



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for  
**Our Lady and St Benedict Catholic Academy**

URN: 140141

Carried out on behalf of the Most Rev. Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham on:

Date: 28-29 June 2023

Overall effectiveness The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....	<b>2</b>
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 curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops’ Conference	✓
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	✓
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

## Summary of key findings

### What the school does well

- There is an unwavering commitment to the most vulnerable pupils and families; all staff go above and beyond to understand their needs.
- Pupils’ knowledge of Catholic Social Teaching is strong, and they articulate clearly how they can make a positive difference in the wider world.
- Pupils know that they are valued and cared for by all within the school community because they are made in the image and likeness of God.
- Consistent hard work and support have improved pupils’ presentation of work in religious education.

- Staff and pupils model excellent standards of behaviour showing kindness and respect to all.

What the school needs to improve:

- Develop pupils' understanding of how Gospel messages influence their daily life.
- Develop feedback that lets pupils know how to improve their religious education work further.
- Develop and facilitate staff and pupils to plan and lead experiences of prayer and liturgy.

## 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 .....

2

### Leadership

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

1



Pupils articulate how they live the mission of 'Loving, learning and looking forward with Christ'. Older pupils in the 'Benedict Best' group are proud that they influence others to know that God loves them; they show this by organising faith workshops and being positive role models. Pupils appreciate opportunities to actively live out their Catholic Social Teaching principles, particularly through actively supporting vulnerable families in the local area with fundraising and food collections. Each class focuses on supporting the disadvantaged in the local area, including collections of bathroom essentials, clothes, and food. Consequently, pupils understand that 'a simple act of kindness can make a real difference'. Pupils are yet to articulate the theology underpinning their actions. Pupils lead collections in response to international disasters; for example, resources collected for displaced Ukrainian families have been vast. Pupils are keen to share their understanding that all races and religions are welcomed and respected by God and the school community, with visitors, for example. Pupil eco warriors promote stewardship through 'green week' with litter collections in the community. These actions were enhanced by leaders' investment in a visiting theatre group, which further promoted the Christian message of stewardship.

Staff are examples of Christ-inspired compassion and love; Our Lady and St Benedict's is a safe haven for pupils and families. Well-deployed resources, including a children's counsellor for one day a week, show a commitment to nurturing all within the school community. Vulnerable pupils and families are fully supported, not least through the significant investment in two safeguarding officers based in the school. Parents appreciate the school's strong culture of welcome. A parent of children with special educational needs or disability (SEND) was passionate about how the school goes 'above and beyond' to ensure her children fully understand the Catholic faith. Another parent praised how they never felt judged by the school, only supported. Class saints are expertly linked to

the messages of Catholic Social Teaching. Pupils talk confidently about how they can positively impact the world using these; for example, by undertaking intentional, practical actions, such as recycling crisp packets to make blankets for people experiencing homelessness. Chaplaincy provision for staff includes retreat days for all schools within the collegiate, external counselling support and strong networking. This subsequently supports the development of a strong pupil chaplaincy group: Benedict Best, though chaplaincy opportunities do not always extend to include pupils beyond this group.

Governors and directors have clear strategic plans to ensure Catholic life and mission is central to school life, supported by visits, training, and sharing of best practice. Consequently, all governors and leaders know the next steps to ensure consistency across the collegiate. Responding to this, school leaders identify appropriate support and challenge, which significantly helps them achieve their mission. The newly formed school leadership team leads with faith-filled passion and integrity. Consequently, clear plans are now in place to develop all curriculum areas to be delivered through a Catholic lens. Following monitoring, reflection, and being mindful of financial pressures on families, leaders and governors have carefully planned timetables for social outreach, ensuring a careful balance between the Church's preferential option for those in need whilst showing a true understanding of their local community. This is led with passion and inspiration to excel in supporting others. This has included staff being stewards within the parish church during lockdowns, establishing foodbanks for vulnerable families and spending time with parents who need support. Christ-inspired actions are so firmly established that staff comment, 'It's just what we do'.

## 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

Pupils demonstrate a strong understanding of religious education. Pupils achieve well, including SEND and disadvantaged pupils, who are well-supported, resulting in them making good levels of progress. Pupils see connections between what they learn and acting as followers of Christ. Work in books is presented well and shows a range of activities introducing key concepts. However, not all pupils are given the opportunity to extend their learning as some activities limit pupils' responses. Pupils can explain how they enjoy their learning and proudly showcase their achievements. Behaviour in lessons is excellent throughout the school, showcasing a culture of shared respect. Pupils complete their work with enthusiasm and pride, valuing the opportunities given to present their work, particularly diary entries, storyboards, artwork, and drama. Pupils feel that teachers make their lessons fun and that this helps them to remember more; they are particularly passionate about opportunities to hot-seat in drama and write from disciples' viewpoints. Pupils express that they are 'engaged in our religious education lessons and enjoy connecting with and talking to God.'

