



INSPECTION REPORT

Saint Gregory's Catholic College

Coombe Hay Lane, Odd Down, Bath BA2 8PA
Telephone: 01225 832873
e-mail address: stgregorys-sec@bathnes.gov.uk

DfE Number: 800/4608
URN: 109329

Headteacher: Ms A Cusack
Chair of Governors: Mr J Delaney

**Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Clifton
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005**

Date of inspection: 7-8 February 2019
Date of previous inspection: 8-9 October 2013

Reporting Inspector: Mr P Ward
Additional Inspector: Mrs B A McLaughlin

Description of school

St Gregory's Catholic College is a smaller than average sized 11-18 Catholic secondary school on the southern outskirts of Bath. The sixth form is run in conjunction with St. Mark's Church of England School.

The college catchment area principally serves the parishes of St Peter and St Paul, Combe Down, Bath and St John the Evangelist, Bath and the local neighbourhood. There are 966 pupils on roll, 50% of whom are Roman Catholic, 32% of other Christian denominations and most of the remainder from families who have not declared a faith.

The makeup of the student body has changed since the last inspection. Pupil Premium numbers have increased significantly since the last inspection but are below the national average. The proportion of students who have a SEN statement or an educational health and care plan is below the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below average and those speaking English as an additional language is below average.

There have been significant changes to the college leadership since the last denominational inspection. A full-time lay chaplain was appointed in September 2015. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2016 and the number of senior leaders has increased.

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)

Grade 1

This is an outstanding school because:

- The college's manifest Catholic character permeates the whole life of this flourishing educational community due to the strong commitment of governors, headteacher and leaders throughout the college.
- The inclusive mission statement underpins the whole life and work of the college community.
- The behaviour and disposition of students is of a high order reflecting the lived reality of the school creed "At St Greg's we are family.....In Christ we Flourish" which students readily recall and quote.
- The significant provision and high quality of pastoral care shown to all members of the community, both students and staff, is outstanding.
- Chaplaincy is at the heart of the life of the college, strongly promoting the Catholic character of the college through prayer, worship and social action while respecting the range of faith and belief among members of the community.
- Attainment in GCSE Religious Studies (RS) is very strong; sixth form students display a very high standard of religious literacy.
- Religious Education (RE) is recognised as 'the core of the core curriculum' by governors, school leaders and subject teachers who actively seek to ensure that each student is able to fully realise their potential.
- Prayer life is a particular strength of the college; all students are involved in devising and leading prayer in tutor time and participate in a full programme of liturgy and worship throughout the year, facilitated by the inspiring lay chaplain.
- Students take full advantage of the many thoughtful opportunities to serve the school and wider community, at home and abroad, by prayer, personal service and fundraising.
- The experience of living and working in a Catholic praying community makes a significant contribution to students' spiritual and moral development.

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop is outstanding

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop is outstanding. The two areas for improvement in the last diocesan inspection have been addressed, particularly that promoting student responsibility for prayer and

worship. The governors, headteacher and senior leaders are all committed to St Gregory's continuing to flourish while recognising local changing circumstances. The development plan identifies the contemporary challenges and opportunities facing the college and realistic steps to secure continued improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Establish a faculty approach to how Catholic faith and life are understood and shared through curriculum Religious Education.
- Ensure that when introducing the new diocesan assessment framework, consistent and rigorous processes are embedded that lead to the maximising of achievement for all groups in all Years.

a) The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school

- The manifest Catholic character of the college reflects the committed engagement of the whole community to its mission, eloquently expressed in the mission statement and encapsulated in the school motto “In Christ we Flourish”, displayed throughout the school.
- Students value and engage in the Catholic life of the college, irrespective of their faith or belief. “At St Greg’s we are family” is the lived reality with students stressing the family atmosphere to inspectors. Excellent behaviour reflects the college’s clear behaviour policy, which includes reconciliation and restitution, and the very positive relations between students within and between year groups and with members of staff.
- Students are sensitive to the personal needs and circumstances of one another as a result of the thoughtful curriculum provision rooted in Gospel values particularly in personal, social and health education (PSHE) and RE. They also benefit from the College’s significant and effective pastoral provision.
- Since the last inspection students have taken a significantly greater role in the prayer life of the school. All students are involved in devising and leading prayer and worship in their tutor groups and all tutor groups lead collective worship at weekly assemblies. Numbers of students attend the wide range of forms of prayer and worship held in the chapel each morning break and avail themselves of the sacrament of reconciliation in Advent and Lent.
- Chaplaincy team members from all years in the school regularly meet with the lay chaplain to help promote prayer and worship. Students play a leading role in the music liturgy group that is committed to enhancing music and singing as part of collective worship.
- Students spoke appreciatively of their experience of retreats. Each year numbers of students participate in the wider life of the Church including diocesan youth events and the national youth congress, ‘Flame’.
- Students are actively aware of the needs of others and seek to promote the wellbeing of all, within and beyond the school community. All are involved in fundraising in some way with the Christmas and Harvest annual appeals being significant school events. Proceeds go to a range of charities selected by students in addition to the commitment to support Julian House, a homeless charity in Bath, and to CAFOD’s worldwide work. In addition, students readily respond to circumstances and events and have raised significant funds for Macmillan and Indonesian earthquake relief.
- Sixth form students also undertake personal service, for example by volunteering in the local community one afternoon a week or participating in the annual Big Bath Sleep Out to raise funds for the homeless. Within the school, sixth form students act as mentors and in other supportive roles throughout the school.
- Students welcome and appreciate the opportunities for service within the school community and beyond, including the CAFOD Young Leaders’ groups in Year 10 and the Sixth Form. These enable students to meld their passion for social justice with personal development skills and work collaboratively with students from other Catholic schools to learn to make an impact. For example, last year students lobbied their Member of Parliament, wrote a CAFOD article for the national press and have gone on to become more involved with CAFOD’s work outside of school. This reflects the school’s practical commitment to its mission statement to enable each student to find their own vocation and to work for the common good.
- Students value the opportunities the school provides for their personal support and development which enable them to be happy and confident individuals. They are encouraged to

develop a good understanding of loving human relationships and sexual development within the context of a Christian understanding of love.

b) The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school

- The school mission statement is clear comprehensive statement of Catholic education with aims that are inclusive irrespective of faith and belief. It underpins the policies and practice of the college. Each faculty has customised the school mission statement to its own particular context and displays it prominently. The student Creed is an effective student-friendly version of the mission statement that was written by students and continues to be known and cited by contemporary students. Its conclusion – In Christ we Flourish – is widely known and prominently displayed throughout the school.
- Students from all backgrounds are encouraged to take an active part in the Catholic life of the college. One parent commented that, as a non-Catholic, they were happy with the provision and that it was “an offering” which their child could choose to accept or reject.
- The college’s-built environment clearly reflects the Catholic identity and character of the school. Christian symbols including crucifixes and statues are prominently displayed throughout and every classroom displays a crucifix selected by the tutor from a range of options. Student-made banners for various religious celebrations are also prominently displayed including in the school reception.
- The school chaplaincy is recognised as a key element in ensuring that prayer, worship and social action are central to the daily life and routine of the college. It is led by an exceptional full-time lay chaplain and based in the school chapel which is in a central location. An extensive programme of events is well designed to support the religious life of the school and the spiritual and moral development of students. The lay chaplain writes a topical contribution to the school’s weekly newsletter and provides the school video system with a ‘prayer for the day’. The Well provides the focus for prayer and worship in the New Sixth.
- The provision and quality of pastoral care for all members of the college community is outstanding. Specialist staff are part of the well-planned systems that enable all staff to contribute effectively to the well-being of each student. The college is also committed to the welfare of staff and has appropriate systems in place complemented by a staff well-being group.
- College staff promote and exemplify high standards of behaviour very effectively. The college’s Behaviour for Excellence policy is a clear and comprehensive positive statement, rooted in the college mission statement, that sets out rewards and sanctions in support of the ‘ready to learn’ policy that contributes to harmonious relations throughout the college.
- A thoughtful programme of PSHE and relationships and sex education (RSE) is delivered through a range of subjects and activities led by the head of RE in line with Catholic teaching and principles and is regularly monitored. Plans are in place for teaching to be brought together as a discrete subject in the next academic year.

