

DIOCESE OF LEEDS DBI



# SECTION 48 INSPECTION

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL  
AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

## REPORT

St. Wilfrid's Catholic High School,  
Sixth Form, Language and Vocational College  
Cutsyke Road  
Featherstone  
WF7 6BD

School URN

108297

Chair of Governors

Fr Sean Durcan

Headteacher

Mr John McNally

RE Subject Leader

Mr J Aitchison

Dates of Inspection

21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2007

Section 48 Inspectors

Annette Dews & Joe Ginty

## INTRODUCTION

The Inspection of St Wilfrid's Catholic High School, Featherstone, was carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Leeds Diocesan Framework and Schedule for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Bishop of Leeds.

### Description of the school

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St Wilfrid's Catholic High School, Sixth Form, Language and Vocational College is a popular and expanding school serving a large catchment area within the Diocese of Leeds and in the Local Education Authority of Wakefield. The school is a mixed Comprehensive school for students between the ages of 11 and 18. There are 1663 students on roll with 319 in the sixth form. Approximately 56% of the students are Baptised Catholics and 44% are of other Christian denominations. The school is highly regarded in the community. This can be seen from the applications received for Year 7 and the 75% retention into Sixth Form. 47 students have statements of Special Education Need (SEN). There are over 100 teachers on the staff of whom approximately 50% are Catholic.

Students come from a wide range of socio economic backgrounds and reflect all abilities so that the school is truly comprehensive in its make up. The school serves numerous parishes in the Wakefield, Castleford and North Barnsley region.

## OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

### The overall effectiveness of the provision for the Catholic life of the school, of curriculum Religious Education, and the school's main strengths and areas for development.

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St Wilfrid's Catholic High School provides an outstanding Catholic education where all aspects of the school's Catholic life and Religious Education (RE) are at least good and many are exemplary. There is a very strong sense of mission within the school community. The school's vision and priorities are known and understood by staff, students and parents. The clarity of direction, supported by effective management structures and communication systems, leads to a sense of respect and unity amongst staff and students.

A highly efficient management structure has been established which promotes rigour and consistency throughout the school. This promotes a shared mission and contributes to the raising of standards. The line management structure is a significant strength, with SLT and Academic Board setting challenging targets in order to continually improve upon the high quality teaching and learning experience of the students. Every action is directly related to the Whole School Development Plan (WSDP) and Self Evaluations (SEFs).

The comprehensive pastoral system focuses on the needs of the individual pupil and is a major strength of the school. The team of Key Stage (KS) Co-ordinators, Heads of Year (HoDs) and Tutors are led by the Deputy Headteacher with responsibility for Catholic ethos, pastoral work and Inclusion. The team works alongside outside agencies and these robust systems ensure that students' attendance, progress and well-being are regularly reviewed and monitored and action taken as appropriate.

Chaplaincy provision is excellent and gives the school a very distinctive identity as a Catholic school. The RE department is vibrant; nurturing interest, developing skills and understanding in the students and assisting them in formulating reasoned and considered

opinion. In the words of one parent, *'the RE teachers do not just deliver lessons, they reach the students.'*

The prayer, liturgy and worship shared and celebrated at St Wilfrid's promotes a truly corporate spirit within the school maintained on a daily basis. The school is regarded by students and parents as *'family'*. The celebratory climax of the school year is the patronal feast day of St Wilfrid of which it is said, *'...you see the sense of community and the spirit; the day represents what the school is'. St Wilfrid's Day highlights the Catholic ethos of school. Music and Dance express religion in a way you don't expect'.*

The school truly provides all students with a platform for success.

### **The effectiveness of steps taken to promote improvement since the last Inspection.**

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Aspects identified for improvement in the previous (s23) inspection have been addressed with rigour and determination.

- Opportunities for independent and sustained writing exercises have been incorporated into the RE schemes of work at Key Stages (KSs) 3 and 4.
- Opportunities for student retreats have increased from 5 to 7 per annum. There have also been opportunities for staff retreats.
- The size of the Chapel remains unchanged due to financial constraints but the school continually seeks to improve this provision.

