

St Bede's Roman Catholic High School

URN: 119793

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Salford

27–28 March 2025

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

2

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

2

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

2

Collective worship (p.7)

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

2

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

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

Fully

Compliance statement

- St Bede's is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- The school is fully compliant with additional requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- The school has fully responded to areas for improvement identified at the last inspection.

What the school does well

- St Bede's Catholic mission helps create an inclusive environment where all students are both welcome and valued.
- Students achieve well in religious education due to quality teaching of a robust academic curriculum.
- Catholic social teaching principles are embedded at this school, ensuring that care for students, especially the more vulnerable, is of a high standard.
- The school has a structured programme for chaplaincy provision that ensures a range of opportunities for collective worship.

What the school needs to improve

- To further develop student participation in the Catholic life and mission of the school.
- To implement strategies to enhance the use of open ended questions during religious education lessons in order to stimulate more independent learning and debate.
- To monitor and evaluate the quality of collective worship so that St Bede's becomes a vibrant Catholic community.

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

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

2

Students at St Bede's embrace the school's mission. Leadership groups such as Prayer Leaders or Social Justice leads immerse themselves into the Catholic life through fundraising, sharing reflections on retreats or promoting principles of stewardship. The mantra, 'everything is possible for one who believes' was palpable. Four core values of *love, hope, forgiveness and compassion* are recognised by the children. In an assembly, positive affirmation to be the best version of themselves was used to inspire. 'Be like Bede' was used to build character and moral development. One head pupil said, 'Stewardship is at the heart of this community'. Students seek opportunities to care for our Common Home through initiatives such as eliminating the presence of single-use plastics on site. Catholic social teaching is embedded. During a Year 8 prep time, students responded positively to fundraising for Cafod and the chaplaincy team provision is supporting the Darwen Food Bank. Students know the theology underpinning their actions. Respect for 'yourself, others, school and faith' was prominent. In lessons, students demonstrated respect by listening attentively; and during social times behaviour was self-regulated. The curriculum teaches other faiths and perspectives. Chaplain provision includes resources for Prep groups and assemblies. Students have access to a prayer room which facilitates quiet reflection and prayer. An annual plan of provision provides opportunities to celebrate the Gospel, learn about feast days and understand other faiths.

The Mission statement, from St Mark's Gospel, expresses the school's charism. It is proudly displayed and has a tangible impact on the schools' ethos. Staff are committed to students at this school, observed through their approachability, praise, and willingness to give their time. This is widely appreciated by students. The sense of community is tangible. In lessons, relationships were friendly, but focused. Staff give generously of their time to support activities

which reflect the mission of the school. Prayer leader assemblies at feeder schools is a great example of building community. Students and visitors from different cultures and faiths are valued. Students endorse the curriculum which remains compliant with Diocesan directives. Staff are positive role models for students and willingly assist them beyond lessons and their support for extra-curricular and apostolic activities. Pastoral care is the bedrock of St Bede's. The 'Hub' is a calm, safe environment for more vulnerable students and staff provide personalised care whilst maintaining students' curriculum access. In keeping with the inclusive ethos, these students remain involved in Prep and wider school life. Students testify that staff are caring. The environment is witness to its identity through explicit signs of the school's Catholic character. Displays, including student contributions, incorporate scriptural references. The prominence of Prep boards facilitates an atmosphere conducive to reflection. Students spoke cogently about their leadership roles. A clear programme for religious and sex education is delivered in Prep time. *Ten:Ten* resources are used thoughtfully.

Leaders, including governors, are passionate about supporting students on their faith journey and take their roles as custodians of the mission seriously. A link governor, who is also lead teacher/innovator in the Diocese, has a remit to evaluate provision and provides reports to support school improvement. The Ecology group have visited Wardley Hall to deepen their understanding of *Laudato Si'* and selected students are working towards the Caritas award and Faith in Action awards. There is widespread student endorsement of the support and approachability of Fr Brian. St Bede's has 4 major feeder schools which are visited frequently by prayer leaders. Parental support is overwhelmingly positive, reflecting their confidence in the school to provide a good Catholic education. Year 7 welcome and Year 11 leaver Masses were cited as meaningful faith and community experiences. Staff whose children have attended St Bede's are fulsome in their praise. Widespread commitment to Catholic social teaching principles is demonstrated by the curriculum beyond religious education. Staff well-being initiatives, including an open-door approach or 2 hours per year allowance were appreciated. The *Religious Education Directory* is being implemented in Key Stage 3. The GCSE specification is compliant with diocesan requirements. Governors' ambitions are demonstrated through investment in a Director of Catholic Life. Governors recognise St Bede's is on a journey, and that evaluative systems will lead to further improvements. They have identified areas for development in strategic planning. Student leaders share how they contribute to the Catholic life, but the evaluation of their work and future planning is limited. Newly qualified teachers were complimentary about support and articulated the role of the Catholic lead on each department.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

