



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Inspection Report

ST GREGORY THE GREAT CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Part of The Pope Francis Catholic Multi Academy Company
Cricket Road, Oxford, Oxon, OX4 3DR

Inspection dates:
Lead Inspector:

28 February – 1 March 2022
Ben McArdle

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS:

Requires Improvement

Catholic Life:

Requires Improvement

Religious Education:

Good

Collective Worship:

Requires Improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection:

Requires Improvement

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

This Catholic school Requires Improvement to be Good because:

- Strong leadership has established a clear vision for the future of the school. This is shared effectively and consistently with pupils, parents, and staff.
- Leaders are laying the foundations for realising the vision of the new headteacher and governing body. Consequently, several actions have been undertaken since the start of the current academic year, demonstrating the rapid progress made. More time is needed for them to become deeply embedded into the fabric of the school.
- The physical environment contains some signs of the school's Catholic character but has little impact on pupils' lived experience of the mission.
- Although pupils are respectful during acts of Collective Worship, its contribution to their spiritual and moral development requires improvement.

It is not yet Good because:

- The centrality and importance of high-quality experiences of Collective Worship are not yet universally cherished.
- Full integration of prayer into the pastoral tutor programme is yet to be established.
- Monitoring and evaluation of Catholic Life, Religious Education & Collective Worship is in its infancy.
- Sixth form students do not receive their full entitlement of Core RE.
- Teachers of Religious Education do not consistently adapt their planning to meet the needs of individual pupils.

FULL REPORT

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Establish high-quality routines for reverent prayer, which are consistently implemented by all staff.
- Ensure prayer in tutor groups is planned and delivered to support the pastoral programme.
- Implement robust systems for monitoring and evaluating Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship, which enable areas for development to be identified swiftly and for rapid improvements to be made.
- Allocate 5% of curriculum time to the teaching of Core Religious Education in the sixth form.
- Consistently adapt planning in Religious Education to meet the needs of all pupils.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

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

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

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

- Pupils know that the school expresses its Catholic character well through obvious signs such as its name, the school badge, and the inclusion of prayer during daily tutor time. Although their understanding of the school’s mission is limited, they have a clear understanding of how to demonstrate St Thérèse of Lisieux’s mantra of ‘small acts, big love’ and they know about the principles of care, ambition and knowledge which make up the ‘wheel of ambition and achievement’. This is because of the clear vision of the new headteacher and her commitment to consistent reinforcement through initiatives such as the ‘St Thérèse Project’.
- The school is at the start of a compelling new journey of implementing the vision of the new headteacher. As such, pupils’ involvement in evaluating the Catholic Life of the school is currently limited.
- Pupils have very little awareness of who St Gregory the Great is, beyond his statue in the reception area.
- During tutor, lesson and assembly times, most pupils’ behaviour is good; pupils can articulate reasons why they should respect one another and are mostly sensitive to the needs of others around them. Generally, there is a warm and welcoming atmosphere throughout the school; however, there is some disruptive behaviour in some lessons and around the school site when pupils are not under the direct supervision of staff.
- Pupils have some input into the Catholic Life of the school, such as discussing the charity initiatives such as cake sales. Pupils establish links between this work and

the value of caring for others. They have modest awareness of Catholic social teaching on the dignity of the human person and care for our common home through activities such as tutor group discussions about COP26.

