

St Charles Voluntary Catholic Academy

URN: 144103

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Middlesbrough

12–13 June 2024

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

Catholic life and mission (p.3)

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

1

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

1

Collective worship (p.7)

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

1

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

1

What the school does well

- The head of school and other leaders are inspirational witnesses to the Gospel, and ensure that every member of the school community is valued and knows that God loves them.
- The school is a joyful, welcoming and inclusive community completely committed to its Catholic character.
- All pupils gain greatly from well-resourced, engaging, and creative prayer and worship opportunities.
- Teaching across the school is always good and sometimes outstanding, resulting in exemplary pupil behaviour, and good acquisition of knowledge relative to age and capacity.

- The learning environment vibrantly proclaims a love of God, in abundance.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that in religious education lessons, feedback and marking systems enable pupils to consistently demonstrate an understanding of how well they are doing, what they need to do to improve and how they have made progress.
- Review strategies used in religious education lessons which enhance pupils' abilities to discuss, explain, debate, converse, and share ideas, so that relative to their age and capability they can articulate their faith knowledge with confidence.
- Ensure that all pupils understand their obligation to be proactive stewards of the world given to them by God, by enabling them to actively embrace this obligation.

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

Pupil outcomes

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

Provision

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

Leadership

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



From the moment you enter it, this school shouts out its Catholic identity with joy and energy. The welcoming and caring atmosphere, always centred on following the values of the Gospel, ensures that Catholicity is in the bones of the school. Pupils express a clear understanding that they are valued and loved. The increasing number of pupils entering the school, many with limited experience of British culture and with English as an additional language, has been embraced impressively and positively. Pupils and staff across the school demonstrate a tangible welcoming and inclusive respect for each other, regardless of their individual characteristics, faith backgrounds, cultural differences or social circumstances. Parents and parishioners are very supportive of the school. One parent told inspectors that, 'the school feels like a family'. Another parent said that 'staff care for our children with a passion'. Behaviour is exemplary across the school. Pupils are calm, respectful and polite. They are happy and safe. They and their families value the opportunities provided for participation in the Catholic life of the school. They are increasingly aware of the demands of Catholic social teaching around values such as solidarity, dignity, the option for the poor, common good, and peace. Pupils support several charities, most recently the Seafarer charity, Cafod's Big Lent Walk, and the local food bank. However, they are not yet given adequate practical opportunities to be good stewards of creation and the environment.

All staff, embrace the established mission of the school, to 'Love Learn Share'. They are especially skilled at welcoming, adapting to, and celebrating the wide variety of cultures, ethnic groups and family circumstances represented in the school community. The genuinely supportive relationships between all staff members, makes them consistently strong and positive role models for pupils. Dedicated and skilled staff ensure that the school's provision for pupils with

special educational needs and the pastoral care of pupils and their families is very effective, given the available resources. The school's environment, inside and outside, is an explicit witness to its Catholicity. There is a designated prayer room where pupils can gather with their teachers to pray, and everywhere there are displays and prayer tables that help pupils engage with, and understand God. The recent addition of a shed, designed to represent the parish church, and placed in an outdoor area used by younger pupils, called Charlieville, is a genuinely inspirational idea, which the pupils love. Chaplaincy provision, supported by the pupils in the chaplaincy team, is outstandingly successful. It is dynamic, well planned, creative, and extensively resourced.

Leaders at all levels are highly ambitious. They clearly articulate the Church's mission in education and make it the priority in the decisions they take. They have rigorous monitoring and support systems in place. This ensures the school is always finding ways to improve. The school engages enthusiastically with other schools, and supports initiatives organised within the Diocese. There is a flourishing partnership with the parish priest. He is a much loved and active participant in school life, along with his dog, Porridge, who awards certificates each week for showing kindness, patience and care towards others. Parents are supported through good communication systems such as newsletters, the school website and the EdLink app. They are happy with the information they are given about the progress of their children's religious education and their experience of school life. Leaders focus on supporting those whose family circumstances make life more challenging. Staff are well supported, and have access to high quality training opportunities, enabling them to fully participate in the Catholic life of the school. The school's self-evaluation is accurate.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

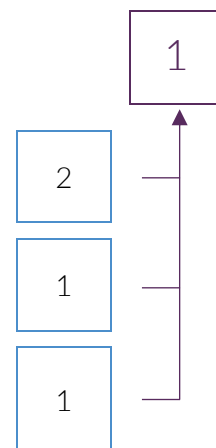
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

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

Leadership

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



Given their relative starting points, including a significant number who join higher up the school and have English as an additional language, most pupils staying in the school for an extended period of time make good progress. By the time they leave, they achieve at least average attainment when compared with other core subjects. Most pupils acquire good knowledge of the traditions and rituals of the Catholic faith, as well as the bible, and accounts of Jesus' life. Older pupils are able to reference an impressive number of parables and discuss the sacraments with confidence. They enjoy learning about other faiths and show respect for these. Pupils enjoy their lessons, and are always focused and engaged. They work independently and demonstrate very good levels of concentration. However, a significant minority of pupils struggle to articulate how well they are doing in religious education lessons, and what they need to do to improve. This is not surprising for those who are still in the early stages of learning English, but for others, it is because the feedback from teachers does not give them enough information, or opportunity, to enable them to talk about their progress and their next steps.

Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers are confident in their subject and have high expectations of pupils. The school is well resourced, particularly in the early years' base, and consequently, these pupils get an excellent start. Occasionally, questioning across the school is not thorough enough and is focused too much on fact gathering, and memory recall, rather than in-depth scrutiny. Sometimes this is because teachers are adapting to an individual pupil's oracy skills, but this is not always the case. In the most effective lessons teachers allow pupils to talk more, to answer questions more accurately, and to talk through their learning in depth. These teachers keep the learning moving at a pace, and encourage pupils to collaborate on tasks. Teachers and support staff clearly understand the impact of religious education on moral and spiritual development. A pupil in a Key Stage 1 class wrote that, 'Jesus in us can change the world'.

Across the school, pupils are regularly asked to consider big questions such as, 'Do we need rules?', or 'How can I be a good shepherd?'. Using a weekly Picture News pamphlet, Pupils are encouraged to think about the issues surrounding world events, including the Israel and Gaza conflict, or the general election.

The leadership of religious education across the school is exemplary. The subject leader has an outstanding vision for religious education and shows a very high level of expertise in making this vision come to life. Staff members, including those who are not Catholics, feel totally supported by leaders. The support provided to the school by St Cuthbert's Catholic Academy Trust is deserving of huge praise. Leaders ensure there is parity with other core subjects, by providing quality professional development, good resourcing, thoughtful timetabling, bespoke curriculum design, committed and skilled staff and an excellent learning environment. The school seeks opportunities to enrich the taught curriculum by inviting visitors such as a para-olympian, or the local police community officers to speak to pupils. Year 6 pupils have recently enjoyed a very busy and exciting day in London, and younger pupils have visited the seaside. There is a flourishing school band made up of over 30 pupils and several extra-curricular clubs. Leaders understanding of the religious education provided by the school is accurate, which means they are in an excellent position to identify what can be made even better.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

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

1

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

1

Leadership

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

1

1

The prayer and liturgy provided by the school is deeply engaging and creative. Pupils, including those who do not have a Catholic background, demonstrate high standards of reflection, attentiveness and respect. They work collaboratively with their peers and the staff to create imaginative and special experiences, designed to help them grow closer to God. Younger pupils joyfully sing and even dance as part of their prayer sessions. Older pupils in a whole school worship, enthusiastically sing 'Fill me Lord. Hold me close like a best friend'. All pupils know the new school prayer, which was written with their active involvement, and the support of the parish priest. Appropriate to their age and capacity, pupils develop an increasingly confident understanding of different forms of prayer, both traditional and new. They know the cycle and colours of the liturgical year. As they move through the school pupils develop their skills by increasingly taking responsibility for planning and leading prayer. Often this is in their own class, but they also plan and lead experiences for other pupils on mission days or feasts, such as Pentecost.

The provision of prayer and liturgy is central in the life of the school. Supported by exceptionally strong adult chaplains, pupils are making significant progress in their understanding of prayer and worship. There are frequent moments of awe, wonder and reflection. Inspectors joined a class worship in Key Stage 1 where pupils reflected on what it might be like to have to leave home. A lunchtime prayer group for older pupils heard about Moses and the escape from Egypt, using sand which the teacher assured them was 'collected from the desert, where Jesus may have walked'. In a key stage two class, pupils found their own ways to spend a moment of silence with God, thinking about how to spread peace. All staff are inspiring models of practice. They demonstrate skill in helping pupils to plan and lead prayer appropriate to their age and ability. They make good use of symbolism, meditation, art, music, singing, and play, to enhance worship

and prayer. The school, inside and out, is a proud expression of its Catholic identity, filled with bright, interesting and celebratory displays and offering plenty of spaces for prayer and reflection. Parents are very supportive of the prayer life of the school, with increasing numbers attending and participating in liturgies. Pupils are included in evaluating and improving their worship experiences.

The school's leaders ensured the prayer life of the school is carefully planned and reviewed. This ensures that, as one governor remarked, 'the foot is never off the pedal'. Pupils are increasingly at ease praying together. A variety of worship experiences are offered to pupils and the community, throughout the Church's year. Mass is celebrated either in school or at the parish church, at key times in the year and on holy days and special feast days. Pupils genuinely enjoy the experience of attending Mass. School staff work closely with the parish priest to ensure Catholic pupils can receive the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist. The recent introduction of the Prayer Bears, which are taken home by pupils for sleepovers, the mission days, and the variety of activities undertaken in Rosary Week are perfect examples of how leaders try to make prayer engaging and relevant. Staff receive high quality training and advice from leaders, so that they can plan worship of a high standard for pupils. Staff members greatly appreciate this support and make good use of it. Inspectors were especially impressed by excellent resourcing the school and Trust allocate to the provision of prayer and worship.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Charles Voluntary Catholic Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	144103
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8102023
Full postal address of the school	St Charles Voluntary Catholic Academy, Norfolk Street, Hull, HU2 9AA
School phone number	01482326610
Headteacher	Sarah Woodmansey
Chair of Governors/Trustees	Martin Macaulay
School Website	www.stchull.org
Trusteeship	Diocese of Middlesbrough
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Academy Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	N/A
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	10-11 January 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Mark Brennan
Stephen Lawson

Lead
Team

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