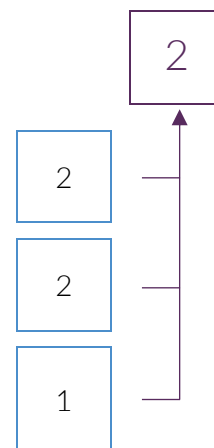
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Students are developing secure knowledge, understanding and skills in religious education in line with the *Religious Education Directory*. In lessons, students used subject terminology with confidence. Analysis of school data shows students are making good progress. Lessons showed appropriate challenge, and students display keen conceptual understanding of the content. The use of mini-whiteboards was effective in correcting misconceptions. They are developing the skills to think like a theologian, reflecting the fact that religious education is viewed as an academic subject. Most students can recall and discuss their learning, demonstrating secure knowledge to illustrate responses. Effective questioning provided opportunities for students to pose their own questions. Although quality teaching was observed, and students typically engage, there was limited evidence of independent learning. Students take pride in presentation and organisation of their work. Work scrutiny shows well-organised, well-structured learning that aligns with curriculum overviews. Opportunities for extended writing showed a deep understanding. Students were attentive in lessons and participated positively when questioned or when completing discussions and group work. Student voice indicates they enjoy religious education. Consequently, they have respectful and positive relationships with their teachers. Students receive feedback in books and through ongoing formative assessment in class, including live marking using visualisers, provides them with an understanding of how to improve. Students participate in self-assessment following tests which help guide their thinking. Attainment in religious education is broadly in line with other core subjects. At Grade 7 plus they are above core subjects.

Teachers display excellent subject knowledge and good understanding of pedagogy to develop student learning. Teachers are passionate about their subject and this confidence shines through in lessons. Their expectations of both behaviour and participation were high. In turn,

students feel valued and respond enthusiastically. The curriculum is diligently planned and builds upon previous learning. Lessons visited demonstrated congruence with the *Religious Education Directory* and strong collaboration was evident in shared planning and appropriate resources. Effective questioning was a strength. For example, probing student responses had the effect of consolidating children's learning. In lessons, positive relationships based on mutual respect, were observed and teachers used praise judiciously to inspire students to achieve more. Feedback in lessons was framed to support learning. In relationship and sex education Prep, students learnt about the difficult topic of abortion and a student responded to the question, 'Is abortion justified' by saying, 'No, as Catholics believe in the sanctity of life'. Teachers identify and develop opportunities for the development of key stage three students through the application of concepts, theology and experience to modern world scenarios, with subsequent opportunities for spiritual reflection and response. Resources at St Bede's are innovative. As well as appropriate worksheets and purposeful deployment of teaching assistants, the department also has a website with great resources and a YouTube channel.

Leaders are on track to fully implement the *Religious Education Directory* and curriculum allocation meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and enjoys parity with other core subjects in terms of budget, staffing and accommodation. The subject leader is proud of the team spirit to create quality resources. For example, the religious education newsletter is used to share good practice and summarise key topics. Religious education enjoys a prominent location in school. Leaders have ensured professional development linked to the requirements of the inspection framework, including attendance at relevant diocesan development courses. The subject leader has a clear vision for the department and her passion has enabled other teachers to embrace this vision. She has also led diocesan professional development sessions, reflecting her expertise as a leader. The curriculum was co-constructed through a strong collaborative approach using the experiences of the team. Leaders have ensured that students in 'The Hub' have regular access to their curriculum entitlement, including in religious education. Examples of adaptive teaching were seen in religious education lessons and teaching assistants provided effective support. A concerted effort has been made to enhance students' enrichment, including retreats, that support students' formation. At GCSE there are visits to Jewish places of worship, enhancing subject understanding and enriching the learning experience. Extensive analysis of GCSE outcomes shows the strengths of the department and has highlighted areas for improvement that have been incorporated into the religious education development plan.