- Sixth form students take a more active role in the Catholic Life of the school. They are designated ambassadors for the school, a responsibility they take seriously. For example, students organised a tuck shop to raise money for charity, volunteered to become involved in the transition work for Y6 pupils during open evening, and provided a well-received welcome to exchange students. They have significant roles in presenting e-safety and anti-bullying policies, acting as sports ambassadors and coaches, supporting younger pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) programmes. Furthermore, they support Year 7 and Year 8 pupils in the school's behaviour management strategies. The sixth form is a real strength of this Catholic community.
- Pupils value greatly the chaplaincy provision they are afforded. Before the pandemic, there were regular Masses, led by sixth formers, and retreats to Taizé and St Cassian's, Kintbury. Emerging from the pandemic, pupils benefit from the chaplaincy provided by the parish priest, primarily through the celebration of the sacraments. Pupils desire to participate in visits, retreats, and other chaplaincy experiences once again.
- There is very effective pastoral care provided to pupils through the pastoral team. They liaise with families and external agencies intending to integrate all pupils into the heart of school life fully. The parish priest provides weekly support in this area which pupils appreciate. As a result of the school's provision, pupils are mostly happy, confident, and secure in their personal development.
- The spiritual, ethical, and moral development of pupils is an area that shows green shoots of promise. Tutors are provided with resources that aim to nurture the holistic development of pupils, although the skill with which they are used varies between classrooms. Where their use is most effective, teachers inform pupils' consciences with opportunities for views to be challenged and developed through skilful questioning and opportunities for reflection. Prayer is not yet used to contribute towards this effectively.
- Relationships, sex, and health education (RSHE) is planned to integrate Church and biblical teachings at every available opportunity. Consequently, pupils have a good knowledge of a Christian understanding of love and relationships. They are provided with regular opportunities to apply what they have learnt to real-life situations, enabling them to grow in confidence in their understanding.
- Pupils understand vocation as a response to God's call. Because of this, they are aware of their responsibilities towards the local and global communities and reflect on the many ways in which they can respond.
- Pupils' respect for the Catholic tradition of the school is growing. The work of the new parish priest is reinforcing the school's link with the local parish once again; as a result, some pupils are becoming more aware of the school's place within the Church and how this can help them to grow as people of God, for example, through Reconciliation.
- Staff understand the effect the school's mission has on its operation. Some departments have gone to great lengths to integrate it into their curricula to provide genuinely Catholic education. However, this is not yet embedded consistently across the school. There is a lack of complete clarity amongst staff about the school's mission, though staff sense that the school's ethos has been improved in recent times.
- There are some physical signs of the school's Catholic heritage. For example, many department areas have a display linking the Faith to their subject area. At the heart of the site is a magnificent chapel, which is currently used in a limited way, with plans at an early stage for greater accessibility to members of the community during the school day. There are many displays signposting pupils to pastoral

support, including their mental well-being. However, there is a capacity for much improvement in this area.

- Staff are very good role models. They consistently demonstrate high standards of behaviour and interact with pupils with sincere warmth. In this respect, staff are good disciples of Christ.
- The school provides good pastoral care for its staff. Through initiatives such as 'well-being Wednesday', staff feel valued and cared for and subsequently further fuelled to continue their important work within the school.
- Because the subject leader for Religious Education oversees the personal, social, and health education (PSHE) curriculum, pastoral programmes are well planned and taught to reflect Catholic teachings.
- There is a lot of potential in the pupils who are enthusiastic about the school and wide awake to social issues. They appreciate the rewards for good work and attitudes, and they recognise the care and skill of their teachers. Their successes are also celebrated in the weekly newsletter, which gives a weekly focus to the Catholic Life of the community through the reflections on the Sunday Gospel.