### **The capacity to make further improvements.**

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The school has a strong capacity to improve having a very accurate view of its own strengths and development needs and a very strong desire to improve further and raise pupil achievement. This was clearly evident in the school's own Development Plans and comprehensive Self Evaluation. The chair of governors, headteacher and staff are united in their efforts in promoting an inclusive, spiritually enriching environment in which all students may achieve as well as they are able.

### **How might the school further improve the provision of Catholic education?**

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Within the context of the School and Subject Development Plans the school should capitalise on the appointment of the full-time Lay Chaplain (who will work closely with the Assistant Headteacher with oversight of Religious Life and Professional Development) and thereby:

- further enhance the Catholic ethos of the school,
- provide increased spiritual, moral and personal support within the school,
- consolidate the spiritual and pastoral nature of the school.

## THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL ~ LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

### How effective are Leadership and Management in developing the Catholic life of the school?

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The leadership team at St Wilfrid's School promotes a strong sense of the educational mission of the Church and the role of the school in expressing it. Catholic ethos and values permeate all aspects of school life, underpinning policies and the daily life of the school. The recently appointed headteacher leads the school with a clear vision in the belief that success with Christ is at the centre of all that is achieved and his outstanding leadership and that of senior leaders provides clear direction for the Catholic life of the school.

The Chair of Governors enthusiastically promotes and fosters the school's Catholic ethos and is committed to raising pupil achievement. Governors are supportive of the school, are committed to the school's Catholic mission and are methodically involved in evaluating the impact of their action. In partnership with the diocese and local authority senior managers ensure that financial resources are well used to create a stimulating and attractive teaching and learning environment.

Faith sharing by staff is vibrant and very visible in their relationships with students and with each other. The leadership team is already planning further strategies for nurturing this special faith-sharing apostolate. All students at St Wilfrid's are valued highly and the school works hard to enable them to access fully the educational opportunities provided. The result is that the students flourish spiritually and morally at St Wilfrid's School.

St Wilfrid's is a welcoming, friendly community. Students enjoy excellent relationships with staff and with one another. They are secure and feel safe knowing that there is always someone to whom they can go and who will listen and support. A highly developed pastoral system with Heads of Year, support assistants and the involvement of organisations such as Catholic Care ensure that the needs of all are met. Very effective structures are in place to ensure that the development of each learner is rigorously tracked and monitored and high standards of learning and behaviour are successfully promoted by staff. The school seeks not to exclude students and cooperates with other schools in relation to managed moves.

St Wilfrid's is an inclusive school where all students are known and valued. Support for students with learning and language difficulties, with disabilities and those who are particularly vulnerable is very good indeed. The school takes a pragmatic approach in seeking to develop the potential of each pupil. Excellent communication between staff, the many external agencies and parents assist this process. Discrimination of any kind is tackled with vigour and social cohesion promoted.

The school is highly effective in promoting the personal development of students and in addition to the broad curriculum, staff also offer a wide and impressive variety of extra-curricular activities and study support opportunities. The retreat programme and support for spiritual development are clearly evidenced. Students' response to, and engagement with, these activities is excellent. The school promotes healthy lifestyles. Achievement is rewarded and success is celebrated. Students recognise and appreciate the support, care and opportunities given to them. They are consulted and can influence life in school. They willingly take on responsibility to support others through such activities as peer mentoring, the school council, the bullying council, paired reading, drop-in sessions and through fund-

raising for projects in this country and globally. Older students look after younger students and this is particularly evident in the arrangements for the transition of students from the primary schools to secondary. The enthusiasm and generosity of staff is reciprocated by students in their interactions with, and responses to, others.

Students from St Thomas a Beckett, Wakefield and other local schools are welcomed in to the Sixth Form and integrate successfully. Students identify with the school and are intensely proud of it. An 'Eco' group encourages other students to look after the school environment.

Parents support the school and trust and value the high levels of care and guidance given to their children. They share an understanding of, and belief in, the school's values and mission and recognise and appreciate the role it plays in the moral and spiritual development of their children. They report that the school helps students to maintain their faith and uphold moral principles. They are happy with the progress of their children, are consulted and involved in all aspects of their education.

