

INSPECTION REPORT

St Cecilia’s RC High School, Chapel Hill, Longridge, Preston PR3 2XA

Inspection date 16th March 2017
 Reporting Inspectors Mr Kevin Hogan
 Mr Martin Reynolds

Inspection carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School Roman Catholic VA High School
 URN 119800
 Age range of pupils 11 -16
 Number on roll 313
 Appropriate authority Governing Body
 Chair of Governors Michael Flynn
 Headteacher Ivan Catlow
 Religious Education Co-ordinator Rachael Hall
 Date of previous inspection 2012

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades 1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3=Requires Improvement 4 = Inadequate
Overall effectiveness of the school	1	
The quality of Catholic Leadership	1	
The quality of the Word	1	
The quality of Welcome	1	
The quality of Welfare	1	
The quality of Worship	2	
The quality of Witness	1	
The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements		

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

St Cecilia's is an 11-16 voluntary aided Catholic school with 313 pupils on roll. The school serves a large rural area of East Lancashire and parts of North Preston. Most pupils join the school from five named feeder primary schools. Most pupils are white/British. The proportion of pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding [12%] is below the national average. The number of pupils with a statement of educational needs or educational health care plan is 5. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 77%. At its last section 5 Ofsted report [2016] the school was judged to be 'good' in all areas.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St Cecilia's is an outstanding Catholic school. Over recent years it has achieved significant improvements in all areas of provision. The school is well served by the headteacher, senior leadership team and governors, who provide a clear vision for sustained improvement. GCSE outcomes in almost all areas are above the national average and the school is well set to continue its impressive progress. The school has a clear understanding of the part it plays in the broader mission of the Church and is committed to developing the spiritual and prayer life of the pupils and staff as well as achieving excellent academic outcomes. St Cecilia's extends a sincere welcome to all visitors recognising that all are created in the image of God. Pupils and staff have a very strong sense of community identity and frequent reference was made to the school as a 'family'. Pupils at St Cecilia's enjoy school and feel safe, valued and loved. The school's strong and confident sense of identity as a Catholic institution serves to inspire and sustain its commitment to work with those in need and reach out to those on the margins of society. It is evident that pupils, staff and governors are proud of their school and committed to continued improvement in all areas of provision.

THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- The effective Catholic leadership provided by the headteacher, senior leadership team and the governors
- Quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 4 RE leading to outstanding outcomes at GCSE
- The quality of relationships across the school which reflect a profound commitment to the dignity and well-being of every individual within the community
- The work carried out by the school in witnessing to the message of the Gospel through its support for those in need locally, nationally and internationally.

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

Catholic leadership of the school at all levels is outstanding. Over recent years the school has secured significant improvements in all areas of provision. The governing body has an accurate understanding of the school's current strengths and what is required in order to ensure continued improvement. A number of recent appointments to the governing body have provided additional skills and expertise. Governors demonstrate a clear understanding of the school's place within the mission of the Church and its role within the local Catholic and wider community. The headteacher, together with the leadership team, provides the school with a clear and unambiguous vision for the school as a Catholic institution. Pupils are provided with numerous opportunities to contribute to the leadership of the school. The school council, ethos team, Caritas and Koinonia groups are just a few examples of the way in which pupils make a significant contribution to leadership within the school. Pupils recognise that their views and ideas were heard and valued by the headteacher and senior leaders and pointed to a number of examples of how their suggestions had been acted upon. The school has developed a rigorous and comprehensive framework for self-evaluation and this supports rapid improvements in outcomes across the school. The school makes good provision for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs. Leaders at all levels provide an authentic witness to the school mission statement encouraging and enabling all members of the school community to 'discover, develop and rejoice'.

THE QUALITY OF WORD IS OUTSTANDING

The school has recently reviewed and re-written its mission statement ensuring it is contemporary and relevant. The new statement provides a clear message for all members of the school community about what the school is and what it sets out to achieve. The mission statement provides the basis for the recently composed school hymn. Over recent years St Cecilia's has achieved significant improvements in outcomes. Learning is well planned and led by teachers who have an accurate understanding of the needs of the individual pupils. Teachers demonstrate high expectations with regard to all aspects of the learning process. High levels of challenge were seen in lessons observed across the curriculum. Assessment procedures, marking policies, verbal and written feedback are employed consistently to support learning and enable pupils to make progress. Outcomes in RE are amongst the best in the school and above the national average with 74% achieving A*-C in 2016, 30% of pupils achieving A*/A. The religious education department is seen as a beacon of excellence within the school. Strong and effective leadership has brought about rapid improvements in outcomes in RE. Schemes of work, assessment, monitoring and quality assurance procedures across both Key Stages, demonstrate a thorough and relentless commitment to departmental improvement. The department is appropriately resourced and the school allocates 10% of curriculum time to RE which meets the Religious Education Curriculum Directory requirement. Impressive levels of religious literacy were evident across the age range. Pupils were comfortable in discussing religious concepts, demonstrating sophisticated skills and mature insights. Pupils enjoy RE and are keen to engage in learning. It was evident that pupils are challenged to address 'big questions' in many areas of the curriculum. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural [SMSC] education is well developed and embedded across the school. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to explicitly link SMSC topics with Church teaching and Christian values. The school makes every effort to deepen knowledge and understanding of Sacred Scripture by ensuring that the Word of God is integral to worship and liturgy.

THE QUALITY OF WELCOME IS OUTSTANDING

The school has a strong and vibrant sense of community which underpins the way in which it welcomes visitors and new members. The school has well established, effective links with partner primary schools. Pupils from Years 5 and 6 visit St Cecilia's and take part in various activities aimed at ensuring smooth transition to high school. Staff from St Cecilia's also visit local primary schools providing support in a number of subjects. Pupils joining the school in Year 7 are provided with a 'buddy' who helps them to adjust to the new demands and expectations. Pupils who join the school 'in-year' are also provided with a 'buddy' to help them settle in to life at St Cecilia's. A pupil who joined the school in Year 8 told inspectors how she really valued the welcome she had received and that she soon felt part of what she described as 'the St Cecilia's family'. This strong sense of belonging was characteristic of all the pupils interviewed by inspectors during their visit to the school. The *Koinonia* group was established with the explicit aim of ensuring all visitors to the school experience a warm welcome. This group, made up of Key Stage 3 pupils, has put together a welcome pack for visitors which contains information about the school. Members of staff who join the school benefit from a programme of induction which explains the culture, ethos and mission of St Cecilia's as a Catholic school. Procedures for welcoming visitors to the school are clear and well understood by all staff. All safeguarding protocols are in place. Parent/carer attendance at school events such as concerts and sporting fixtures is very high. Parents/carers are also invited to liturgical events such as the Welcome Mass, Feast Day Mass and Advent service. Large numbers of parents/carers attending such events demonstrates the strong and effective links between home and school. It is evident that pupils, parents and staff are very proud of their school and the part it plays in the local Catholic community.

THE QUALITY OF WELFARE IS OUTSTANDING

The mission statement makes clear the school's commitment to caring for and nurturing each individual member of the community. It states that 'It is our responsibility to make sure we support the growth of our own talents and gifts, along with those of each other'. Relationships between all members of the school community were observed to be extremely positive, reflecting the belief that each person makes a real and valuable contribution to building up a community based on gospel values. In lessons pupils listened carefully and sensitively to the views of others, demonstrating not only respect but also appreciation for their contribution. The belief in the value of each individual informs school policies and practice. In particular it informs the way in which those individuals with greatest need are cared for and supported. St Cecilia's has a

comprehensive programme of support ensuring all pupils feel safe and valued. In discussions with pupils the phrase 'St Cecilia's is like a family' was used time and again, reflecting a belief that they are valued, listened to and loved. The school recognises that at times pupils may make mistakes. The mission statement reflects this view, 'When things go wrong, Christ's love will help us support each other to start again'. This restorative approach is indicative of the school's culture of respect, care and forgiveness. St. Cecilia's provides a comprehensive sex and relationships education [SRE] programme. The SRE policy is guided by and reflects the teaching of the Church and prepares pupils to meet many of the complex moral challenges posed by contemporary society. Members of the school council meet regularly with the headteacher to provide feedback and discuss pupil concerns. Pupils have also been involved in providing input to staff training on their experience of teaching and learning and on their views on collective worship. Working within the constraints of a challenging financial situation the school makes excellent use of its resources and ensures that spending on areas linked to mission and ethos are prioritised.

THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS GOOD

The quality of prayer and worship at St Cecilia's is good and improving. The school benefits from excellent support provided by local parish clergy who regularly visit the school. Mass is celebrated on a regular basis and local parishioners are invited to join pupils and staff in celebrating the Eucharist. Inspectors met with the lay chaplain and pupil GIFT team, who demonstrated great enthusiasm and commitment to developing opportunities for prayer across the school. In addition to class prayers and assemblies, regular opportunities are provided throughout the week for pupils to meet and pray together on a more informal basis. The lay chaplain hosts 'Breakfast with God', an opportunity for pupils to come together and share food and prayer. Staff and pupils are confident in leading prayer and sharing aspects of their own spiritual journey. Support and guidance for staff in leading prayer is provided by a handbook which sets out the school's expectations. Training for staff in leading prayer is provided on a regular basis through the well-established programme of professional development. In addition to their work in school the pupil GIFT team also assist delivery of the Sacramental programme at St Wilfrid's Parish. The group also attended a local 'Women's Day of Prayer' event in Longridge and are planning to host this event in 2018. The school makes every effort to review and improve the quality of prayer and worship. A group of pupils form the 'Ethos Team' review provision in this area, providing reports to the headteacher that identify potential improvements. The reports are thorough and detailed, demonstrating a commitment by the school to ongoing improvement. It is evident that St Cecilia's strives to ensure that all members of the school community benefit from a rich experience of prayer and worship that is rooted in the Sacramental life of the Church and is appropriate to the needs of the individual providing support for their ongoing spiritual development.