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

- Leaders, including governors, publicly demonstrate a steadfast commitment to the Catholic Life of the school. Because they are laying the foundations of their expectations for the community, there is a determination to 'get it right' by setting high standards and consistently modelling these to staff and pupils. They have a clear vision of what they want to achieve and are proficiently skilled in realising it.
- The Catholic Life of the school is given priority by leaders, as demonstrated by their regular evaluation and securing of expert support from elsewhere in the multi academy company to improve standards.
- The headteacher welcomes pupils to school each morning at the gate and is regularly visible around the site during periods of free time. She engages with all pupils in a warm, friendly yet assertive manner. Because she perseveres with her encouragement of pupils' responses to her questions and challenges during assemblies, pupils are willing to take risks with her and participate in the Catholic Life of the school in ways they haven't done previously. Coupled with her strategic vision, she is a highly effective leader of this community.
- Currently, the day-to-day leadership of the Catholic Life of the school is shared by the headteacher and the subject leader of Religious Education, both of whom have many additional responsibilities. Governors and the multi academy company are aware of the need for more capacity to be generated regarding this leadership and have planned strategically to create it.
- Monitoring and evaluation of Catholic Life have started to be undertaken. The views of stakeholders are sought by leaders who, as a result, are aware of the impact of some of the school's new strategies. Currently, monitoring and evaluation are undertaken primarily by questionnaires. There is a need for greater rigour and robustness so that leaders can be confident they have an accurate grasp of the school's strengths and areas for development.
- There is evidence of some changes having been made due to monitoring and evaluation. More time is needed for planned improvements to enhance the Catholic Life of the school, generated from robust monitoring practices.
- The governing body discharges its canonical responsibilities exceptionally well. They are regularly informed of the school's Catholic Life developments and provide practical support and challenge to leaders. They have a well-informed knowledge of the school and high aspirations for its future as a Catholic community.

- The school responds well to diocesan policies, and leaders are promoting 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	Good

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

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

- Standards in Religious Education are improving at pace, with some pupils making progress in each key stage. In particular, pupils with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) are supported well by teachers throughout lessons and are enabled to make progress comparable to other pupils.
- Because some teachers spend too long talking or on less demanding activities, more able pupils do not always make adequate progress in lessons.
- As a result of recent endeavours to improve religious literacy, most pupils can use specialist terms with accuracy when expressing their ideas.
- The curriculum has been designed so that all pupils experience an 'application lesson' as part of the regular timetable cycle. Consequently, they can articulate the intent of their Religious Education curriculum and are enabled to reflect theologically on what they have learnt. For example, during the inspection, a Year 9 class applied St John Paul II's teachings on the theology of the body to relationship situations in modern Britain.
- Teachers plan lessons that capture pupils' attention and include their interests. Subsequently, most are engaged in learning and are committed to developing their skills.
- Most pupils want to improve their achievements in Religious Education, meaning that behaviour is generally good. Teachers do not consistently apply behaviour management strategies in classrooms where behaviour is less than good. Some pupils feel they learn less well in these classrooms, which they do not like.
- Pupils' attainment in Religious Education is low against diocesan averages but showing signs of improvement. Attainment is in line with some other core subjects within the school itself.
- Work completed in pupils' exercise books shows good coverage of the curriculum. Presentation standards in Religious Education books are generally not as high as in other core subjects. Teachers in the Religious Education department must aspire to achieve the same standards attained in other curriculum areas.
- The department operates a system of centralised planning, which ensures that pupils in all classes are exposed to the same resources and learn the same subject knowledge. This is particularly helpful in cases where non-specialists are teaching Religious Education. However, because all classes are mixed ability, the requirement for teachers to adapt planning to meet the needs of individual pupils becomes even

more important. Some teachers do this well; however, most do not, which limits the progress of certain groups of pupils.

- Teachers demonstrate a good level of subject knowledge, enabling them to answer the many questions pupils ask with competence. This is because of the high-quality resources and support provided by the subject leader. For example, during the inspection, a non-specialist teacher skilfully explained complex vocabulary in the prologue to the Fourth Gospel to a Year 7 class, enabling them to elicit the text's whole meaning.
- Lessons are filled with a good variety of activities whilst focusing on written responses to exam-style questions, an area of focus identified by the school. Pupils' exercise books illustrate the varied activities they are given: inference exercises, designing leaflets, ordering and sorting, quizzes, storyboards and many opportunities for extended writing.
- Teachers routinely provide verbal feedback to the whole class so that all pupils learn from common misconceptions and avoid repeating errors in their subsequent work. Furthermore, personalised written feedback is given to pupils using success criteria on feedback sheets and stickers and, for older pupils, responses to work completed in their assessment books. These new systems are yet to be used consistently, particularly in Key Stage 3, though they are beginning to be understood and appreciated by pupils.
- Time is not consistently managed effectively. Consequently, some teachers do not allow enough time for pupils to consolidate their learning thoroughly at the end of the lesson, resulting in tokenistic plenaries which have little impact on learning.
- Some teachers' use of observation and questioning is limited, and their adaptation of tasks is minimal. In the most effective classrooms, teachers target individuals with well-planned questions. However, in most classrooms, a large amount of subject knowledge is imparted to pupils with little opportunity to engage them in questioning beyond the key questions identified on the PowerPoint resource.
- High-quality resources are provided to all pupils through the digital medium. As a result, key subject knowledge is readily identified and used in activities. For example, a 'basic and brilliant' strategy has been introduced, requiring pupils to compare the features of a 'basic' written response to a 'brilliantly' written one. Some teachers use it as a scaffold for pupils to create their own responses.
- Because of the amount of subject knowledge covered in lessons, teachers have high expectations regarding Religious Education; most pupils respond well.
- Teachers celebrate pupils' achievement and effort routinely in lessons through verbal praise and the reward system. Pupils are particularly motivated when teachers send praise emails to their parents.

