



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St. Bernard's Catholic High School, Barrow-In-Furness

URN: 148702

Carried out on behalf of the Right Rev. Paul Swarbrick, Bishop of Lancaster on:

Date: 24th and 25th January 2024

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The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- All staff and pupils clearly articulate the core school values of 'kindness resilience and hard work'.
- The school identity and motto 'to work is to pray' is strongly embedded across school.
- Pastoral care provided at St Bernard's is exceptional, with a particular commitment given to the most vulnerable.
- Staff at all levels show a great desire to keep St Bernard's a caring and compassionate school while it strives to improve academic standards.

What the school needs to improve:

- Seek opportunities to stretch and challenge the most able in Key Stage 4 religious education to further improve standards.
- Continue to address the inconsistencies acknowledged in the provision of prayer and liturgy, by implementing quality assurance processes.
- Further enhance and build the formation of staff in their spiritual and faith journeys.

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

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

2

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

2



Many students say that St Bernard's is a place where the mission statement of 'kindness, hard work and resilience' is rooted in the teaching of the Church. Christ is at the heart of the community and students understand the motto: 'to work is to pray'. The mission of St Bernard's is known and lived out by staff and students and visibly shapes the life of the school. Students are aware that they are valued as unique persons, made in the image of God. This is clear in the caring provision for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and vulnerable students at the school 'Hub'. The school community is committed to Catholic social teaching with students actively engaged in fundraising for charities. Students work with the local primary schools to raise awareness for Red Wednesday and the Lower School Leaders work alongside sick and vulnerable parishioners in conjunction with *Anna Chaplaincy*.

The school chaplain provides spiritual formation and opportunities for staff and students to become involved in the Catholic life of the community. She is now being well supported by the new senior leader of Catholic life and personal development. Staff formation is being further enhanced with the introduction of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults courses. The good behaviour of students reflects how well they feel cared for, with one student saying that the gospel value of forgiveness is 'woven into the fabric of the school'. Staff are committed to the school's mission and feel valued. They are good role models for the students in their care. There is real sense of community at the heart of the school. For example, breakfast club provision is free to all students. They are welcomed in a spirit of hospitality, with both staff and students recognising the presence of Christ in each other and showing a sense of respect for those of other faiths and cultures.

Pastoral care provided for students is excellent and focuses on the most vulnerable. Students are provided with a safe space at the 'Hub' where they can drop in to receive counselling and support. Staff display warmth and compassion, taking an interest in student's lives and developing links with families. This practice is a strength of the school. The school chapel is a welcoming place for all, with weekly prayer and liturgy taking place there. It is testimony to the centrality of Catholic life. One student commented that it was his 'place of peace'. Weekly staff reflection, which is well attended, takes place in the chapel. Displays show an understanding of the needs of students and staff. The provision for relationships, sex and health education (R(S)HE) is well-developed in line with school-wide initiatives on curriculum planning. It is led by the religious education leader, who ensures it is faithful to Church teaching. Use of *Ten-Ten* resources is planned. Appropriately developed materials meet student needs, with staff receiving the professional development to ensure effective delivery.

Leaders and governors take an active role in ensuring that the Church's mission is carried out in all aspects of school life, and this is seen as a key leadership responsibility. For example, governors were aware of some inconsistencies in prayer and liturgy provision and were proactive in ensuring steps for improvement were taken. Strong links exist with feeder primary schools. One school's pupils are now taught on the St Bernard's site. It is testament to the welcoming nature of St Bernard's that they were able to reach out to their neighbour in their time of need.

Staff speak passionately about the way the school supports their well-being. Leaders consider the needs of staff and ensure that they are treated with dignity and respect. The processes for the induction of early career teachers (ECT), as well as any staff new to the school, are good. These include appropriate modelling and training for the leadership of prayer and liturgy.

There are good links with the parish with a hardship fund provided to support the most vulnerable students. Regular masses are offered to school throughout the liturgical year. The chaplain continues to strengthen this good practice.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

2

Provision

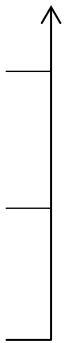
The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....

2



In religious education well-planned teaching helps pupils improve their knowledge and understanding. Pupils make good progress from their starting points because teaching enables them to know more and remember more. A clear focus on learning and remembering religious vocabulary runs through lessons for all year groups and leads to positive outcomes. Pupils across all age groups demonstrate good behaviour, and good levels of concentration in lessons. This is because staff ensure lessons are engaging and enjoyable and meet individual pupils' learning needs. Nevertheless, opportunities for pupils to question and discuss core concepts should be explored further.

In some cases, some subgroups do not achieve as well as others. Subject review documents acknowledge this, and leaders closely monitor the progress of these groups and the impact of any interventions given. Pupils can speak with confidence about what they have learned in religious education with one Year 7 pupil saying that they had learned about the Big Bang theory whilst also exploring Genesis creation stories.

Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and show their commitment to the value of religious education. For example, teachers and leaders talked about their responsibility in ensuring the new Religious Education Directory is adequately embedded across Key Stage 3. The resourcing of the department is comparable to that of other core subjects in terms of curriculum time and accommodation.

Within lessons there is a good level of student engagement and enthusiasm. There is a clear rapport between staff and students. In one year seven lesson, on Bible referencing, pupils joyfully

engaged in the learning by responding to the competitive element of the task set by their teacher. Resources are of good quality and exercise books demonstrate a variety of tasks for students. However, there is an over emphasis on the development of knowledge at the expense of some independence. There are elements of inconsistency in the quality of feedback and similar variation in the quality of questioning and assessment of students' understanding in lessons.

The recently appointed curriculum leader for religious education is passionate about providing good quality teaching and learning throughout the department. The curriculum leader was able to speak knowledgeably about the strengths and areas of focus within the department. Leaders and governors ensure that religious education programmes and resources deliver the curriculum aims set out in the *Religious Education Directory* and that the required amount of time is given to religious education. Leaders ensure learning is effectively sequenced to meet the needs of pupils in each key stage and as a result, prior learning is effectively enhanced and built upon. All staff, benefit from good support, both for their own spirituality and to secure their subject knowledge. This results in outcomes for pupils which have parity with other core subjects. Leaders' self-evaluation of religious education demonstrates the required monitoring, investigation, and challenge. Leaders at all levels, have a good understanding of strengths and areas for further development and take effective action to secure improvements. All findings of this monitoring are reported to the governing body. Governors are aware of the need to support the religious education department through the challenges brought about by a change in leadership and through the changes in curriculum.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

3

Provision

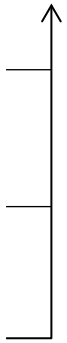
The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

2



Prayer and liturgy is structured around scripture with form groups using relevant passages to prepare and take leading roles in liturgies delivered in the chapel during personal development time. This new initiative allows students to work collaboratively with the chaplain and to fully engage and take ownership of their prayer and liturgy. However, several pupils who attended the pupil led liturgy were unable to articulate its meaning and message. Some pupils struggled to link prayer and liturgy to their own life or explain its impact on them. The foundation for building these links in the future is evident.

Prayer and liturgy at St. Bernard's are carefully planned, sensitively structured and inclusive, as evidenced by the fact that the nurture group were invited to their own, student led, liturgical celebration for the feast of the Epiphany. Students are provided with a range of opportunities for prayer and liturgy in whole school including class and year group Mass, voluntary Mass on holy days of obligation, pilgrimages, retreat to Castlerigg, posada, carol concerts, and lunchtime rosary. Students could talk with confidence about the wealth of liturgies and Masses throughout the year. Clear links are made with parish communities in the use of Holy Family parish church for many of these celebrations.

There is a daily pattern of prayer with quality form time resources prepared by the chaplain and modelled by the head teacher at the beginning of the week. Whilst the resources benefit staff who may be less confident preparing or leading prayer, staff and students are not always involved in its preparation or delivery. Therefore, the quality of this is sometimes inconsistent. Many students receive rich opportunities which engage them and offer relevance to their own lives, whilst for other students this is not always the case.

Senior staff, including the head teacher and chaplain are models of good practice to other staff and students. Senior staff plan and deliver prayer and liturgy at a weekly reflection attended by all staff. Whole school and cohort celebrations are supported by the use of music. The beautiful new chapel is well used, and students are encouraged to respect the space and recognise the importance of the Blessed Sacrament within it.

The school's Catholic Ethos and Collective Worship Policy is clear and supports staff in their practice. It has been successful in providing pupils with a clear scaffold upon which to plan and deliver reverent prayer and liturgy services. The school diary is planned in line with the Church's year with a chaplaincy and Catholic life calendar that is mindful of sacramental celebrations and significant days pertinent to the school, such as the feast of St Bernard.

The chaplain is a key resource in planning and leading prayer and supporting others to provide good quality and accessible resources for students. Staff expressed how much they value the chaplaincy support. Leaders encourage the hallmarks of the school to be embedded throughout the curriculum with all subject leaders highlighting relevant strands of the Catholic ethos in their schemes of work.

Families are welcomed and included, thus demonstrating the focus on community. Parents and carers are invited to celebrate the Year 7 welcome Mass, the end of year whole school Mass at Furness Abbey and the Christmas carol concert.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St. Bernard's Catholic High School
School unique reference number (URN)	148702
Full postal address of the school	Rating Lane, Barrow-in-Furness, LA13 9LE
School phone number	01229 814560
Name of head teacher or principal	Mrs Jennifer Whittam, Acting
Chair of governing board	Ms Susan O'Neill
School Website	https://www.stbernardsschool.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Mater Christi Multi-Academy Trust
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	11 to 16
Trustees	Lancaster Roman Catholic Diocesan Trustees Registered
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	November 16
Previous denominational inspection grade	2 - Good

The inspection team

Kath Wilson	Lead inspector
Philip Allan	Team inspector
Carol Gregson	Team Inspector

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement