

# The Catholic High School

URN: 139343

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Shrewsbury

06–07 November 2024

## 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

1

#### 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

1

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

N/A

## Compliance statement

- The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- The school is fully compliant with the additional requirements of Bishop Mark.
- There were no areas for improvement from the last inspection which was also under a different framework.

## What the school does well

- The school, in living out its Christ-centred mission, successfully creates a welcoming and highly inclusive community in which each individual pupil is known and loved.
- The commitment of all staff to the service and care of every pupil permeates the whole life of the school.
- The school offers an extensive and imaginative range of activities which deepen the moral, spiritual and emotional formation of all pupils.
- Leadership of all three key areas in the school is outstanding

## What the school needs to improve

- To raise the attainment and progress of *all* pupils in religious education.
- To develop routine liturgical ministries and roles for pupils to support the leadership of prayer and liturgy across the school.

## 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**

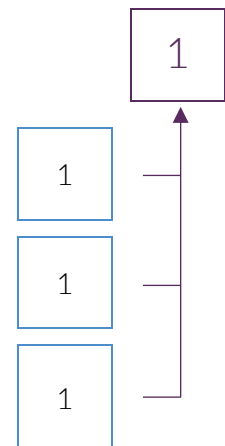
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

**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



The school fully lives out its mission of *Christo Fidelis*. Pupils and staff fully realise that they are (in the words of the school prayer) ‘the hands, feet and lips of Christ.’ There is a lived sense of community across the school in which Christ is clearly at the heart of all policies and actions. As a consequence of this, inspectors experienced a welcoming, happy and highly inclusive school where pupils feel known and loved for their uniqueness. Pupils who had moved to the school from other high schools were very clear in their expression of this feature. One pupil comments: ‘It’s the best school I could ever have wished for.’ Their behaviour and sense of mutual respect are excellent. Pupils are proud of their school and can explain with clarity and confidence how the Catholic dimension of the school makes a positive difference. In the words of one pupil: ‘Everything we do comes back to being a good person modelled on Jesus.’ The prominence of Catholic social teaching across the whole school empowers pupils to come forward and lead extensive acts of service and charity. The model of the sixth form leadership group leading on Catholic social teaching themes with younger pupils is exemplary.

The Catholic mission of the school is prominently celebrated in the rich displays of scripture, Catholic social teaching, charity and other opportunities to grown in faith. Each classroom has a well-cared for prayer station which acts as a focal point for pupils. Within the wider taught curriculum, Catholic social teaching is well-embedded. For example, in a history lesson a pupil comments: ‘It’s important to talk about immigration so we can learn to respect all.’ Staff are exemplary role models and highly dedicated to the pastoral care of their pupils. Systems are carefully designed to quickly identify the diverse needs of pupils so that bespoke support can be quickly deployed. The provision contained in the Trinity area is an exemplary model of a school reaching out to its most vulnerable pupils and meeting their individual needs. In its configuration

and delivery, it is clearly shaped by the school's passionate belief in the dignity of the individual person. In the words of one pupil: ' We are a school that includes everyone like Jesus did.' Provision for chaplaincy across the school is extensive and creative, providing a rich menu of opportunities for pupils to grow in faith and moral formation. The Youth Saint Vincent de Paul society (SVP), Faith in Action awards and a befriending group are three out of many examples. A 'faith explorers' group who meet every two weeks with the lay chaplain provides a secure space for pupils from different faith backgrounds and none to share their faith experiences together.

The headteacher communicates a passionately held vision for the mission of the school. With her dedicated team she has taken staff and parents with her on this journey. Staff feel highly supported and valued and they are inspired to go beyond the ordinary to ensure the best care, teaching and opportunities are available for their pupils. Leaders have fostered strong links with parents, parishes and feeder primary schools. In its support of families experiencing financial hardship, the school is a beacon of hope in the community and a powerful witness to the school's commitment to the common good and its preferential option for the poor. Leaders and governors have ensured that the Catholic mission of the school is at the heart of all policy decisions and actions. Governors are a visible presence around school and through careful monitoring and evaluation are clear about the next stages of development.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

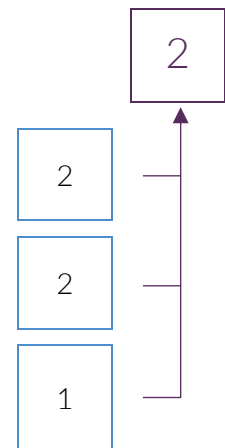
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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



Through a carefully planned curriculum for religious education and routinely good teaching, pupils make secure gains in knowledge and understanding. They enjoy religious education, particularly the positive relationships between themselves and their teachers, which they say helps them learn better. As one pupil comments: 'I like my teacher more than I like religious education but now she helps me like religious education as well.' Core religious education in the sixth form is highly valued by students who enjoy the opportunities to discuss ethical and topical issues. They learn to appreciate different viewpoints guided by the light that a Catholic perspective brings. In the best lessons in Key Stage 3 and 4, pupils responded well to teachers' questions showing good religious literacy. Pupils are engaged in their learning and behave consistently well. As a consequence of all lessons beginning with recall activities, pupils show good progress in knowing and remembering more. Attainment in GCSE religious education is broadly in line with core subjects but exceeds this measure in the higher grades. A level theology outcomes over time are good. For outcomes to be outstanding in religious education, teachers should allow more time for pupils to reflect on their answers so that they can give deeper and more considered responses.

