT**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Develop a curriculum-wide approach to Catholic social teaching.
- Increase pupils' knowledge and understanding of the liturgical year so they speak about the key seasons and feasts of the Church with confidence.
- Broaden the opportunities for pupils to design and lead their own acts of prayer and worship.
- Validate the progress made to GCSE and A-level Religious Education outcomes with externally assessed examination data.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

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

CL1 The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school

- Pupils understand and value the school's motto, 'Love of God, love of people, love of learning, love of life.' They establish clear links between this and the numerous activities and projects within the school. This is because the motto is part of the day-to-day vocabulary used by leaders and staff.
- The school's mission, 'to lead each person towards a fulfilled life founded on Christ's teaching of love and respect for one another and to hand on His promise of a life to come', is not known to the majority of the community. However, it does encapsulate the perception that pupils hold of the school's work.
- Pupils evaluate aspects of Catholic Life through questionnaires, and more informal feedback is gathered verbally through various pupil leadership groups, such as the school council, the Catholic Life captains, prayer leaders, and the liturgy and worship group. Their feedback improves the Catholic Life of the school; for example, a focus on encouraging pupils to read more prayers has benefitted from subject areas writing or adopting department prayers.
- Eliciting feedback from pupils and empowering them to lead on developing aspects of Catholic Life is not yet systematic. The principal has recognised this and has identified it as an area for development in his report to the local governing body.
- The behaviour of pupils is very good. Pupils are friendly, polite, and sincere in their interactions. Anti-social behaviour is infrequent because pupils recognise their duty of care towards one another. Where poor behaviour presents, staff act swiftly to resolve it.
- Pupils are keen to be involved in the school community because they have a strong sense of service. They are particularly engaged in fundraising and, throughout the pandemic, raised a phenomenal amount of money for Mary's Meals as part of an

academy-wide initiative, whilst continuing to raise funds for other charities, including Fr Hudson's. As a result of a focus on gospel values throughout the school, pupils are acutely aware of their responsibility to contribute toward the common good and are rightfully proud of their achievements.

- Because the focus of the gardening club is framed around *Laudato si'*, the thriving group of pupils taking part in this initiative know why improving the condition of the remembrance garden is important. Pupils' understanding of the importance of their work is less secure in other areas. For example, when speaking about the importance of their charity work, pupils lack confidence in speaking beyond 'caring for other people' and 'doing the right thing'.
- Pupils highly value the school's chaplaincy provision. There is an abundance of provisions which pupils enjoy, for example, the requirement for all year groups to actively prepare an aspect of Mass in tutor groups, prayer club, support disaster club and engagement in the 'Live Simply' initiative. Pupils particularly enjoy attending retreats at Savio House, Alton Castle and The Briars. Indeed, these opportunities are so popular amongst pupils that the school is looking at booking double slots at some venues, a testament to their appreciation for the school's provision of spiritual development. Pupils also value the opportunity to participate in the John Paul II Award.
- Furthermore, the school is committed to ensuring that high-quality chaplaincy is provided to pupils who cannot attend residential retreats through their lay chaplain and by engaging the Kenelm Youth Trust and its school-based staff to offer internal retreats to all.
- Pupils enjoy an excellent level of pastoral care. Pupils with social needs are cared for in the Siena Room, in which a person in charge of Catholic Life (PICCL), lay chaplain and pastoral support worker are based. Consequently, pupils have easy access to highly skilled professionals who can support their personal, social, and emotional needs. The Augustine Room provides additional support for pupils with behavioural needs through the effective use of pastoral support workers. There are green shoots of its impact in lowering the number of suspensions.
- Pupils understand the need for positive and healthy relationships and understand them in the context of 'being nice to each other'. Their understanding of the need to respect human dignity needs to be deepened and embedded across all age groups.
- Older pupils understand the concept of vocation as a calling from God to serve and how it features in the Ordo of the Church; this is because of the work undertaken by the parish priest and his assistant. However, pupils in Key Stage 3 need to have their understanding of vocation developed and embedded.
- Good links with the parish enable pupils to make a difference in their local community. For example, during the pandemic, pupils donated significant amounts of food, collected by the parish priest, a foundation governor, for distribution within the parish and to a local food bank. The highly committed parish priest works hard to ensure that pupils can experience the Sacrament of Reconciliation at pertinent times during the year, with the support of other local priests. Consequently, pupils value and respect the tradition and heritage of the school.

