

St John Plessington Catholic College

URN: 139031

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Shrewsbury

10–11 December 2025

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

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 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

Fully

2

Compliance statement

- The school is compliant in relation to the general norms for religious education as laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- The school is compliant in relation to any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- The school has responded fully to the previous areas for improvement.

What the school does well

- The school lives out its mission on a daily basis and is a reflective community where students want to be engaged
- Collaborative planning, resourcing, and team work in RE are a strength
- Students are increasingly responding well to and engaging with the prayer life of the school

What the school needs to improve

- Outcomes in religious education public examinations
- Staff and pupil formation to enable consistent delivery of prayer in form time.

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

2

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

2

2

The motto 'Always faithful to Christ' is central to the mission of St John Plessington Catholic College community. There are many signs in school which act as a visible witness to this mission. These include the beautiful Chapel which is seen as the heart of the community. There are key quotations displayed around the buildings both from Scripture and influential people of the Church which also serve as reminder of the Catholic nature of the school. Many students can articulate what it means to be part of a Catholic community, and what it means to serve others through charity and faith in action. Most students value being at St. John Plessington Catholic College and know in turn that they are valued. Behaviour sanctions are applied in the spirit of faith and with dignity and respect. Overall, this is reflected in a calm and orderly school. The school mission aims to build an inclusive Catholic community founded on gospel values. This is an increasingly diverse community and students from other faiths feel they are welcome. There is a range of groups that students can engage with including Youth SVP (St Vincent de Paul), Faith in action, Icon and Inspiration club and the Todos diversity club all of which make a contribution to the school and wider community. There is regular and generous support to local and national charities through various fundraising initiatives. Some students are also members of the diocesan Mini DASH (Diocesan and secondary heads) group. Parents value the work of the staff in support of their children. Community, care, and faith make this a hope filled place to be. As one student noted, this is a community where 'we dare to speak of gospel values.'

There is extensive provision to support the Catholic life of school, and it is woven through the everyday fabric of school life. The school has reviewed its mission and values recently to bear greater witness to its core purpose. The value of compassion added is a signal of the school's sincere approach. This review has encompassed all policies and procedures. Staff are seen to

live out the values in their day to day encounters with young people and each other. This comes from the top. The head and the leadership team set the example for all. Staff feel valued and those new to school note that the leadership team care and take notice, this comes from a profoundly held belief by leaders in the mission and core Catholicity of the school. One colleague noted, 'I came here and I always wanted to come back'. An example of inclusivity is the newly formed Year 7 hub to meet the needs of more vulnerable students.

'Always faithful to Christ' is at the heart of the governing body's work. From all conversations it is clear that the commitment of leaders and governors is centred on the young people they serve and their flourishing. They are honoured to serve this community. They increasingly critically evaluate the work of school leaders through the lens of the mission statement. Planning of professional development and training means that staff are now growing in confidence in terms of their understanding of mission. The governors and leaders of the school are determined to make it the best educational establishment for the students as possible. They acknowledge the work that the headteacher is carrying out to get the school to this stage and they value it. His leadership is characterised through humility and selflessness.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

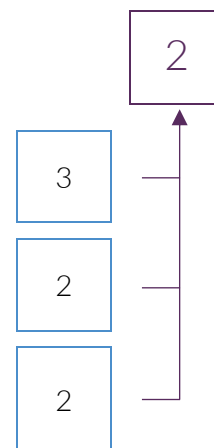
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Many students across the key stages say they enjoy religious education. They recognise too the recent positive changes that have taken place in their religious education lessons. They appreciate their teachers and value their hard work and commitment. Parents know their children enjoy their learning and say they talk about their religious education lessons at home. In most lessons behaviour is good with strong routines supporting this. There is plenty of student encouragement by teachers and in some instances, teaching is such that students are inspired to give of their best. Independence and concentration are positive features in some classrooms; where used effectively, they enhance learning and mean that these students can take greater ownership of their own work. However, this is not yet consistent across lessons. Students do not yet have a clear understanding of their academic targets to be able to see where they need to improve and this impacts outcomes and the potential to perform at a sufficiently high level. Greater consistency is needed; outcomes are not yet satisfactory. At GCSE level in particular outcomes fall below the results in other core subjects in the school. Post 16 the general religious education lessons follow the draft *Religious Education Directory* where students seem fully engaged in thoughtful and reflective discussions. One student noted 'this is a community where we dare to speak of gospel values.' A Level students are well taught and enjoy their learning. Numbers planning to study the subject at A level are increasing.

