



St Bernard's Catholic High School and Arts College

URN: 137312

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Brentwood

02–03 May 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

- There is a calm and respectful atmosphere within the school and all members of the community live out the mission, 'Love one another as I have loved you'.
- There are strong links between the school and parishes and this ensures all are supported in their faith journey.
- The religious education department is well led with a clear vision and the expertise to secure this vision.
- The generosity of the wider school community towards charitable causes is most impressive.
- The commitment and dedication of the various youth ministries is truly inspiring.

What the school needs to improve

- Enable students to articulate the principles of Catholic social teaching underpinning the wide range of fundraising activities which exist within the school.
- Empower students to formally evaluate the quality of prayer and liturgy they prepare so that they may make it even better.

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

1

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

1

1

St Bernard's High School is an inclusive, welcoming community where students are nurtured and feel valued and cared for; in fact one youth ministry group actually greets students as they enter the playground each morning. The behaviour of students is exemplary both in lessons and throughout the school as they strive to live out the mission statement, 'Love one another as I have loved you'. The Bernardine charism, 'There are those who seek knowledge in order to serve; that is love', is truly reflected in the learning achieved and service given by the students. In conjunction with the youth ministry teams, students raise awareness and fundraise for a variety of charities including a local homeless centre, a women's refuge, CAFOD, Marie Curie, Great Ormond Street Hospital and the St Vincent de Paul Society. As a result, students flourish as they seek to grow in virtue. They gladly embrace their personal responsibility to care for the common good. The generosity of the whole school community towards the wide range of events organised by the students is truly humbling. The senior students are excellent role models for the rest of the school and, as part of their general religious education course, they put their faith into practice by volunteering to help out with various duties at the SVP centre. The manager commented, 'The centre is very appreciative of all the work done by the students and how it supports the volunteers'. Students value highly the school's chaplaincy provision and willingly take leadership roles as evidenced in assemblies and form time. Students of other faiths are encouraged to talk about religious festivals and how they are celebrated to the rest of the form class. Recently a student presented a slideshow on Diwali and shared it with the rest of the year group. Although the students are good at applying Catholic social teaching at St Bernard's, the school needs to further develop understanding in this area so that students are aware of the principles behind their actions.

Loving attention has been given to the school's Catholic character which is proudly displayed in the physical environment. The chapel is widely used and for many is seen as a spiritual haven. The school is over one hundred years old and is very proud of its rich heritage. The Catholic identity and cultural diversity of the school are promoted on every corridor with wonderfully presented and maintained displays of students' work including religious art and icons. Pastoral care is of the highest quality. Year leaders, form tutors and learning mentors are relentless in the pursuit of the best care for their students. As one teacher commented, 'We care about the students as though they were our own and we care about each other as a staff body'. The school goes the extra mile to provide an exceptionally supportive and joyful community for each of its members. Students felt confident going to staff for support or to talk about problems as confirmed by one student, 'My mentor has been there for me when I have cried and needed guidance, and she makes me laugh. I have more confidence now and she has made me go to the library most days'.

Leaders and governors are the true guardians of Catholic life and mission at St Bernard's. They recognise that their staff, as well as students, are made in God's image and treat them with respect and dignity. The chaplain is very much involved in the Catholic life of the school, providing various opportunities for the spiritual development of students and staff. The overwhelming majority of staff, including early career teachers, are very positive about the school and were eager to explain how the school supported them. One teacher said, 'There is really something special about St Bernard's and I truly believe it is down to the ethos which is lived out every day'.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

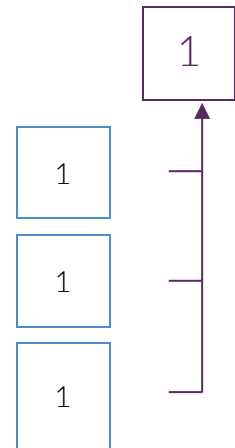
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 at St Bernard's are developing excellent knowledge and skills in religious education. Both GCSE and A level results are outstanding and demonstrate the excellent progress students make as they move through the school. Books scrutinised reveal work of a consistently high standard, showing excellent presentation and strong development of knowledge. Students are able to use key terms effectively, demonstrating strong religious knowledge. They take pride in their work and this is acknowledged in the comments from teachers. Students are regularly given diagnostic feedback and opportunities to develop their responses further. Behaviour for learning is outstanding, fostered through extremely positive teacher-student relationships. Students feel confident and comfortable in their learning and particularly enjoy the study of world religions because they believe learning how to respect and understand others' faiths is incredibly important in today's world. Students are provided with a good level of challenge in their lessons and this was reinforced by a parent who commented, 'I am particularly encouraged by the stretch and challenge in religious education and the opportunities for my daughter to extend her learning independently. The topics covered open enriching discussions at home'.

In the majority of observed lessons teachers demonstrated very strong subject knowledge and used this to good effect to support students in their learning. The curriculum has been carefully planned in line with the new *Religious Education Directory*, and has a positive impact on the spiritual development of students. Teachers have very high expectations of students and consistently recognise excellence by regularly awarding achievement points which further enhance motivation and achievement in lessons. A wide range of activities and approaches were observed, including: extended writing tasks; mind maps; pair-and-share discussions and memory tasks. In an outstanding Year 8 lesson on 'The Covenant' the teacher shared resources

that allowed students to think about how their daily lives reflect what happened in the story of Abraham. Relationships between students were very positive, collaborating well in group tasks and actively listening to each other. The teacher's questioning was effective in checking understanding and challenging students to think more deeply.