CL2 The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school

- All staff are fully committed to the Catholic vision for the school. They, too, understand the school's motto and are steadfast in their support of it. As a result, they reinforce it to pupils as a matter of routine.

- The staff's commitment to the principal's vision is demonstrated by how they proactively engage with continuing professional development (CPD) relating to it. Subsequently, the Catholic Life of the school is constantly evolving and growing.
- There is a powerful sense of community within the school due to the centrality of prayer. It is at the centre of the school's work and a feature of its daily routines, ensuring that the school is a supportive and joyful community.
- The school's physical environment has vastly improved since the last inspection. Many concrete and effective signs around the site witness the school's Catholic ethos. The school's motto is prominently displayed throughout the different areas of the school. Wall art is used to promote gospel values and inspirational quotes from contemporary influential role models who uphold them, such as those who have stood up for justice in the face of oppression.
- All staff are superb role models for their pupils. Because of the bespoke CPD with which they are provided, they clearly understand leaders' vision for the school and confidently promote it through their language and actions. As one member of staff commented to inspectors, 'I know we are good role models because I see the behaviours and values that we're told about in my colleagues every single day. I am proud to work here.'
- Catholic social teaching is a core feature of the Religious Education curriculum. It is embedded within teachers' planning; as such, the department refers to it as a matter of routine throughout their teaching. It is not yet planned for other department areas, which senior and middle leaders must now address. Nevertheless, all departments strongly support the Catholic Life of the school, with many making a proactive and much-appreciated contribution towards it, such as the music department, which accompanies numerous events, and the design and technology department, which devised a Romero Cross project for pupils.
- Providing high-quality pastoral care for pupils is complimented by the excellent pastoral support provided for all staff members. Clear policies and procedures ensure that the well-being of staff is a core leadership responsibility. Staff have access to approachable, personable, and receptive line managers who listen carefully to their concerns and provide appropriate support. Staff also have access to external support organisations, should they wish to use their services.
- Personal, social, and health education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) are well planned. The subject leader works collaboratively with the PICCLs, who have established a clear and purposeful vision amongst the staff who teach these subjects. She has identified key Catholic knowledge in the curricula, which needs to be reinforced with pupils as a matter of routine to increase their confidence in viewing relationships through a Catholic lens.
- The school has devised a rewards system to celebrate pupils who demonstrate gospel values. Pupils value the rewards they can earn, and most are consequently well-motivated to live up to the school's expectations.

CL3 How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school

- Leaders' commitment to the Catholic Life of the school is firm; it is the first priority in all of their work. As a result of the importance they place on it, all community members regard them as exemplary models of Catholic leadership. Uncomplacent, they constantly seek to enhance the quality of their provision for all.
- There are very clear systems of monitoring and evaluation in place. A particular strength of the school's practice is how leaders systematically revisit previously

identified areas for development to measure their progress before determining their next cause of action.