c) How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school

- Governors and leaders are manifestly committed to securing and promoting the Catholic life of the school and recognise it to be a core leadership responsibility. The college mission statement clearly underpins the policies and practice of governors and leaders. They appreciate the evolving pattern of student recruitment and financial challenges for the college and are

developing realistic strategies to address them. These include exploring becoming a de la Salle associate school to strengthen further the Catholic character of the school as well increasing collaboration with the Camino partnership of local Catholic schools to further develop the local provision of 4-18 Catholic Christian education.

- Governors and leaders have clear and effective procedures for evaluating the Catholic life of the college. They visit the school in their roles as link governors as well as attending school liturgies and staff events when possible. The chair of the Christian Vision committee is link governor for RE and Catholic Life and regularly visits the schools to meet staff and undertake learning walks. The head of RE and the lay chaplain regularly attend the Christian Vision committee. The headteacher's reports to governors always include a review of the Catholic life of the college with a view to strengthening provision and practice, such as the increase in tutor time to enable greater engagement in collective worship.
- Staff are fully supportive of the Catholic life of the college and lead students in a wide range of its activities. The college promotes this engagement by providing a well-regarded induction day into college Catholic life by the lay chaplain and devoting an annual development day to spirituality. This is an important event in the life of the school when numbers of governors join staff to explore contemporary concerns, the most recent being on the corporate vocation of a Catholic school led by David Wells. The inclusion of prayer at the opening of meetings further reflects and supports the college's Catholic life.
- The college, through its website, clearly recognises that the more closely home and college work in partnership 'the greater the benefit will be for the student'. Accordingly, it continues to review and develop effective strategies for engaging with parents and carers including those who might traditionally find work with the college difficult. The pastoral team have developed particularly effective home links as an integral part of their work of supporting students. The recent appointment of a new dedicated family support officer further strengthens these links.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the whole curriculum contributes to students' spiritual, moral and vocational development strategically through their commitment as a Catholic school to accredited British Council International School status. This involves partner school links across Europe and Asia, Erasmus+ programmes with eight European countries and the Mandarin Excellence Programme. Participation in these projects helps students to appreciate and broaden their understanding of 'neighbour', become aware of social, economic and political issues and desire to make a difference and in the words of the student creed 'work together for a better future'. This is complemented by increasing awareness of Catholic Social Teaching following spirituality days and the core curriculum presence of RE.
- Leaders and governors are committed to supporting diocesan policies and initiatives and promoting the Bishop's vision throughout the college. This is recognised in the college development plan which explicitly references the Bishop's three-year plan 'A Future full of Hope'. The Year of Mission was marked in several ways including the Camino Partnership celebration. Plans for the Year of Prayer are in place.

a) How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

- Student attainment at GCSE has been consistently strong over the past three years with around 80% achieving grades 9-4 (formerly A*-C) and grades 9-7 (formerly A*/A) rising from 41% in 2016 to 48% in 2017 and 2018. RE continues to be one of the leading GCSE faculties in the school.
- Internal school and public examination data show students generally make strong progress in each key stage, but with some variation between groups of students. Student progress for those achieving GCSE grade 7+ is above national progress whereas those achieving grade 4 is slightly below. The department is alert to these variations and is actively seeking to improve the progress of all students in the less well achieving groups. Inspectors reviewed school progress data for Years 7-9 and found it to be strong.
- Students make age-appropriate progress in becoming religiously literate throughout the school. Sixth form students display a high standard, for example engaging thoughtfully with inspectors on a range of topics involving Catholic Social Teaching.
- Most students are actively engaged in lessons and committed to improving their knowledge, understanding and skills. They are aware of their present standard and what they need to know and do to progress.
- Most students enjoy religious education because of the excellent relationships with teachers who make the subject interesting. This was evident in lessons observed during the inspection and discussions with students. GCSE students appreciated the relevance of the topics studied and the opportunity to debate and express their view. Sixth form students welcomed being consulted on the nature and range of topics that they explored and appreciated the rigour with which each item was considered. Behaviour is generally of a high order reflecting students' commitment to learning.

b) The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education

- Teaching is never less than consistently good and is sometimes outstanding. Teachers generally display secure and often strong subject knowledge but teaching sometimes reveal a lack of confidence when seeking to explain or respond to students' questions if a teacher thinks that they lack a strong knowledge of the topic.
- Teachers know their students well, generally display high expectations and strive to enable them to make secure progress. Lessons are planned in line with an appropriate faculty scheme of work. Teachers employ a range of activities and resources together with homework activities that effectively engage students so that they make at least secure progress. Lesson objectives are shared at the outset, sometime in writing, in order to provide a secure focus for learning. Differentiated tasks may be introduced during the lesson to support and challenge the learning of each student in the class.
- Lessons are generally well paced with teachers usually taking an active role in progressing the sequence of learning activities. These include individual and group tasks with pupil feedback to assess learning and to identify how it might be necessary to address misunderstandings or to advance teaching further. Teachers generally use questioning effectively to identify misconceptions but less to provoke greater understanding by insisting on justification or elaboration of answers.

-
- During Year 7, students receive a personal target based on school-wide data which is revised annually. Students in Years 7-9 know and understand the amplified four-point assessment framework – ‘beginning, developing, secure, extending’ – and what they need to do to make further progress. This is noted on a record sheet in each exercise book to which each student responds but it is often somewhat cursory.
 - RE assessment data is collected and analysed in line with school policy and practice. Key Stage 3 students’ work is not subject to faculty moderation, so the data may be less reliable than that for GCSE students whose work is moderated. It is then analysed closely to inform teaching and the annual GCSE RS examination performance show this to be very effective.

c) How well leaders and governors monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education

- Leaders and governors ensure that the RE curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops’ Conference. The curriculum in key stage 3 is closely based on the ‘People of God’ framework nominated by the diocese, modified only to provide an appropriate transition to the GCSE RS curriculum. The three world faiths addressed are Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. The GCSE RS course is the Eduqas route B specification with Judaism which conforms to the requirements of the diocesan Bishop.
- The faculty leader for RE is an experienced practitioner and knowledgeable subject leader who is line managed by a deputy headteacher. There are regular thorough faculty reviews each term, which include pupil voice, and progress reports. The link governor who is chair of the Christian Vision committee regularly meets with the faculty leader and undertakes learning walks to ensure that governors are well informed in order to support future improvements.
- Public examination data is analysed very effectively by an assistant headteacher. It is carefully analysed by governors as part of their exercise of responsibility for denominational education so that they may be assured that the GCSE specification and the classroom teaching enable students to make strong progress in RE. Internal school assessment data is held centrally. Analysis of individual student data is strong, but inspectors saw no evidence of analysis of the data of groups of students at Key Stage 3.
- The faculty leader effectively directs a team of committed subject specialists. Individual student data is used by subject teachers to plan and develop appropriate schemes of work and teaching strategies that promote student learning and progress in attractive specialist teaching rooms. Plans are in place to introduce the new diocesan assessment framework in Years 7-9.
- Thoughtful school-wide strategic and operational development plans and an operational faculty plan inform effective decision taking to support RE. For example, in light of the increasing number of students joining Year 7 from local community as well as Catholic primary schools, a common RE induction programme has been introduced for all students to help provide a shared starting base to enable all to benefit from the Year 7 curriculum. This development is valuably informed by regular meetings with the local authority RE adviser in order to know and understand the RE that is taught at community primary schools.