## **THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL ~ COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

### **How good is the quality of Collective Worship?**

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The quality of provision for liturgy and worship at St Wilfrid's is outstanding. Acts of worship include a variety of prayer styles, group sizes and location, consistently appropriate to the age and faith background of students and faithfully reflect the Catholic mission of the school. The school day begins with prayer in the Chapel and staff briefing opens with a prayer lead by the Headteacher.

The Chaplaincy Team, comprising representation from the RE, Drama, IT and Art meets every fortnight and supports local parish celebrations. The Chaplaincy contributes significantly to maintaining the outstanding Catholic ethos of the school and to encouraging an active faith amongst the students

The RE department organises and leads INSET for staff supporting and promoting the breadth of Catholic life. In addition, the Liturgy Group promote the liturgical and spiritual formation of staff and students. The importance and status the school affords to liturgy and spirituality can be seen in the creation of the senior post of Assistant Headteacher with oversight of Religious Life and Professional Development and the imminent appointment of a full time Lay Chaplain.

There is strength in the creative energy put into Acts of Worship by staff and students alike. There is a programme of retreats at Myddleton Grange and Ampleforth which are very well attended and popular. The Heads of Year and form tutors are actively involved in these retreats. Students from years 10 and 12 engage in the annual Lourdes pilgrimage and this is an enjoyable opportunity to reflect on their own lives, develop spiritually and care for others.

There is weekly Mass in the school organised by class groups. Mass is also celebrated at key times in the lives of the students such as Year 7 Welcome and Y11 and Y13 Leavers' Masses. The school promotes 'e-prayer' accessible to all staff; a prayer book, resource support for form tutors and Heads of Year with daily Acts of Worship in tutorial time and assemblies. Assembly and tutor time are prayerful and reflective where students engage in use of Scripture, prayer and reflection.

Students actively engage and support charitable events such as Year group charities, Sponsored Child, Fairtrade raising thousands of pounds annually. There are strong links with parishes where students and staff are actively involved in sacramental and liturgical celebrations. Students' and parents' evaluations endorse the significant contribution made by worship to the spiritual and moral development of students.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ~ ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RE**

### **How well do students achieve in RE?**

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Students achieve good standards and make good progress at all levels. Any significant variation between groups of students is highlighted through department tracking and whole-school analysis systems. Students with SEN make very good progress in the subject.

Students are gaining knowledge, skills and understanding at a good rate across all key stages. There is strong commitment to inclusion in all areas of school life and this is evident in RE. All students take pride in their work. They are interested and responsive during lessons and their behaviour in class is very good indeed. There are vibrant display areas in the RE teaching areas and around the school which are an overt celebration of all aspects of achievement within the Catholic ethos of the school.

RE is taught in Form Groups across KS3 and this arrangement is said to be highly beneficial. Attainment at the end of KS3 is consistently on a par with other core subjects with the majority of students attaining Level 5 or above in RE with the highest attaining students reaching levels 7 and 8. Standards in Year 9 are good and progress is good. Higher attaining students have an above average grasp of Catholic practice and can explain the significance of key symbols of the Church with confidence. They are comfortable in the use of specialist terminology as use it appropriately. They look up biblical references confidently and recognise the significance of parables. They work well collaboratively and higher attaining students present their conclusions clearly. The implementation of a new Scheme of Work (SOW) in Sept 2006 has led to improved standards and greater pupil progress.

Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategies are firmly placed within the KS3 and KS4 SOWs. This has highlighted to students specifically what is required from the examination boards in order to achieve good answers and high results. This has improved students' written skills and overall attainment and has led to raising standards across the key stages

The department is achieving a very high pass rate at GCSE with 99% of students achieving a pass. Strategies are in place to raise attainment at AS level. The school has maintained a long record of 100% pass rate at A2.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ~ THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN RE**

### **How effective are teaching and learning in RE?**

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The quality of teaching is at least good with many outstanding features. Teachers are highly aware of students' individual learning styles and needs, and these are well met. Highly effective teaching develops knowledge, understanding and skills - appropriate to students' age and capacity. The team of RE teachers are well qualified RE specialists with

high levels of knowledge of the faith and expertise in teaching it. Lessons are carefully and consistently planned taking account of the ability of students within the class and the need to engage and challenge all students. Teachers use a variety of teaching and learning strategies within the lesson. Teachers challenge students to think spiritually, ethically and theologically, and to become aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. Opportunity for prayer, reflection or meditation during lessons makes an excellent contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the students.