THE QUALITY OF WITNESS IS OUTSTANDING

Pupils and staff know and understand the key messages of the mission statement and are enthusiastic about putting this into action. Large numbers of pupils are involved in various activities linked to promoting Christian values not only in school but also in the local, national and international community. Through the 'Ethos Group' pupils are actively engaged in evaluating the Catholic life of the school and are an integral part of planning future activities. The enthusiastic and energetic GIFT team are proactive in seeking new ways and opportunities to develop their own faith and encourage others to do the same. A number of pupils recently attended the 'Flame' event in London and spoke with great passion about how the experience had inspired them and enabled them to gain a greater insight into their faith. A group of pupils took part in the HCPT pilgrimage to Lourdes. On both occasions, on their return to school, pupils led assemblies and were able to share with their peers their experience. The school demonstrates a real and active concern for those in need in other parts of the world. It has an established link with a parish in northern Kenya and pupils have raised funds to provide support. The school has recently established a link with a parish in Puento Coto, El Salvador, with pupils exchanging letters and messages. The school is also developing links with the Medaille Trust and during Advent raised over £300 to support the work of this group in its fight to end human trafficking. The school is clear that the enormous amount of charitable work that takes place is founded on and sustained by gospel values and the teaching of the Church. It clearly demonstrates its commitment to play an active part in witnessing to the message of the Gospel and the teaching of the Church and it does so in a very effective manner at local, national and international level.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Ensure all opportunities are taken within spiritual, social and cultural education to explicitly link learning to gospel values and church teaching
- Maintain and further improve outstanding outcomes in GCSE Religious Studies
- Continue to develop the involvement of pupils in planning and leading worship activities in school

Summary report for parents

On the 16th March 2017 the school was inspected in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The full report has been made available to the school and can also be accessed via both the school website and the Education section on the website of the Diocese of Salford.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St Cecilia's is an outstanding Catholic school. Over recent years it has achieved significant improvements in all areas of provision. The school is well served by the headteacher, senior leadership team and governors, who provide a clear vision for sustained improvement. GCSE outcomes in almost all areas are above the national average and the school is well set to continue its impressive progress. The school has a clear understanding of the part it plays in the broader mission of the Church and is committed to developing the spiritual and prayer life of the pupils and staff as well as achieving excellent academic outcomes. St Cecilia's extends a sincere welcome to all visitors recognising that all are created in the image of God. Pupils and staff have a very strong sense of community identity and frequent reference was made to the school as a 'family'. Pupils at St Cecilia's enjoy school and feel safe, valued and loved. The school's strong and confident sense of identity as a Catholic institution serves to inspire and sustain its commitment to work with those in need and reach out to those on the margins of society. It is evident that pupils, staff and governors are proud of their school and committed to continued improvement in all areas of provision.

THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- The effective Catholic leadership provided by the headteacher, senior leadership team and the governors
- The quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 4 RE leading to outstanding outcomes at GCSE
- The quality of relationships across the school which reflect a profound commitment to the dignity and well-being of every individual within the community
- The work carried out by the school in witnessing to the message of the Gospel through its support for those in need locally, nationally and internationally.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Ensure all opportunities are taken within spiritual, social and cultural education to explicitly link learning to gospel values and church teaching
- Maintain and further improve outstanding outcomes in GCSE Religious Studies
- Continue to develop the involvement of pupils in planning and leading worship activities in school

24th March 2017

Dear Pupils,

Thank you so much for the very warm welcome you gave us when we came to visit your school. We were very impressed with how proud you were of St Cecilia's and with all that is being achieved at the school. You all play a major part in helping to make St Cecilia's an outstanding Catholic school. We came away with a feeling that every member of the school community feels part of the 'St Cecilia's family' and does everything they can to contribute to the mission of the school.

Your work is of a very high standard and we could see that you take your learning very seriously and are proud of your achievements. You have outstanding RE teachers who are clearly helping you to feel confident in your learning and in your ability to discuss complex religious and moral issues. We were particularly impressed by the way in which you were able to reflect on serious matters of belief and values and discuss them in an open, honest and mature manner.

Mr Catlow, the leadership team and the governors are determined to continue to improve all areas of provision and are committed to ensuring that the Catholic education you receive at St Cecilia's is second to none and continues to be outstanding.

We were particularly impressed with your commitment to helping those who are in need, not just in the local area but in other parts of the world as well. Such wonderful work demonstrates a real commitment to gospel values and does you, your parents and your school great credit.

We wish you well for the future and are confident that in your time at St Cecilia's and beyond you will continue to 'discover, develop and rejoice'.

God bless you all

Kevin Hogan
Martin Reynolds
[Section 48 Inspectors]