- Because the systems for monitoring and evaluation are well-focussed, they naturally lead to well targeted 'implementation plans.'
- Staff new to the school community experience a good induction programme that teaches them about the distinctive nature of Catholic education at Blessed William Howard, enabling them to engage and contribute as soon as they join the community. CPD for all staff is well planned and regular, allowing the leaders to achieve the areas identified for school improvement. Bespoke one-to-one support is available for individual staff members should they have specific issues they wish to address.
- The school engages well with parents. Communication is through a newsletter published frequently, highlighting significant Catholic Life developments and events. The school uses social media to update parents who would otherwise be difficult to reach. Leaders must now look at how to formally gather the views of parents as a matter of routine to ensure that their evaluation of Catholic Life is even more robust and truly holistic.
- Leaders enjoy support from a highly skilled and competent local governing body. The chair works hard to ensure that the school has a full complement of foundation governors, whose skills are appropriately allocated to various areas of responsibility. The governors are relentless in their pursuit of achieving excellent standards for the school and are a regular presence within the community to ensure they achieve this. After every visit, they provide forensic feedback to the school in written reports, always focused on and linked to current implementation plans.
- Similarly, the principal's reports to the governors are excellent. Detailed and full of information as to how the school is performing against its areas for development, they enable governors to provide effective support and challenge.
- The staff and pupils highly regard the two PICCLs. They emulate the vision for the school and are excellent role models for the community.
- Governors ensure that the Catholic Life of the school, together with Religious Education and Collective Worship, are their core priority at the heart of all they do. They discharge their canonical and statutory duties well.
- Blessed William Howard fully embraces diocesan policies and expectations relating to Catholic Life and actively promotes the vision of the Archbishop of Birmingham throughout the school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

RE1 How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

- In lessons, pupils make good progress towards the intended learning outcomes. This is because lessons are well planned and resourced to meet pupils' needs. Teachers have intricate knowledge of the range of abilities and needs within each of their classes; as such, the learning that pupils are exposed to is commensurate with their abilities.
- As a result of well-planned lessons, most pupils are aware of religion's demands on their everyday lives. This is being strengthened by introducing chapel lessons within the Religious Education curriculum, utilising the lay chaplain, who works effectively with the subject leader. These sessions enable pupils to reflect on the issues about which they learn and make a good contribution to their spiritual, moral, and theological development.
- Most pupils enjoy their learning in Religious Education. This is because of teachers' accurate planning. All pupils are appropriately supported and challenged in their learning, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and more able pupils. Challenge activities are always available to all pupils, meaning that teachers do not place artificial ceilings on their attainment. Some pupils would benefit from being signposted to these challenging activities sooner.
- Because teachers' planning is almost always at least good, the behaviour of most pupils in Religious Education is very good and contributes to a calm and purposeful learning environment. Where low-level disruption occurs, it is usually identified and reprimanded swiftly. Where lessons are not planned as effectively, the high standards of behaviour for learning are not sustained for a minority of pupils.
- The quality of work in pupils' exercise books is good. Work is presented neatly and well organised, meaning that it is easy for pupils to revise from their notes and written activities, which is an essential aspect of the department's work.

RE2 The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education

- Teacher's planning is excellent. This is because they know their pupils and their abilities well. Consequently, they plan activities and questions that are accurately targeted at individual pupils who make good progress within lessons.
- The subject knowledge of Religious Education teachers is almost always very strong, meaning that they can answer pupils' questions and deal with their misconceptions competently. The subject leader provides additional support in this respect whenever it is needed.
- Department teachers utilise a good range of appropriate strategies for learning. Even in Key Stage 5, where the course demands much essay writing, teachers

ensure that students' tasks are varied and contribute to successful extended writing pieces.

- Peer and self-evaluation form part of teachers' routine provision. As a result, pupils know what they need to do to improve their work quality. Success criteria are used in every lesson during teacher delivery, though the use of the yellow feedback sheets is inconsistent across the department. However, teachers apply this format of feedback throughout their teaching, so all pupils receive similar-style feedback. The department must review the use of the yellow feedback sheets to establish consistency for all pupils in the school.
- Teachers' time management is usually always at least good and is often better, ensuring an appropriate pace of learning for most pupils. On occasions when a teacher runs out of time, they cannot effectively assess pupil learning within the lesson, thus hindering the future planning process.
- Questioning is good because of teachers' knowledge of pupils' abilities and the next steps they need to take to make progress. To make questioning truly outstanding, teachers must consistently exploit opportunities to elicit pupils' greater depth of understanding.
- The use of feedback is good. The department utilises a 'green pen' strategy when requiring pupils to respond to teachers' written and verbal feedback. As a result, teachers are assured that pupils have a complete set of detailed and accurate notes in their exercise books and a bank of model answers from which they can learn.
- Teachers appropriately celebrate pupils' achievements in lessons, primarily through verbal praise, to which they respond positively. As a result, most pupils are further motivated to sustain their hard work and efforts.

