



DIOCESE OF
SHREWSBURY

DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT:

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

School: Loreto Grammar School
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Altrincham
Cheshire
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Tel No: 0161 928 3703

URN: 138464

Headteacher: Mrs J Beever

Chair of Governors: Mr J Lister

Date of Inspection: 11 & 12 March 2019

Inspectors: Mr J McCann
Mr J Wilbraham

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

**I am the Way
the Truth
and
The Life**

(John 14:6)

At Loreto Grammar School Altrincham, students, staff, parents and Governors form a Catholic community. We aspire to create a caring, structured environment in which teaching and learning and the experience of school

- are characterised by joyful and loving service to others
- challenge each of us to realise our full potential in a spirit of joy and creativity
- encourage the pursuit of excellence
- uphold honesty, justice and mutual respect
- enable us to be questioning, independent learners and "seekers of truth"
- prepare each of us to meet with confidence the challenges of a changing world
- improve and enrich the life of the wider community and enable us to be an example of Christian values in the world as witnesses to God's Living Kingdom

Our values are centred in God, rooted in gospel values and derive from the vision of Mary Ward.

Love and speak the truth - at all times

(Mary Ward)

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

1

This is an outstanding Catholic school

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

CATHOLIC LIFE

1

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

1

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

1

Summary of key findings:

- Loreto Grammar School is an outstanding Catholic grammar school for girls, where all leaders, staff, governors and students strive to create and maintain a pursuit of excellence in all things in a caring and supportive community based on Gospel values.
- Seven shared core values underpin the work of all Loreto schools and these were observed in action in Loreto, Altrincham.
- The school has an experienced and highly successful team of senior leaders who are supported and challenged effectively by an experienced governing body with oversight by the Loreto Education Trust (LET).
- Pupils willingly contribute to, and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school and have many opportunities to put their faith into action locally, nationally and internationally.
- Pupil behaviour in classrooms and around the school is exemplary as is the respect and courtesy shown to each other in this learning community.
- All pupils make good progress in RE with most achieving outstanding progress.
- The school provides a rich and varied range of opportunities for Collective Worship, following the Church's liturgical year, its feasts and seasons. Links with some of the many parishes the school draws from builds on pupils' experiences and has a positive impact on their spiritual development.
- Effective and supportive partnerships over a number of years have been developed by the school, with the Head in particular serving on diocesan, local authority, national bodies and the Loreto English Education Network. Each of these groups helps to shape policy and practice in schools in a variety of contexts.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- Ensure that the curriculum time allocation for Religious Education meets the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales requirements in all years in Key Stage 3.
- Develop a more structured approach to the monitoring of Acts of Collective worship in morning form time.

Information about the Inspection

The Inspection of Loreto Grammar School 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, Chair and Vice-Chair of Governors with a committee chair; chair of the Ethos and Values Committee and link RE governor, trustee of the Loreto Education Trust, priest chaplain, lay chaplain, Head of RE, RE line manager, an Institute of the Blessed Virgin (IBVM) governor, 3 newly or recently qualified staff, a parent, Head of Department and Sixth Form Tutor with a Head of Year leading a transition team, member of senior leadership team with oversight of pupil welfare, 2 sets of pupil representatives, pupil Internationality Working Group, Kolkata pupils going to India.
- Attended 2 year assemblies, 4 form tutor periods and a Lenten reflection and prayer trail.

- A sample of RE books was scrutinized from every class together with pupil reports and assessment and tracking data.
- Responses to pupil (700+), staff (41) and parent (69 families) questionnaires were collected and analyzed. All comments made were fed back to the leaders and managers.
- 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 materials.
- Learning walks undertaken throughout the school covering all teaching areas to inspect the presentation of the Catholic Life of the school and pupils' behaviour.