Leaders, including governors, view religious education as the 'core of the core' with parity between the subject and the rest of the core subjects in relation to resourcing, timetabling, staffing and accommodation. Professional development is seen as a key priority for the whole department. There are currently two non-specialists following the CCRS course. The senior leaders ensure that the teaching of religious education is well monitored, leading to outstanding results at GCSE and A level. The subject leader has an inspiring vision for religious education and has the high level of expertise to secure this vision. This is being used to nurture and develop teaching and learning across the department. She also takes a leading role in the delivery of form time worship with termly booklets to assist prayer and liturgy. Religious education has 10% curriculum time at Key Stages 3 and 4 while the sixth form time allocation is more than the 5% required. A carefully planned sequential curriculum is in place which ensures that students' achievement is strong as they progress through the school. The senior leadership team ensures that attendance and punctuality are excellent. Enrichment activities have included trips to the local synagogue and a Hindu temple in London, ensuring the students experience religion as real and alive. A visit from the founder of 'Let the Children Live' and a 'Vocations Day' provided students the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the different callings in life from priesthood, religious orders, and marriage and family life.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

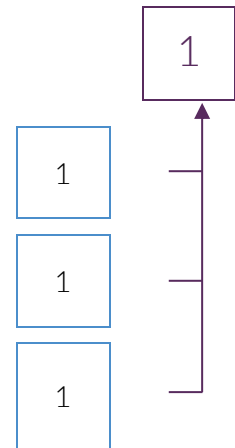
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

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



The quality and variety of prayer and liturgy provided by the school is outstanding. Prayer is at the heart of St Bernard's school. Students participate fully in the school's prayer life. They are respectful and attentive when prayers are said in form time and at the start of every lesson. An observed assembly on Sunday's Gospel 'The True Vine' allowed an entire class to contribute using the theme of gifts and talents with students composing and reciting prayers in their own languages while others presented pre-recorded interviews from around the school, including the chapel. The various youth ministries include readers, altar servers, cantors, orchestra and a welcome team. They spoke of the pride and joy in belonging to a youth ministry and how it allows them to reflect on their faith. A parent commented, ' St Bernard's offers opportunities for my daughter to grow in her relationship with Christ'. There are form retreat days and this is a wonderful opportunity for students to reflect. During Advent a small service is held every Friday lunchtime and led by senior students. Year 13 organise and lead reconciliation services during Lent, preparing their own script and suitable music. Also during Lent Year 12 students lead the Stations of the Cross every Friday and this is well attended by younger students. The ministry teams expressed an interest in setting up a Bible study group and said they would welcome the opportunity for prayer requests as part of the start of lesson prayers. Another suggestion was to include more contemporary music and hymns alongside traditional hymns in school worship. An area for development is for students to formally evaluate the quality of their prayer and liturgy so that they can identify how it may be improved.

The centrality of prayer and liturgy is very well evidenced. There is a carefully planned programme that ensures students experience the richness and breadth of the Catholic tradition. During Lent students are able to book appointments with the local clergy so that they can receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation in school. During October and May a decade of the Rosary is

recited each morning before school and is led by the chaplain. This takes place in the chapel and is well attended. The chaplain has developed strong links with the local clergy which enables the school to celebrate the Sacrament of the Eucharist regularly in school and with the parish community. It has been a school tradition for the Year 13 students to prepare a passion play as part of their Core RE course in the spring term. It has become one of the highlights of the school year, incorporating students' creative and artistic skills through art, music, dance, drama, costume design, lighting and oracy. The play is performed to the whole school before Easter and is also taken to one of the parishes. Parents are kept well informed with weekly emails from the chaplain outlining the theme of the week, prayer of the week which correlates with the Sunday Gospel. A number of the school altar servers also serve in their local parish every Sunday.

Leaders, including governors, have ensured that prayer and liturgy have a high profile in the school. Staff value the support and guidance provided by the school on prayer and liturgy. For many staff it provides them with an opportunity to reflect and deepen their own faith. There is a set budget for prayer and liturgy and when there are additional needs, the headteacher ensures they are purchased so that the spiritual needs of students and staff are fulfilled. The school is fortunate to have a beautiful chapel on the top floor which is the dedicated space for prayer and reflection. The Bernardine Hall is used for larger services and the school has direct access to St Helen's church next door. All these buildings are well utilised by the school community during the liturgical seasons.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Bernard's Catholic High School and Arts College
School unique reference number (URN)	137312
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8825465
Full postal address of the school	St Bernard's Catholic High School and Arts College, Milton Road, Westcliff-on-Sea, SS0 7JS
School phone number	01702343583
Headteacher	Allison Moise-Dixon
Chair of Trustees	Lorraine Lancaster
School Website	http://www.stbernards.southend.sch.uk/
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Bernard's High School
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Date of last denominational inspection	29 November 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Mr. Dermot O'Neill	Lead
Mrs Josephine Erokwu	Team
Mrs. Angela Podmore	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