Staff's subject knowledge for religious education is a strength in the school, and this is ongoing due to the support and training led by the subject leader. Planning considers all learners, and knowledge is successfully embedded, building upon pupils' prior learning. Teachers use various questioning techniques to further pupils' understanding, deepening their learning. 'Green for growth' questions have been introduced this year as part of the school's feedback policy, which is consistently applied throughout the school. However, feedback strategies must ensure pupils understand what they have done well and their next steps to progress further because they do not consistently articulate this clearly. Teachers ensure that religious education lessons develop pupils spiritually and morally. Introducing Catholic Social Teaching into the religious education curriculum has enabled pupils to think about how they can make a difference in the wider world. Teachers use high-quality resources and a range of activities which engage pupils and bring the curriculum to life; for example, using the forest school area to generate a sense of awe and wonder.

Leaders have identified priorities for religious education and have clear action plans to meet them. Leaders ensure that the contents of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* are enhanced through a range of resources. Due to its strong leadership, religious education is comparable to other core subjects. For example, they require pupils to share their exercise books as part of parents' meetings, enabling them to showcase a piece of work they are particularly proud of. Monitoring leads to improvements; for example, the implementation of tiered questioning methods, which are now used by all staff. The religious education subject leader has a clear vision for teaching and learning; staff feel highly supported by her, which aids the subject's development. The head teacher and subject leader are insightful in their analysis of monitoring, resulting in a leadership team that is very aware of the strengths and weaknesses of religious education at Our Lady and St Benedict's. They work incredibly well as a team, supporting staff to plan effectively to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. This results in positive behaviour in all religious education lessons and good outcomes. The religious education link governor provides support and challenge to school leaders and reports to the full governing board regularly; consequently, they know the school's strengths and development needs well.

## 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 .....

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

Pupils are proud to share their understanding of Jesus' suffering, dying, and rising for us, as reflected in each class taking responsibility for sharing a Station of the Cross during Lent. Pupils are attentive and reverent during prayer at Our Lady and St Benedict's; younger pupils are supported by their Year 6 monitors. Pupils value such roles of responsibility within liturgy but are not yet taking ownership of prayer experiences through planning and delivery. Pupils' willingness to purposefully engage in quiet, reflective time and publicly share personal responses to prayer prompts is embedded throughout the school. Pupils know prayer is a way to communicate with God and identify various ways to pray formally and informally. Pupils are confident in their knowledge of traditional prayers; they enjoy opportunities for open, spontaneous prayer and feel that it helps them to respect and understand each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. Pupils know prayer helps them to feel closer to God. Pupils understand the Church's liturgical year and can discuss Gospel stories relevant to its cycle of seasons and feasts. Pupils know Mass is an essential feature of the week and are passionate that pupils of all faiths, and those of no faith, are welcome to join its celebration. One pupil told inspectors, 'There are no limits to the Church. Everyone is loved equally by God'.

Prayer is routine in school life. Staff and pupils appreciate the opportunities provided for regular prayer, particularly when they need support. Training has been delivered, sharing various ways to enable children to become active participants in prayer; there is limited progress in terms of pupils planning and leading prayer. Scripture is shared appropriately, and pupils are given options for how they would like to listen to the Good News; this includes class teacher reading, video clips, paired reading and whole-class reading opportunities. Pupils respond well to this opportunity to take ownership of prayer. The head teacher delivers high-quality Gospel assemblies linking Scripture to everyday actions. The next steps for this have

been identified by the school regarding developing pupils' ability to speak knowledgeably about how these Gospel messages influence their actions. School staff proactively invite parents into school throughout the year to celebrate key Church celebrations. Year 6 is developing an outside prayer area, and are very proud that each member has physically constructed a part of this. They are highly anticipating the impact they hope it will have on developing younger pupils' prayer lives.

In partnership with the parish priest, leaders plan carefully to ensure prayer and celebrating the Eucharist are central to daily life within the school. The school year is timetabled to focus on celebrating key liturgical events, including Holy Days of Obligation. Leaders allocate resources well, ensuring pupils are supported to understand and discuss signs, symbols, and colours relevant to the liturgical seasons. Pupils benefit from financial investment in accessing online prayer and liturgy events throughout the year, including worship through song with OneLife music. Regular monitoring of prayer results in timely, focused staff training; this is part of a planned action to further develop pupils' roles in leading liturgy. However, as yet, pupils are not planning these independently. Governors are knowledgeable about the carefully planned steps concerning this. Because they regularly visit the school, governors are rightly confident in this aspect of their work. All schools within the collegiate use a detailed prayer and liturgy policy. This is further developed through bi-annual training days supporting teachers, who told inspectors that the collegiate had 'gone above and beyond to ensure that we have access to appropriate and effective training'.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	Our Lady and St Benedict Catholic Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	140141
Full postal address of the school	Abbey Lane, Abbey Hulton, Stoke-on-Trent, ST2 8AU
School phone number	01782 234646
Name of head teacher or principal	Sarah Clowes
Chair of governing board	Gillian Meller
School Website	<a href="http://www.ourladyandstbenedict.co.uk">www.ourladyandstbenedict.co.uk</a>
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	The Newman Catholic Collegiate
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	3 to 11
Trustees	Archdiocese of Birmingham
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	June 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

## The inspection team

Julie-Anne Tallon

Lead inspector

Rachael Batson

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