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

- Leaders and governors ensure that Religious Education meets the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales requirements concerning the curriculum that is taught in all three key stages.
- Pupils in the main school receive their full entitlement of Religious Education lessons. However, sixth form students do not currently receive theirs.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the subject is comparable to other core subjects in the school regarding professional development, staffing, and accommodation.
- The subject meets the additional requirements of the Archbishop of Birmingham. For example, much work has been invested into the Core Religious Education programme in the sixth form to ensure that it is an academic subject taught in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church. Leaders quickly respond to diocesan advice, ensuring their offering reflects best practices.

- Religious Education is monitored by the subject leader, who has a regular timetabled meeting with the headteacher. Through these meetings and the subject leader’s weekly meeting with the parish priest, a foundation governor, the governing body has oversight of Religious Education. Consequently, there is a long-term strategic plan in place.
- Due to the limited capacity of the subject leader, monitoring is undertaken primarily through short ‘pop in’ visits to lessons. Increased rigour and robustness are also needed for timely, accurate monitoring to further contribute to effective improvement planning.
- The subject leader is an inspiring witness to the department and beyond. She is enthused by the school’s vision and has worked tirelessly to implement a new framework of operation for the department. She is fully supportive of the latest strategies in the school and uses them to improve outcomes in Religious Education lessons. There is a sound evaluation of the innovation, but it has not yet been fully implemented. The subject leader has recognised the need to make Religious Education relevant to the pupils’ lives and has harnessed their interest in ethical issues to recruit pupils onto an A-level course.
- Leaders and governors ensure Religious Education is planned to meet the needs of pupils, which is reflected by the redesigning the Key Stage 3 curriculum.
- Leaders and governors will need to ensure adequate staffing to accommodate the teaching of A-level Religious Studies from September 2022.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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

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

CW2 The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

- Pupils always observe silence when engaging in acts of prayer; this is conducive to enabling one another to raise their hearts and minds to God. Responses to prayers are often muted and generally only come from some pupils. This is due to weak historical practice, which the new headteacher has swiftly identified and is beginning to action through her modelling of consistent, good practice.
- Collective Worship is adequate, but it is often routine, lacking in variety and interest. While the overwhelming majority of the community speak well of prayer, few have examples of particularly inspiring or engaging occasions.
- Opportunities for prayer in individual tutor groups are limited. Prayers are sent to tutors each week and are primarily focused on developing pupils’ knowledge of traditional Catholic prayers. However, the variance in practice between tutor groups is significant; some teachers have limited skills in creating a sacred space, whilst others demonstrate proficiency.

