



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Canonical Inspection Report

PRINCETHORPE COLLEGE

Leamington Road, Princethorpe, Rugby, Warwickshire, CV23 9PX

Inspection dates:

27-28 November 2019

Lead Inspector:

Andrew Maund

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS:

Good

Catholic Life:

Outstanding

Religious Education:

Good

Collective Worship:

Good

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

This is a Good Catholic school because:

- All pupils and staff greatly appreciate, contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school, which has a generous, robust and deeply sincere family ethos at its heart.
- There is exemplary provision for the Catholic Life of the school, which extends to the wider community, particularly with regards to Catholic education.
- Pupils achieve very well and clearly enjoy their learning in Religious Education, making very good progress as a result.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education is consistently good with some outstanding features.
- The quality of Collective Worship throughout the school is consistently good.

It is not yet Outstanding because:

- Religious Education does not meet the requirements of the Bishops' Conference of England & Wales.
- Teachers' approach to feedback on written work is variable in Religious Education.
- The good quality Collective Worship provided by the school focuses mainly on traditional approaches to prayer and is limited in its expectations of pupil leadership.
- Systems for monitoring, evaluation and improvement planning need to be further embedded.

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

- Ensure that Religious Education is allocated 10% of curriculum time in KS3.
- Teach a GCSE Religious Education specification that fully meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference.
- Embed the school's marking and feedback policy within the Religious Education department.
- Offer a wider range of acts of Collective Worship and develop consistency in the quality of prayer across the school.
- Continue to develop rigorous and systematic monitoring, reporting, evaluation and future planning of Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship by all stakeholders.

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	Outstanding
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

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

- The pupils and students have a very good understanding of the essence of the school's mission statement and the motto, *Christus Regnet; (Let Christ Reign)*. This is clear in their exemplary behaviour and their appreciation of all aspects of the Catholic Life of the school.
- Pupils are involved in the evaluation of the Catholic Life of the school.
- All pupils' behaviour is exemplary in every aspect; they show remarkable respect for one another, for staff, visitors and for themselves, are most courteous towards each other and towards adults and naturally help and support one another. They listen very well indeed, readily give thanks and express their appreciation for all that the school has to offer.
- All pupils and students accept the responsibilities of living within a Catholic school community and, as a result, are involved in many activities which promote the Catholic Life and mission of the school and the wider community. They choose a variety of local, national and international charities to support, including the St Anne's Parish Christmas Shoe Box Appeal, Mary's Meals and cancer charities. There is an active Youth SVP group, but all pupils and students clearly feel a call to support the less fortunate, find innovative ways to do so and enter into those activities with exemplary enthusiasm and engagement.
- Pupils and students clearly value the school's chaplaincy provision very highly, regularly speaking with great appreciation of the centrality of the priest chaplain

and the chaplaincy coordinator to all aspects of school life. The school chapel itself is seen as a safe space for all and they often find themselves drawn there in times of sadness, remembrance or suffering, as well as celebration.

- Almost all pupils take full advantage of the opportunities that the school provides for their personal support and spiritual, moral and ethical development, which can clearly be seen in the remarkable warmth of the relationships between pupils and staff; the school is frequently described as 'a family' by pupils, staff and parents and this ethos is clearly lived out in all aspects of their daily life together.
- Pupils and students feel very well cared for; if they feel the need for help, they know where to go for it and are confident that the care will be there. Bullying is extremely rare but when it does occur it is swiftly dealt with and reconciliation is always a key part of the process.
- Many pupils have an emerging sense of their own vocational development, this was clear in discussions in class and at lunchtimes.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school