Information about this school

- Loreto Grammar School is an average sized selective girls Catholic academy in Altrincham, catering for 11-19 year old girls. It is in the Diocese of Shrewsbury and located in the Borough of Trafford.
- The school has an annual admission number of 160, and there are currently 1,046 pupils on roll, with 256 in Sixth Form. The school has, 130 EAL pupils, 44 pupils are eligible for pupil premium funding and 54 are on the SEND register, with 2 with an Educational Health Care plan.
- The school has an exceptionally high percentage of Catholic pupils, 92% of the pupils aged 11-16 are Catholic and in the Sixth Form 90%.
- The school serves 14 parishes - St Hugh and St John, West Timperley; St Vincent de Paul's, Altrincham; All Saints, Ashton-on-Mersey; St Margaret Ward, Sale; St Joseph's, Sale; Holy Angels, Hale Barns; Our Lady of Lourdes, Partington; Holy Family, Sale Moor; St Alphonsus, Old Trafford; Our Lady and English Martyrs, Urmston; St Monica's, Flixton; St John's and St Theresa's, Chorlton/Firswood and also draws pupils from the wider area of Manchester and surrounds.
- The school is part of the Loreto Education Trust (LET).
- Staffing and governing body membership are secure and experienced with very little turnover. Staffing includes a full time equivalent of 65.9 teachers including the Headteacher and 1 teaching support staff. 54% of teachers are Catholic. 6 specialist teachers teach in the RE department, 1 of them part time and 2 holding senior leadership roles in the school. 2 further experienced non-specialist staff teach RE as part of their teaching commitment. 3 members of staff hold the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies (CCRS) or its equivalent, with 1 undertaking the course at present.
- The evidence from questionnaires, meetings and feedback from various bodies confirms that this is an outstanding learning community of which all are proud to be a part.

Full report – inspection judgments

CATHOLIC LIFE

The Catholic Life of the school is outstanding

1

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	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school	1

- The school has a mission statement which clearly expresses the educational mission of the Church 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life'. Centered in God and animated by the spirit of Mary Ward, the founder of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mission statement is animated and expressed through 7 core values which underpin the life and work of the school. The core values are; Joy, Sincerity, Truth, Justice, Freedom, Excellence and Internationality.
- Almost all pupils appreciate, value and actively participate in the Catholic Life and mission of the school. Pupils take a leading role in those activities that promote the Catholic Life of the school, both within school and the wider local community and internationally. Thirty Sixth Form pupils self-fund a working visit to India to work in a number of settings working in schools with young children in impoverished areas.
- Year 9 pupils with some younger pupils have formed an Internationality Working Party and spoke enthusiastically about their role and the activities they have undertaken to further raise awareness of different cultures. They were looking forward to continuing work on this 'Core' theme next year.
- All pupils believe this is a 'good' school, of which they are proud to be a member and appreciate the care and support offered by the staff at all levels.
- Few, if any, pupils, or parents, regard the school as an 'exam factory' although the pursuit of excellence in all things is an aspiration. Pupils see the school as a community which is concerned with the development of the whole person. This view was also shared by the staff.
- Almost all pupils show a deep respect for themselves and others as made in the image and likeness of God.
- Pupil behaviour in and around the school is exemplary.
- The school's chaplaincy provision is highly valued by the students, 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 a one day retreat programme in each year organized by the lay chaplain and assisted by form tutors and the priest chaplain. During the retreats every student has the opportunity to receive the sacrament of reconciliation or a blessing as the priest chaplain calls on other parish priests the school serves to assist
- 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.

- Upon permanent appointment, teaching staff are required to attend an induction weekend in York, which is held every year. The Chair of Governors, Headteacher, senior leaders and lay chaplain attend too. The focus of this time is to reflect on the vision and values of the school and how they are to be realized.
- This school leadership is deeply committed to the Church's mission in education.
- Parents and carers have a clear understanding of the school's mission and values which runs through all school documentation.
- Governors are deeply committed and make a significant contribution to the Catholic Life of the school. They are actively involved in its evaluation and have created a governors' committee, which reports back to the full governing body specifically to consider the school's Ethos and Values in relation to their impact on school life.
- One parent summed up the views of many when they wrote 'My daughter joined Loreto from a non-feeder school and out of Borough. She has been welcomed into the school community and feels a full part of everything the school has to offer on a daily basis – spiritually, pastorally and academically..... Faith truly is put into practice in this school and I am delighted she is flourishing and reaching her full potential....'