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

2

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

2

Engagement in collective worship is good, for example, in a Year 10 assembly, students bore witness to their faith through reading and reflection; and in prep time generally respond well to the experience of prayer. The student prayer group are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their faith and work alongside the chaplain to increase participation and access to other students. The annual plan of provision provides a framework for the liturgical year, enabling students to experience a variety of age-appropriate ways of praying including traditional formulaic prayer, scripture and hymns. These prayers align with the prescribed themes for the week. Students are aware of different liturgical seasons and their significance. Students work with staff to celebrate God's Word in assemblies, enabling them to deepen their faith, time to reflect and to serve their community. Students also collaboratively plan and lead other liturgical activities, for example Year 7 welcome Mass. Student leadership groups are pro-active and take pride in their contribution and spoke with authentic knowledge. Students do recognise and identify how prayer and liturgy influence the life of the school and wider events. To be outstanding in this area there needs to be a clear plan to expand opportunities for all students to be involved in liturgical celebrations.

Prayer is central to school life, with a protected position in Prep time and assemblies, some of which are enhanced by the attendance of the chaplain. This is appreciated by older students. Prep and assembly prayer, themes of the week and prayers in religious education lessons ensure daily pattern reflects the rhythm of the prayer life of the Church. A Year 7 assembly, delivered by prayer leaders, included a hymn, prayer, scriptural reading and reflection. Students were reverent throughout. Scripture is widely displayed around the school and scriptural texts are provided in prayer resources to read and reflect upon. A staff retreat has been organised for this year and staff embrace professional development on the school's mission. A different staff

team leads prayer and reflection on the values of the week and teachers articulated how this changed their practices. The Director of Catholic Life and chaplain work as a team ensuring staff are provided with resources to develop prayer and para-liturgies. Hymns are sung at assemblies, which begin with appropriate liturgical music. Art and music enrich the prayer experience of students. A prayer room serves as a quiet space but is too small for Prep group liturgies and its use needs to be evaluated. St Bede's has a strong link with a local priest and students visit his Darwen parish churches. St Bede's supports the Year 8 Confirmation programme and prayer leaders visit local feeder schools to deliver assemblies and lead prayer. Parents attend and enjoy the welcome and leavers' Masses with liturgies prepared by pupils and the chaplaincy team.

Leaders are committed to embedding collective worship and recognise the need for continuous quality professional development for staff. The religious education link governor uses her experience to ensure structure to professional development opportunities. The headteacher is working to implement the new prayer directory, enhancing practice further. Fr Brian celebrates the Eucharist during key events and staff Mass is celebrated termly. Repentance and Reconciliation are explored during Lent. However, student voice indicated limited knowledge of their patron St Bede, which might be of interest to the chaplaincy team. The chaplaincy team provide resources and guidance which allow for pupil leadership and creativity in the delivery of prayer and celebrations of the Word. They attend diocesan courses and feedback to colleagues. A significant number of leaders have the *Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies* qualification or equivalent, including the headteacher and religious education leader. Leaders support their colleagues in the delivery of collective worship through the provision of appropriate resources. These are valued both within and beyond the school. These allow for student creativity and leadership and, consequently, the school provides stimulating liturgical opportunities. Budgeting allocations for collective worship align with capitations for other core subjects. Retreats, trips and a focus on enrichment is testament to appropriate resourcing. Leaders are supportive of staff professional development. Leaders must continue to ensure robust evaluation of activities to plan for the future in creating a Catholic community where collective worship is vibrant. Staff evaluation of the impact of resources and support provided by the chaplaincy team provides a model for further developments.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Bede's Roman Catholic High School
School unique reference number (URN)	119793
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8894632
Full postal address of the school	St Bede's Roman Catholic High School, Green Lane, Blackburn, BB2 4SR
School phone number	01254202519
Headteacher	Daniel Milton
Chair of governors	Paul Crewe
School Website	http://www.stbedesblackburn.com
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	17 th March 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

Sheldon Logue	Lead
Simon Duggan	Team
David Deane	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