RE3 How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for Religious Education

- Leaders and governors ensure that the Religious Education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales in every respect and each key stage. Aware of the upcoming publication of a new Religious Education Curriculum Directory, plans are afoot to ensure that Key Stage 3 reverts to being a three-year curriculum.
- The requirements of the Archbishop of Birmingham concerning Religious Education are fully embraced.
- The required amount of curriculum time is allocated to Religious Education in each key stage.
- Governors ensure that Religious Education is at least comparable to other core subjects in terms of resourcing, accommodation, and CPD. They have made a conscious effort to ensure that the department is fully staffed with specialist teachers.
- The monitoring and evaluation of the subject are sharply focused, accurate and robust. Evaluation is thorough and is mapped meticulously against the Section 48 framework; as a result, the department is making improvements in all of the right areas.
- An effective working relationship between the subject leader and link governor ensures that department development is secured and sustained. The corroboration of their views provides validation that the subject leader's evaluations are accurate. The link governor is highly skilled and offers excellent support.
- The subject leader for Religious Education is outstanding. She has a clear vision for the department and is working incredibly hard to secure it. Planning, resourcing and CPD are all overseen by her, and she has successfully fostered a culture of chasing

high academic standards across the department with aplomb. Her evaluation of the department's performance is accurate and underpinned by robust practices. The department views her as an inspirational leader.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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

CW1 How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship

- Pupils are reverent during prayer and liturgy. They demonstrate high levels of respect because the school has clear routines embedded into its day-to-day provision.
- Pupils participate well due to the routines of the school and the fact that prayer responses are always displayed clearly during times of prayer.
- Collective Worship is currently more directed and less pupil driven. There are, however, strong pockets of pupil leaders, including the prayer leaders and the liturgy and worship group, who provide good witness to their peers. The talent and skills of this group must be nurtured by leaders and then used to develop the confidence of other pupils in leading prayer.
- When allowed to do so, pupils are confident in planning and leading prayer. Creativity is encouraged, particularly when contributing towards Mass. For example, at the time of inspection, the liturgical dance group was choreographing a routine based on the gospel of the upcoming Mass. A Year 7 tutor group was preparing reflections on Our Lady to be included as part of the offertory procession. There is an expectation that each year group actively contributes to the preparation of all big Masses; in this respect, pupil outcomes for the liturgy are outstanding.
- Because of the approach taken by leaders towards prayer, whereby individual form tutors are free to adapt centrally planned resources, and because of the support of the lay chaplain and PICCLs, pupils display confidence in a wide variety of traditional and contemporary approaches to prayer.
- Many pupils' knowledge of the liturgical year is insecure. When speaking to inspectors, many pupils were aware of Eastertide, and that May is one of two months of Marian devotion but struggled to identify other key seasons and feasts beyond the day the school dedicates to its patron. Inspectors reviewed evidence of the school's work to address this issue. However, it is something that needs to be revisited so that it becomes embedded and pupils' knowledge and understanding deepen.
- Pupils are well aware of the effect prayer has on their lives. This is because of the strong links between the lay chaplain and the Religious Education department, who

work effectively together. In assemblies, gospel values are made accessible in a contemporary context, contributing to their spiritual development.