- The mission statement, which reflects the fundamental influence of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart upon the foundation and development of the school, while lengthy, clearly expresses the educational and pastoral mission of the Church.
- All staff are fully committed to its implementation across the curriculum and wider life of the school. They enthusiastically participate in all school activities which currently reflect the Catholic Life and mission of the school, such as individual form prayers, opportunities for staff spiritual development and retreats and other Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in Catholic Life. This involvement and provision include the whole staff, including office and estates, all of whom are part of the school's house system. Many staff act as co-tutors, coach sporting teams or offer co-curricular activities alongside the teaching staff.
- The headmaster, director of ethos, pastoral deputy head, chaplain and chaplaincy coordinator clearly have a vision for the future development of the school's Catholic Life. They are all taking a lead in all areas of school life and are models of innovation and commitment. Non-Catholic staff specifically spoke with great appreciation of their induction and the continuing support provided by the director of ethos and the chaplaincy coordinator in particular.
- The school is a prayerful community, with prayer forming a central part of school assemblies and reinforced by the use of individual House and Form prayers as well as the provision of a school prayer book. Through this, pupils, students and staff are exposed to the full range of the traditional prayers of the Church but also celebrate, for example, the individuality of each house through prayers written by members of that house.
- The school's internal environment clearly reflects its mission and identity through obvious signs of the school's Catholic character. One particular example of this is the recently re-developed 'Switzerland', an outdoor education space, which also embraces the original use of the area as a place of quiet prayer and contemplation by the religious when they were based here. Another example is the attractive artwork and other iconography provided in the new building. The external signage and digital environment of the website and advertising also acknowledge the Catholic character of the school actively and have developed significantly.
- All members of staff are universally generous, open and honest in their behaviour and attitude towards pupils and students, one another, parents and visitors. They have a clear affection and appreciation of the school and all it stands for and are reflective and self-critical. As a result, the school has the highest standards of

pastoral care for its pupils and students. This includes the provision of a dedicated mobile phone which pupils can text or call in order to raise concerns with the pastoral deputy.

- Chaplaincy provision is very effective in supporting and promoting the Catholic Life of the school. Many spoke with genuine appreciation of the support offered by both the chaplain and the chaplaincy coordinator in their personal and spiritual development.
- Pastoral programmes, personal, social and health education & relationships and sex education are carefully planned, well taught and fully reflect Catholic teachings and principles.

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

- School leaders, including governors, clearly demonstrate an exemplary public commitment to the mission of the Church and are well regarded as models of Catholic leadership by staff, students and pupils. The school's constitution guarantees a majority of practising Catholics on the board.
- The provision for the Catholic Life of the school is clearly acknowledged as a leadership responsibility; it is clearly reflected in the school's self-evaluation of the Catholic Life of the school and there is evidence of monitoring and evaluation of the Catholic Life of the school by trustees.
- The impact of this is to lead to an ongoing programme of improvements which have considerable impact on the Catholic Life of the school.
- CPD focussing on the Catholic Life of the school occurs extensively and is highly effective. As a result, staff understanding of the school's mission is exemplary and all staff are involved in shaping and supporting it.
- The school demonstrates its commitment to building an inclusive community through its considered use of bursaries and scholarships, which also reflect its commitment to Catholic education.
- The school has strategies for engaging with the majority of parents and carers to the benefit of pupils and the views of parents on the Catholic Life of the school are sought, monitored or evaluated through regular questionnaires. However, only one specific question in the most recent questionnaire referred to the religious life of the school.
- Governors and the Parent Teacher Association both offer considerable financial support to maintain the Catholic Life of the school. Governors are closely involved with the self-evaluation of the Catholic Life of the school and offer both a supportive role and appropriate challenge, as can be seen from the minutes of their meetings.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The quality of Religious Education	Good
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	Outstanding
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	Good

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

- Almost all pupils and students, including those with SEND, make at least very good and often, outstanding progress in each key stage from their varied starting points.
- The most able pupils and students are making better progress in Religious Education than in most other subjects.
- Most pupils and students, relative to their age and capacity, are very engaged young people. They show great interest in the subject and clearly enjoy the ample opportunities provided to discuss and reflect spiritually, ethically and theologically. In the school's own survey, 83% of pupils and students agree or strongly agree that the lessons in Religious Education are enjoyable and this was supported by the majority of pupils and students to whom the inspectors spoke. Consequently, behaviour in lessons is exemplary; all pupils move quickly and efficiently between tasks in class, are always attentive, listen well and are keen to work. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour are all but non-existent.
- Pupils' religious literacy needs to be further developed as pupils know and use a range of terms but miss some opportunities; one example of this was using the expression "value" of life rather than "sanctity" of life. The Religious Education subject leader's five-year plan to make all students more religiously literate will be a way of ensuring further improvement.
- Pupil attainment as indicated by teacher assessment and public examination results is always very good and, in many cases, outstanding.
- The quality of pupils' and students' class work is very good; their written work is well presented and generally thorough, with more pride being demonstrated in their work in Religious Education than in some other subjects. However, while they respond on useful feedback sheets at the end of each unit of work, they rarely respond in writing to the challenging and targeted feedback offered on individual pieces of work.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education

- Teachers consistently plan and deliver good lessons which are linked to the pupils' and students' current assessment. As a result, most pupils are engaged in their lessons and learn well.
- Teaching is consistently good with some examples of outstanding practice; this assessment of teaching is in line with the school's own detailed assessment from their very thorough programme of monitoring.
- When teachers refer to their personal faith journey and bear Christian witness, there is genuine evangelisation of the school's pupils and students.

- Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and regularly employ a range of appropriate teaching strategies, engaging all pupils and students throughout the lessons as a result. Different teachers use different teaching methods; more opportunities for peer-observation and sharing of good practice amongst the department are planned. This will further improve the diversity of learning experience.
- More pupil-centred activities and less teacher-talk could further enhance the overall quality of teaching and enable pupils to make progress more rapidly.
- Teachers ensure that pupils and students are involved in evaluating how they are achieving by offering verbal and written feedback, an overall assessment of areas of strength and targets for development at the end of units and by using the school's assessment tracking procedures. The current plan to focus on feedback is starting to bear fruit and, when used consistently, will further improve pupil and student progress.
- Teachers habitually use high-level skills, such as observation and open questioning, in order to adapt tasks and explanations and to develop higher level thinking skills. As a result, the quality of learning is improved for most pupils and students.
- A wide range of good quality resources are provided and used well to optimise learning for most pupils and students. Fundamental to this is the support for SEND pupils and students, which was a real strength. However, while there was some evidence of other adults being well used in support of learning in some classes, it is not consistent across all the teaching groups in which they are used.
- Teachers consistently communicate high expectations of, and real passion for, the subject to their pupils and students, all of whom respond positively.
- Achievement and effort are always celebrated, leading to good levels of motivation from most pupils and students.

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

- While plans are in place to address this, Religious Education does not currently meet the requirements of the Bishops' Conference as less than 10% of curriculum time is allocated to the teaching of Religious Education in Key Stage 3.
- Provision for Religious Education is more than comparable to other core subjects in terms of professional development, resourcing, staffing and accommodation. The school's decision to move the teaching of Religious Education to classrooms close to the chapel in the centre of the school reflects this commitment to Religious Education as a core subject.
- The subject leader and other staff have engaged with diocesan training, which has had a positive impact on the school's capacity for improvement.
- The highly committed approach of the director of ethos in his current role has had a most positive impact in both Religious Education and evangelisation of the community. This is also true of the chaplaincy coordinator, whose quiet focus and depth of spirituality enrich the pupils' and students' experience of Religious Education; this was very powerfully demonstrated in an Advent Reflection with Year 8 pupils.
- School leaders regularly monitor and evaluate Religious Education and there is systematic monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education by governors. The evaluations of pupil and student voice and lesson quality have provided useful evaluative tools.
- The subject leader for Religious Education has a clear vision for outstanding teaching and learning and a very good level of expertise to enable this vision to be

secured. However, while he has mapped the content of the current GCSE specification to the Religious Education Curriculum Directory, the specification does not meet the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. Nevertheless, the subject leader shows great commitment to the development of his colleagues and their support in the classroom, as well as being a model of highly academic teaching at Sixth Form level. This results in increased confidence in those colleagues and a good standard of teaching.

- This is further supported by the assistant headteacher for teaching and learning who is leading a whole school initiative on effective feedback. This work is having an immediate impact in the school and is also seeing an improved use of the school's student reflection sheets.
- Leaders ensure that Religious Education is imaginatively planned to meet the needs of different pupils and students and to secure coherence across the key stages and phases.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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