a) How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's prayer life

- Students confirmed inspectors' observation that almost all students actively participate in the extensive prayer life of the school. The wide variety of opportunities to actively participate includes various chaplaincy responsibilities including assisting with the celebration of Mass, music ministry and tutor time along with Year celebrations of prayer and worship.
- Every student, regardless of their faith background, is involved in devising and leading a tutor group act of collective worship. Each week in every tutor group, a rota of three students devises their own tutor-group liturgy during tutor time in line with the weekly theme, aided by a generic planning sheet with support from their form tutor or chaplain as necessary, and leads worship on a subsequent day. In addition, each tutor group devises and leads its Year assembly once a year so all students are involved in planning and leading prayer and worship in two different contexts.
- Members of the chaplaincy team and others including sixth form students work with the lay chaplain in devising and leading imaginative and creative para-liturgies. One such was the 2018 Ash Wednesday liturgies, beginning with tutor groups' producing posters of both what they wished to leave behind and opportunities to undertake works of mercy during Lent. These were brought together as part of the principal liturgy and then displayed in the chapel throughout Lent.
- Students are also fully involved in the preparation of Mass, selecting or writing prayers, hymns and music as appropriate and undertaking the various ministries, including eucharistic minister if they have been confirmed in the Catholic Church and inducted into the ministry. Mass during each tutor group's Year 7 retreat is the first of the many opportunities to become directly involved in the celebration of Mass. A recently formed liturgy music group facilitated by the head of music and involving students from a number of year groups is strengthening the consideration given to music and singing in celebrations and beginning to lead music in liturgical settings.
- Sixth form students welcome the opportunity provided by 'Salt 'n Light' lunchtime gathering in The Well to engage and dialogue on matters of faith and belief
- Students' spiritual and moral development is strongly supported by the school's prayer life, shared by all regardless of faith or belief, which reinforces the strong sense of community, equality and respect for the other which is a feature of the college. This is manifested in the high standards of personal behaviour around the school and students' commitment to those in any form of need, near or far, exemplified by the substantial annual support for Julian House, a homeless charity based in Bath, and CAFOD's work worldwide. Another example is the book of refugees' reflections which was published nationally.

b) The quality of the prayer life provided by the school

- Prayer and worship are at the heart of the life of the school community. The liturgical cycle and school life set the annual pattern and themes of religious celebrations which are echoed in the weekly themes which are celebrated daily in tutor groups and weekly in Year gatherings. Prayer is regularly celebrated before lunch and at the end of the day as well as at morning registration.

- School Mass is celebrated at the beginning of the year to mark the feast of St Gregory, at Easter and at year end. This year Mass was also celebrated to mark the centenary of the Armistice. Mass is also celebrated when Holy Days of Obligation fall in school time and is an integral part of the Year 7 retreat programme. There are also whole school liturgies in Advent and Lent. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is available to students and staff during an Advent liturgy and during Lent in class reconciliation services and the chaplaincy.
- Established Catholic traditions such as the rosary in October and remembrance in November are celebrated with regular recitation of the rosary, themed prayer and liturgies taking place in the chapel. During Lent the Chapel is transformed into a space filled with interactive prayer stations each designed to engage students and staff in a variety of ways. Over a two-week period during RE lessons classes attend a service in the Chapel led by the lay chaplain and have the opportunity for individual confession. Over the course of the year students will experience a broad spectrum of prayer traditions, musical styles, media stimulus and engagement.
- The lay chaplain opens the chaplaincy at break and lunchtime with a varied programme of activities which are well attended. Morning break is a time of prayer, with a different style each day: shared prayer, Rosary, Lectio Divina, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, creative prayer. Each lunchtime there is a varied programme of faith engagement, ranging from meditation to creative artwork and to planning and preparing fundraising. The Well is an important focus for prayer, reflection and support in the New Sixth building.
- The theme for each week is publicised by the chaplain well in advance with accompanying resources and relevant material for personal spiritual development and to facilitate staff engagement with the theme so that they may seek to make it as appropriate as possible for the tutor or year group. The resources include prayers, scripture and reflections that are adaptable for use in a range of contexts throughout the week. Students lead tutor group worship weekly in all tutor groups.
- The college is fully involved in all the youth ministry opportunities offered by the diocese, effectively promoting the CAFOD Young Volunteers and Young Leaders courses, the diocesan youth day and the national Flame gathering. It is looking forward to fully supporting the diocesan Year of Prayer which will include a Stations of the Cross project across the school.