CW2 The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

- Prayer is at the centre of school life for all pupils and staff, regardless of their own particular faith background. Prayer features at three specific times each day and at every school celebration. It is part of the daily lived experience for all pupils and staff. Each department has written or adopted a prayer for use in its subject area, further emphasising its centrality.
- Liturgy and prayer are carefully planned, thus ensuring that it is liturgically relevant and meaningful to pupils. Pupils are enabled to contribute to the school's prayer life through the prayer boards and shelves in each classroom: the upkeep of these is a deliberate and intentional act.
- As with Catholic Life and Religious Education, Collective Worship is prioritised in planning and evaluation. The school has systems for collecting and reviewing the views of pupils and staff regarding the quality of provision.
- Relevant staff have an excellent understanding of prayer. Their knowledge is very secure, which results in prayer that meets the community's needs and which is purposeful.
- Staff are excellent role models, and they consistently demonstrate appropriate responses and actions throughout all instances of prayer, which contributes to the development of such reverence amongst pupils. Staff are conscious of their discipleship and bear Christian witness both within the school and the community.
- Leaders have self-identified the need to develop the provision of pupil-led prayer throughout the school.
- The school has engaged parents in Collective Worship throughout the pandemic with great success. Many parents' feedback recorded their joy and appreciation for their opportunities to join the school community in prayer during extended periods of isolation.
- The school ensures that support staff and teaching staff are enabled to attend the celebration of Mass in school whenever they desire. Impressive is how the school and priest chaplain continue to celebrate those significant feasts and Holy Days of Obligation that have been transferred to the nearest Sunday in recent years on their traditional dates.

CW3 How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship

- Leaders' understanding of the liturgical year is expert. Consequently, they are well skilled at linking these to acts of prayer in a contemporary and accessible way. For example, during the inspection, one of the PICCLs delivered prayer within an assembly which linked the themes of justice and truth to the Hillsborough disaster and the message of Easter.
- The provision of CPD by leaders is robust. There are numerous opportunities for staff to engage with the PICCLs and the lay chaplain to enhance their practice, such as through sessions focused on preparation for class Masses, establishing a prayerful atmosphere for worship and how to lead prayer. Furthermore, the school engages the services of advisory visits from the archdiocese to support relevant staff.

- Monitoring and evaluation are excellent because they accurately focus on the school's needs. This is expertly supported by the governors, who provide timely support and challenge, seeking measurable outcomes with high impact.
- The additional requirements of the Archbishop of Birmingham relating to Collective Worship are fully embraced.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Unique reference number	142193
Local authority	Staffordshire
<i>This inspection was carried out under Canon 806 of Canon Law and under Section 48 of the Education Act (2005).</i>	
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy
Age range	11-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	901
Appropriate authority	The board of directors
Chair	Kenneth Wilson
Headteacher	Karl Brown
Telephone number	01785 244236
Website address	https://www.bwh.staffs.sch.uk
Email address	office@blessedwilliamhoward.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	December 2017

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS SCHOOL

- Blessed William Howard Catholic High School is a slightly smaller than average secondary school and sixth form located near the centre of Stafford. It serves the parishes of St Anne's, St Austin's, St Patrick's, St Dominic's, St Mary's and St John the Baptist.
- The percentage of Catholic pupils is currently 28.5%.
- The percentage of disadvantaged pupils is broadly in line with the national average.
- The percentage of SEND pupils is below the national average.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic origins is below the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with EAL is below the national average.
- Attainment on entry is average.
- Since the last denomination inspection, the school has joined The Painsley Catholic Academy. It has appointed a new principal, two new vice principals and a new subject leader for Religious Education. The leadership team's capacity has been further increased by the appointment of three further assistant principals.

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

- Two Diocesan Inspectors carried out the inspection: Ben McArdle and Suzanne Horan.
- The focus of the inspection was on the impact, quality, and leadership of the school's provision of Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship.
- The inspectors observed teaching across ten Religious Education lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning, and assessment quality. All of these lesson observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspectors completed work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic Life, the impact of Religious Education teaching on their learning over time, and their collective worship experience.
- Meetings were held with the CEO of the academy, the chair of governors, the Catholic Life and Religious Education link governors, the principal, the Religious Education subject leader, the persons in charge of the Catholic Life of the School, the priest chaplain (who also serves as a foundation governor), pupils and a representative group of staff.
- The inspectors attended year group assemblies and undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of learning and teaching in Religious Education, the presentation of the Catholic Life of the school and pupils' behaviour.
- 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, the Catholic Life & Collective Worship and the Religious Education implementation plans, teachers' planning and various other documents.