Teachers' high levels of knowledge of the Faith and expertise in teaching it, together with careful planning and thorough assessment of learning, ensures that work in RE is very well pitched and suitably challenging for all students. The methods and use of resources, such as ICT, are precisely judged to engage and extend students, including those with additional learning needs.

Interactive whiteboard technology is used to great effect to enrich resources, to re-focus attention, to supply a visible summary of pupil responses, and to act as reminder of written work focus and learning objectives throughout a lesson. Students are given opportunities for personal reflection, for paired/group talk, for note-taking, for asking questions and also for wriggling, stretching and re-focusing. Students enjoy their lessons and thrive as a result of the teaching of RE, enjoy their lessons, and make good progress.

Students know their targets and how they can be achieved. They like Religious Education and consider they make good progress. They reported that the subject gave them the opportunity to discuss things. Their enjoyment was evident in lessons observed and in their attitudes to learning which are very positive. Behaviour in lessons was good. In 6<sup>th</sup> form – the lesson observed had pace and challenge – enabling students to question and demonstrate higher level thinking skills. Students were challenged to think spiritually, ethically and theologically. In this and lessons observed in KSs 3, 4 and 5 students were engaged and motivated, becoming aware of the demands of religious commitment in every day life.

Effective arrangements are in place to enable support staff and parents/carers to support students effectively.

### **How well does the RE curriculum meet the needs and interests of students?**

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A significant strength of the school lies in the fact that students are encouraged to form opinion and respect the opinions of others. The RE curriculum fulfils the requirements of the Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools in providing a systematic study of God, the life and teaching of Jesus and the Church, the central beliefs that Catholics hold and the relationship between faith and life. Students are encouraged to investigate and reflect, develop appropriate skills and attitudes respond to God's call in everyday life.

All students have access to the RE curriculum which is adapted to their needs and to the needs of the school. Progression within and between years and key stages is clearly thought out and set out for all staff.

The curriculum has a significant impact on the spiritual and moral development of the students. Provision is made for the teaching and learning of other world faiths and students are developing a balanced understanding and appreciation of these.

Students are encouraged to investigate, reflect and develop appropriate skills and attitudes in response to God's call in everyday life. The broader curriculum enables them to think spiritually, ethically and theologically, and to become aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.

The provision for Education in Personal Relationships is a significant strength and it is noted that the Sex Education Policy is to be reviewed shortly.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ~ LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF RE**

### **How effective are Leadership and Management in raising achievement and supporting all students in RE?**

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The leadership and management of the RE department is outstanding and is a major influence on the overall life of the school in leading by example and encouragement. The former Head of RE has assumed the position of Assistant Headteacher with oversight of Religious Life and Professional Development and the new Head of RE ably leads a fully committed and enthusiastic team of teachers. The school is successfully addressing any issues raised during this 'transition' period and it is clearly evident that the RE department will grow from strength to strength. The work of the department is well organised and managed. All schemes of work are in place, along with resources. The school shares good practise and offers INSET to other Catholic Secondary schools in the Diocese.

The drive and commitment of the RE Co-ordinator contributes to the fact that the overall provision for RE is outstanding. RE has a clear plan for development and is prominent in the overall school improvement plan and evident in the detailed RE action plan. Morale in the RE department is very high indeed with a clear focus on promoting high standards in the subject and the faith development of the students.

Aspects of the Subject development Plan are clearly and effectively linked to Performance Management systems within the school. The subject is very effectively managed in a way that ensures the very best use of resources, thorough and incisive quality assurance of its work, and prompt and decisive action to remedy any problems.

The subject is managed efficiently and, through quality assurance procedures, the subject leader has a good understanding of the quality of the school's provision. Effective monitoring of teaching and learning in RE is embedded.

Staff development in RE is afforded high value and staff meeting time is earmarked for discussion of needs and there is evidence of regular and discerning acquisition of good quality resources.

The post of second in charge of RE will be filled shortly and this, together with the appointment of a full-time Lay Chaplain working in harness with the Assistant Headteacher offers very exciting prospects for ongoing development of an inspirational nature.

## SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<b>OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS</b>	<b>1</b>	Outstanding
<b>THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL</b>		
<i>How effective are Leadership and Management in developing the Catholic life of the school?</i>	<b>1</b>	Outstanding
<i>How good is the quality of Collective Worship?</i>	<b>1</b>	Outstanding
<b>RELIGIOUS EDUCATION</b>		
<i>How well do students achieve in RE?</i>	<b>2</b>	Good
<i>How effective are Teaching and learning in RE?</i>	<b>1</b>	Outstanding
<i>How well does the RE curriculum meet the needs and interests of students?</i>	<b>1</b>	Outstanding
<i>How effective are Leadership and Management in raising achievement and supporting all students in RE?</i>	<b>1</b>	Outstanding

## INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS ANNEX

### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

<b>How effective and efficient is the provision of Catholic education in meeting the needs of students and why?</b>	<b>1</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>the effectiveness of steps taken to promote improvement since the last inspection</i></li> <li><i>the capacity to make further improvements</i></li> </ul>	Yes Yes

### THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

<b>How effective are leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school?</b>	<b>1</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>how well the governing body fulfils its role in relation to the school's Catholic foundation</i></li> <li><i>how effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality care and education</i></li> <li><i>the quality of the leadership of the headteacher and senior staff in leading and developing the Catholic life of the school</i></li> <li><i>how effectively the Catholic life of the school is monitored and evaluated</i></li> <li><i>how effectively leadership at all levels in the school promotes students' spiritual and moral development</i></li> <li><i>how effectively leadership at all levels in the school promotes and provides opportunities for the spiritual development and prayer life of the staff</i></li> <li><i>the impact of the involvement of the clergy team on the work of the school</i></li> <li><i>how effectively leadership at all levels promotes the school's contribution to social cohesion</i></li> <li><i>how effectively leadership at all levels encourages the positive behaviour of students</i></li> <li><i>the extent to which students' contribute to the school and broader community</i></li> </ul>	1 1 1 1 1 1 2 1 1 1

<b>How good is the quality of Collective Worship?</b>	<b>1</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>the frequency and quality of the provision for prayer, Collective Worship and liturgical life of the school</i></li> <li><i>students' response to the school's provision for prayer and worship</i></li> <li><i>how well Collective Worship contributes to the spiritual and moral development of the students</i></li> <li><i>the inclusive nature of the provision for prayer, Collective Worship and liturgical life of the school</i></li> </ul>	1 1 1 1

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

<b>How well do students achieve in RE?</b>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>the standards reached by students in RE</i></li> </ul>	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>how well students make progress in RE, taking account of any significant variations between groups of students</i></li> </ul>	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>how well students with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress in RE</i></li> </ul>	2

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in RE?</b>	<b>1</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>the adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that students are well taught in RE</i></li> </ul>	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>how well teaching is used to meet the full range of students' needs in RE</i></li> </ul>	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>the effectiveness of planning, monitoring and assessment in RE</i></li> </ul>	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>the extent to which students enjoy their work in RE</i></li> </ul>	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>the involvement of parents and carers in their children's learning in RE</i></li> </ul>	1

<b>How well does the RE curriculum meet the needs and interests of students?</b>	<b>1</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>how far the RE curriculum meets external requirements</i></li> </ul>	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>the extent to which students are gaining a knowledge and developing an understanding of the teachings, beliefs, values and way of life of other world faiths</i></li> </ul>	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>the suitability of family life and sex education, education in personal relationships and citizenship education</i></li> </ul>	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>the extent to which the curriculum in RE contributes to the spiritual and moral development of the students</i></li> </ul>	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>how far the RE curriculum promotes social cohesion</i></li> </ul>	2

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all students in RE?</b>	<b>1</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>how effectively subject leaders in RE set clear direction and provide support leading to improvement</i></li> </ul>	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>how effectively performance in RE is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets</i></li> </ul>	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>how well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all students achieve their potential in RE</i></li> </ul>	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>how effectively and efficiently resources are deployed</i></li> </ul>	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>the effectiveness with which governors discharge their responsibilities in RE</i></li> </ul>	2