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Religious Education is outstanding

1

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	1
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

- At the outset of this section it must be stated that many aspects within Religious Education are judged to be good or outstanding. However as the leaders and governors have not made sufficient provision within the timetable to meet the Bishops' Conference requirements for 10% curriculum time for RE in KS3, this requires improvement and must be rectified as a matter of urgency.
- The RE department consists of six specialist and two non-specialist teachers, all of whom display strong subject knowledge accompanied by a variety of effective teaching strategies. The school's self-evaluation that RE teaching is never less than good or outstanding is accurate, as endorsed in lesson observations in all key stages during the inspection.
- The RE curriculum provision is appropriate and it provides a range of opportunities that contribute to the spiritual and moral development of pupils. The subject leader has audited and revised Key Stage 3 to ensure that it covers the requirements of the Curriculum Directory. However, at Key Stage 3 there remains the limitation of time allocation.
- In all lessons, pupils are interested and keen to learn. Pupils' behaviour during RE lessons is invariably excellent and indicates real engagement with learning.
- Standards of attainment and progress, where measured by external examinations, are significantly above the national and diocesan average. In 2018, the history of high achievement at GCSE was even stronger with 82% of pupils gaining grades 8 and 9, with 100 % achieving grade 6 or above; at A level, 77% gained grade A*-B, approximately in line with departmental targets for an uncharacteristically small contingent (9 students). Internal data indicates that almost all pupils at KS3 are making excellent progress which enables successful transition to GCSE and high performance in that examination.
- The RE department provides a curriculum with which pupils engage at all key stages and frequently express their enjoyment of the subject and its relevance to their own lives and the wider world.
- The Head of RE, supported by the linked Assistant Head, monitors progress and attainment accurately across the department, with specific identified monitoring groups to ensure that all needs are met.
- The strong and focused leadership of the department results in consistency in all aspects of assessment, marking, and monitoring of progress. Pupils are aware of their targets and progress and what they need to do to improve. Presentation of work is universally of a very high standard, as are displays of information, stimulus material and pupils' work in classrooms.

- Positive relationships with teachers and peers generate a productive environment. Pupils take a pride in their work and need no prompting to engage with tasks or switch from one to another. They are well prepared for examinations by their whole experience but pupils widely express the view that Religious Education, as with their other subjects, is not merely about academic performance but about the values which underpin the school's (and Loreto Family's) ethos.
- Sixth Form pupils praise the quality of content and teaching in, and see the relevance of, Religious Studies A level and General RE, (the *Aletheia* course, derived from the previous Diocesan NOCN course). The numbers of pupils currently studying A Level Religious Studies is standing up well despite the transition to the new A level system which impacted upon numbers for 2018. The high standards and engagement at KS4 contribute to this recovery of uptake.
- There is regular, systematic monitoring and evaluation at departmental, whole school leadership and governance levels, while also at the level of the Loreto Academy Trust. (These processes need to address the time allocation at Key Stage 3).

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Collective Worship is outstanding

1

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

- Quiet reflection/contemplation for various periods of time forms an important part of the prayer life of the school.
- Pupils are respectful of all parts of the school which includes the beautiful chapel and main hall when used for Collective Worship. They are also very aware of the special significance of the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the enclosed chapel, which allows the community the opportunity to pray and worship in a very special way.
- Pupils frequently take the initiative in leading or making contributions in Collective Worship depending upon their age and experience. Their contributions are varied in style and presentation, One Year 13 Act of Collective Worship observed was thought provoking and challenging. All student contributions are well received by their peers.
- Through the full time lay chaplain and priest chaplain the school provides a weekly voluntary mass or communion service. Every form will, over the course of year, prepare for the mass/service with guidance as appropriate from the chaplains. The form tutor is invited to attend as well as all members of the school community.
- Pupils from Y10 and above can be appointed as Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist within the school, but must be sponsored by the parish priest where they regularly worship and also complete a one day training/preparation programme in school. This has been highly successful and some pupils have now been commissioned within their home parish.
- The experience of living and working in a faithful praying community has a deep and visible effect on the pupils and staff. 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 pupils and staff. At times there may be missed opportunities to extend and develop the prayer and create time for reflection in morning form registration.
- The lay chaplain prepares and disseminates high quality resources to help staff with morning and afternoon prayer, although staff and pupils are welcome to use their own resources too.
- 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.