- One classroom visited by inspectors featured a beautiful prayer focus area, decorated with religious artefacts and aids to prayer; this helps turn the room into a sacred space helpful to prayer. This element of best practice is not replicated throughout the rest of the school.
- Pupils' opportunities to prepare and lead worship are narrow; most don't lead prayer unless they volunteer to read the prayer in tutor time. The head girl reads prayers during assemblies and invites younger pupils to light the candles before doing so. There has been some sixth form involvement in planning Mass before and during the pandemic.
- While the headteacher is laying the foundations of her expectations surrounding standards, she has rightly focused on ensuring that all tutor groups pray together daily to build confidence in staff and pupils. Leaders now need to ensure that high-quality delivery is consistently secured in all tutor groups and that the range of prayer styles used with pupils increases.
- The parish priest expressed his desire for the chapel to be more available to the community during the school day.
- Pupils know little about the Church's liturgical year beyond the significant celebrations of Easter and Christmas and the periods of preparation leading up to them.
- Pupils know and understand that prayer is important because it is a Catholic school, although most passively participate in it. Consequently, prayer does not yet make an overt contribution to their spiritual and moral development.
- Opportunities for reflection are offered regarding various themes, including the pandemic, friendship, exams, and world conflict. Prayer does not always explicitly link to these opportunities due to different staff members being in charge of the resources. A more co-ordinated approach is needed for worship to enhance pupils' spiritual and moral development more effectively.
- Staff are respectful of prayer and understand its importance within the school.

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

- Prayer led by the headteacher has a purpose, message, and direction. As a result, she demonstrates an understanding of how to plan and deliver Collective Worship to the staff.
- The key seasons and feasts of the Church's year are well understood by staff, and they form the focus of acts of prayer. Leaders offer clear and practical real-life applications where relevant. This means that staff possess the necessary knowledge as a framework for their work with pupils, but the resources at their disposal are not always sufficiently supportive. Consequently, opportunities for prayer related to world events are not routinely provided.
- Because themes and prayers are presented to pupils in an accessible, contemporary format, pupils' interest is often captured.
- Leaders and governors do not yet promote pupil leadership in planning and leading prayer and liturgy. Once the foundations have been laid, pupil leadership must become a focus of school improvement planning.
- Although there has not been an opportunity for a retreat for staff recently, their formation is supported by continuing professional development (CPD) and the work of the new parish priest. He makes himself readily available to answer questions. He is keen to make a more formal contribution to staff formation when circumstances allow.
- As with Catholic Life, monitoring and evaluation are undertaken primarily through questionnaires, and here too, there is a need for greater rigour and robustness.

- Leaders and governors have plans to make the school fully compliant with the requirements surrounding Collective Worship of the Archbishop of Birmingham by September 2022.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Unique reference number	146800
Local authority	Oxfordshire
<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	580
Appropriate authority	The board of directors
Chair	Paul Concannon
Headteacher	Lyndsey Caldwell
Telephone number	01865 749933
Website address	www.stgregory.oxon.sch.uk
Email address	admin.4145@stgregory.ocnmail.net
Date of previous inspection	October 2016

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS SCHOOL

- St Gregory the Great Catholic School is a smaller than average secondary school located in South Oxford. The school serves the Greyfriars parish.
- The percentage of Catholic pupils is currently 34.7%.
- The percentage of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The percentage of SEND pupils is above the national average.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic origins is above the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with EAL is above the national average.
- Attainment on entry is below average.
- Since the last inspection, there have been several significant changes. The previous school has been disaggregated, and St Gregory the Great Catholic School now provides secondary education. A new headteacher is in post, as is a new governing body and parish priest. The school is now part of the Pope Francis Catholic Multi Academy Company.

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

- The inspection was carried out by two Diocesan Inspectors: Ben McArdle and Janet Mellor. Paul Madia shadowed the inspection as part of his inspectorate CPD.
- 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 eight Religious Education lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Some of these lesson observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.

- The inspectors completed a 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 experience of Collective Worship.
- Meetings were held with governors, the headteacher, the Religious Education subject leader, parish priest, and groups of pupils.
- The inspectors attended year group Collective Worship, a staff briefing. They undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of learning and teaching in Religious Education, the presentation of the school's Catholic Life, and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspectors reviewed various documents, including the school's self-evaluation, data about pupils' attainment and progress, the school development plan, the Religious Education action plan, teachers' planning and pupils' work.