Religious education is taught by a specialist team of teachers with high levels of subject knowledge and expertise. They show a deep commitment to the subject and have high expectations for their pupils. They plan and work collaboratively and have fully implemented the new *Religious Education Directory* (RED) with care and imagination. Beginning all lessons with a short recall activity of prior learning is helping pupils build up secure knowledge and acquire appropriate specialist vocabulary quickly. Last year, the department identified feedback to pupils as an area for development. The fruits of that work were observed by inspectors. Consistent approaches to feedback (use of red and green pens) helps pupils understand misconceptions

and encourages them to be diligent in correcting errors. Positive relationships in all classrooms characterised by appropriate praise motivates pupils to do better. Religious education days, in which pupils in each year are released from timetable for a day, help them to engage more deeply with moral issues relevant to their lives. More visits by external agencies, representatives from other faiths or religious education trips would benefit their understanding further.

The highly experienced subject leader for religious education leads her team with great care and commitment. She offers an inspiring vision for the subject and an insightful ability to translate this vision into a curriculum relevant to the diverse needs of the pupils. She knows her hard-working team well and has established a team ethos which contributes significantly to the school's core values. She has strategic oversight of the relationships, sex and health education (R(S)HE) programme and works closely with the subject leader of R(S)HE to ensure all materials are faithful to Catholic teaching. Her leadership also goes beyond the school in the way she shares her expertise in a range of diocesan forums. Leaders and governors have ensured that all religious education classrooms are suited together and well-resourced. They are generous in ensuring that staff have appropriate time for further training in courses outside school. Leaders, including governors, are also proactive in ensuring that the design of the religious education curriculum meets the needs of all pupils. Their self-evaluation of religious education is thorough and detailed and confirms the department's capacity for further improvements in pupil outcomes.

## Collective worship

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

### Collective worship key judgement grade

**Pupil outcomes**

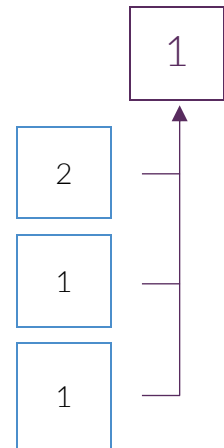
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school’s collective worship

**Provision**

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

**Leadership**

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



Pupils respond well to the wide variety of prayer and liturgical celebrations offered. In all prayer and liturgy observed, pupils showed reverence and respect. This is clearly the norm. They experience a range of different ways of praying which are faithful to the Catholic tradition such as reciting the Rosary, grace before meals and celebrations of the word. In some of the opportunities for prayer and liturgy pupils are compliant but also passive in their responses. In the best liturgical celebrations, pupils are engaged and confident in responding to question prompts about scripture. In a Mass for a Year 11 class, pupils were fully engaged and respectful such that individual pupils spontaneously offered up prayers of petition when requested. In larger, whole school liturgies such as Masses for leavers and Advent services, pupils are more confident in coming forward to help in planning and delivery. To be outstanding in this area, pupils need more opportunities to develop routine liturgical ministries in order to embrace the high ideals outlined in the new *Prayer and Liturgy Directory*.

The provision for prayer and liturgy occupies a central place in the life of the school. There is a routine plan for daily prayer at three points in the day: prayer at the start of the day, grace before meals and a good news reflection or celebration of the word at the end of the day. In addition, there is a rich variety of well-planned liturgical celebrations fully in line with the changing patterns of the Church’s year. For example, services of remembrance, Adoration of the Eucharist, recital of the Rosary, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, weekly Masses and a ‘faith explorers’ group to name just some. This is extensive and, at times, innovative provision. Whole-school liturgies are enhanced through the addition of music, drama and art. For example, in a ‘live’ stations of the cross liturgy, drama pupils support the planning and delivery of the service to feeder primary schools and parishioners. The lay chaplain plays a pivotal role in building up the skill and confidence of staff in planning and delivering prayer across school. The provision for prayer and

liturgy also reaches out to families and feeder schools reflecting the school's commitment to the local community.

The school has a comprehensive policy for prayer and liturgy, responsive to the specific needs of its pupils and closely developed in partnership with governors. The lay chaplain demonstrates excellent leadership in the way she supports staff (formally and informally) in building up the confidence of staff to plan and lead prayer and liturgy. There are regular sessions each half term dedicated to training staff in delivering prayer, liturgy and Catholic social teaching. All meetings begin with a prayer including the twice weekly staff briefings. The school calendar is planned with priority given to key events and seasons in the Church's liturgical year. The parish priest celebrates a weekly Mass in the school chapel. Working with the lay chaplain, the Mass is skilfully adapted to maximise the engagement of the participants. Leaders ensure that high priority is given to the celebration of holy days of obligation, celebrations of the Eucharist and Lenten and Advent services. Governors have ensured that resources for prayer and liturgy are at a premium. This is visible in the beautiful iconography across the school and particularly in the main chapel which is highly valued by staff and pupils.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	The Catholic High School
School unique reference number (URN)	139343
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8964603
Full postal address of the school	Old Wrexham Road, Handbridge, Chester, CH4 7HS
School phone number	01244952788
Headteacher	Cathryn McKeagney
Chair of local governing body	Jane Johnson
School Website	<a href="http://www.christofidelis.org.uk">http://www.christofidelis.org.uk</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	The Chester Catholic Academies Partnership
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	8 February 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

## The inspection team

Martin Reynolds	Lead
Carl Fisher	Team
Simon Duggan	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