c) How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the prayer life of the school.

- The centrality of prayer and collective worship at the college is reflected in the priorities of the Governing Body and its Christian Vision Committee and are shared fully by the headteacher and senior leadership team. 'Worshipping Together – A Policy for Collective Worship', available on the college website, is a clear and comprehensive statement of how the Governing Body views the nature and practice of prayer and worship.
- The Governing Body is kept well informed through the headteacher's report to governors which includes contributions from the lay chaplain and head of religious Education and from the work of the Christian Vision Committee whose chair is the link governor. The latter regularly visits the school as well as attending many of its liturgies, as do many governors.
- Members of the senior leadership team are confident and experienced in leading collective worship that engages young people in contemporary, reflective and thoughtful ways. This was reflected in collective worship with Year 10 led by the deputy headteacher which explored the parable of the talents in an engaging contemporary manner, linked to the pupils' creed, before returning to the significance of Jesus' teaching through the parable.

-
- The priority given to prayer and worship by the college is demonstrated by the attention given to supporting all teaching staff in leading and facilitating prayer and worship, some of whom may be unfamiliar with the role. New staff told inspectors that they greatly valued the day provided by the school chaplain and continued to value the personal support of the chaplain and senior leaders. The lay chaplain is recognised by all as a significant knowledgeable animator of prayer and worship throughout the college.
 - Priority is also demonstrated by the theme for the week and supporting items always being the lead item on the video screens around the school. The themes reflect the Church's year and Bishop Declan's 'A Future full of Hope'.
 - The scope of provision and level of engagement by students has increased in the last few years and the headteacher and lay chaplain have clear and realistic plans for further development. These are informed by systematic monitoring and evaluation after major celebrations together with an action plan developed by the Catholic Camino partnership of schools to increase the quality of prayer and worship.
 - Following each whole school Mass, the lay chaplain reviews music and hymns with the head of music before meeting with the deputy headteacher and subsequently headteacher. The focus is on the extent of pupil participation in worship and includes extending the repertoire of hymns and Mass settings and exploring the range of ministries that students can undertake. The lay chaplain also seeks the views of the chaplaincy team members. Pastoral leaders monitor the provision of tutor group collective worship and evaluate it at regular pastoral team meetings which include the lay chaplain. Student voice and parent voice surveys also include contributions on prayer and worship.

Summary of Parental Questionnaires

There were 97 parental questionnaires received, 29 by the commencement of the Inspection and 68 submitted during the Year 9 parents' evening on the first evening of the Inspection. The overwhelming majority were extremely positive about the school. Some typical responses in relation to why they chose Saint Gregory's for their child/children included:

'The children are happy!'

'Every child is valued and encouraged to grow spiritually'

'Positive ethos with strong Catholic values'

'Exceptional dedicated and caring staff'

'The spiritual welfare and viewing the children as individuals'

'Good Christian ethos, caring environment'

'An outstanding education allowing them to grow as individuals'

'Superb ethos and the fact that students and staff here seem genuinely happy and passionate about school'

'The chaplain's weekly thoughts on the newsletter are inspiring'

'Puts needs of children at centre within a caring spiritual'