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

- Pupils and students have an obvious commitment and willingness to participate in acts of Collective Worship; one example of this was the spontaneous development of the display of paper poppies built into an act of worship in its own right. However, they commented as part of the school council that they would like to have more opportunities to prepare and lead acts of worship.
- Pupils generally act with reverence, although their singing was not always as joyful as it might have been and there was not always universal focus during prayer.
- Pupils and students lead prayers within tutor times and have the opportunity to write bidding prayers for Collective Worship and Masses. They are also involved in the evaluation of Collective Worship.
- Pupils and students have a straightforward approach to prayer, which includes using scripture, liturgical music and some religious artefacts, but does not include more contemporary styles of prayer. The school council would like to see greater consistency in approaches to prayer in tutor time. There is some evidence of pupils' participation in voluntary acts of worship in the form of a lunchtime rosary group.
- Pupils and students have a good understanding of the Church's liturgical year, its seasons and feasts and consequently would have an effective appreciation of the effects of this on the planning of their own acts of Collective Worship.
- Overall, the experience of living and working in a faithful, praying community with chaplaincy at its centre, has a positive impact on the spiritual and moral development of most pupils and students, irrespective of their ability or faith

background. They have a well-developed sense of respect for those of other religions and faiths. The impact of this can be seen in pupils' response to prayer and liturgy.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the School

- Collective Worship is central to the life of the school and prayer is included in almost all school celebrations. Praying together is part of the daily experience for pupils, students and staff.
- Collective Worship has a clear purpose, message and direction, with reference to the liturgical seasons and the Catholic character of the school. However, worship in tutor time is not always overtly Catholic, or indeed spiritual, and could be much more explicitly and proudly so.
- The planning of Collective Worship is given high priority, as is its resourcing and monitoring by school leaders. This results in an experience for pupils and staff which is engaging and referred to positively by members of the community.
- Relevant staff have a very good understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts and ensure that pupils have good experiences of the Church's liturgical life.
- The variety of Collective Worship is, however, limited and, while staff accept responsibility for leading prayer and involving pupils and students in its delivery, little time is spent on innovation (with the exception of devising individual house prayers) or encouraging pupils' or students' leadership of it.

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

- Leaders clearly know how to plan and deliver quality Collective Worship, having a very good understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts.
- However, because of its limited variety, Collective Worship is not always accessible to the pupils and students in a contemporary context.
- Leaders are leaders of Collective Worship within the school and appropriate models of good practice for staff, students and pupils.
- Leaders provide staff with opportunities for CPD in liturgical formation, the planning of Collective Worship and provide a comprehensive range of resources.
- Leaders monitor and evaluate Collective Worship and there is also monitoring by governors.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Unique reference number	125787
Local authority	Independent
<i>This inspection was carried out under canon 806 of Canon Law.</i>	
Type of school	Independent
School category	Independent
Age range	11 - 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	913
Appropriate authority	Governing body
Chair	Mrs E Griffin
Headteacher	Mr E Hester
Telephone number	01926 634200
Website address	www.princethorpe.co.uk
Email address	post@princethorpe.co.uk

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS SCHOOL

- Princethorpe College is a co-educational 11-18 independent Catholic day school in a rural setting. It has just over 900 pupils, roughly 200 of whom are in the Sixth Form; as such it is well above the average size for independent senior schools and is the second largest independent Catholic school in the country.
- Pupils travel to school each day from an area of wide radius around the school. The parishes served by the school are many throughout Warwickshire, Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Oxfordshire. It is heavily oversubscribed.
- The school forms a central part of The Princethorpe Foundation, with two other schools.
- The percentage of Catholic pupils is currently 25% overall.
- The percentage of disadvantaged pupils is significantly below the national average.
- The percentage of SEND pupils is above the national average.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic origins is significantly below the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with EAL is below the national average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION

- The inspection was carried out by two Diocesan Inspectors: Andrew Maund & Sarah Hatfield. Ben McArdle shadowed the inspection during the afternoon of its second day.
- 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 10 Religious Education lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Almost all these lesson observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders from the school.

- The inspectors completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils and students to evaluate their understanding of Catholic Life, the impact of Religious Education teaching on their learning over time and their experience of Collective Worship.
- Meetings were held with the chair of governors, the governor in charge of safeguarding, the headteacher, the subject leader for Religious Education, the director of ethos, academic and pastoral deputy and assistant heads, other members of staff, the priest chaplain, lay chaplaincy co-ordinator and a wide range of students and pupils including the head girl, senior and junior prefects and members of the school council.
- The inspectors attended two acts of house Collective Worship in the school chapel and a number of acts of tutor time Collective Worship. They undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of the presentation of the Catholic Life of the school in the school environment and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, data about pupils' attainment and progress, school performance data, the school development plan, the Religious Education action plan, teachers' planning and learning journals, trustees' minutes and records of the monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education, Collective Worship and Catholic Life.