The department aims to meet the needs of all learners. Through the newly formed programme of class sets the department aims to ensure that all are challenged at an appropriate level according to ability and need. This includes the most vulnerable who have routine access to the religious education curriculum. The quality of teaching and learning is such that there is not yet consistency across the department. In the best lessons, reflection time is planned to allow learners to deepen and develop their knowledge – 'don't talk about it now, just let it land'.

Additional classroom support for those with specific needs is well targeted and enables those students to progress in their understanding. Again, in the best lessons, teachers are dynamic and have a confidence in their subject knowledge which is applied well in their planning and delivery. There is clear evidence of planning and coherence across the department. Appropriate professional development is in place and planned to ensure that the best quality teaching is possible. The department follows school wide teaching and learning patterns but are on a journey regarding assessment. They recognise that they need to embed good practice consistently across the department. They are committed to improving outcomes and after a period of staffing instability are confident this will happen. Assessment changes are beginning to make an impact and fall in line with the new whole school model. The department is following the *Religious Education Directory*.

The head of department is a faithful leader with an enormous passion for the subject, a passion which is infectious. Her commitment and energy are reflected in the positive partnership within the department. This shows in her impact on the newly formed team who are now making a difference to the student learning experience. Leaders and governors recognise that outcomes for examination classes are not good enough and have a strategic plan for improvement for the subject and support the head of department in her work. This plan is monitored and routinely assessed. Appropriate and robust accountability processes are now in place.

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

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

1

Leadership

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

2

2

The school day at St John Plessington is wrapped in prayer from morning registration to the Examen reflection at its close. Most students engage in the wide range of activities designed for their participation through leadership, personal reflection, and stillness. As a result, most respond well to prayer and liturgy. They appreciate the continued development of the celebration of the word opportunities and especially communal form prayer which always ends with a challenging action for the week. They can speak of the importance of prayer in all its forms plus its essential place in upholding the school's Catholic life and mission. Several students speak with pride about being involved in planning the weekly Mass which is attracting larger numbers. They appreciate the lay chaplain's development of an assisting chaplaincy team. One says, 'If we want to help, we just volunteer whether or not we already have the skills.' Careful formation of this team will be needed for students to undertake particular ministries. Students understand the seasons of the liturgical year and how these apply to their everyday lives. They are beginning to articulate with confidence how prayer is linked to their living of Catholic social teaching within the school and wider community through faith in action.

The liturgical year is at the heart of the school's rich provision for prayer and liturgy. This is supported by an informative chaplaincy calendar and a thoughtfully planned and structured plan of provision. Well-chosen passages from scripture are a strength of the school's provision, which students and staff use with confidence. For example, the Advent service for the sixth form typified the developing quality of what is offered through its liturgy, readings, music and singing, accompanied by two excellent student reflections. Senior leaders, form teachers, and heads of year are included in planning and delivery of prayer and liturgy, accompanied by ongoing training for students. Daily use is made of the beautiful chapel which is regarded as 'the heart of the school'. Students prepare the classroom prayer corners and peace garden. The local priest,

together with the lay chaplain has provided a continually increasing link between home, school and parish including weekly Mass. This year saw a significantly increased number of students both attending Mass and receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation. The work of the lay chaplain is beginning to bear fruit in the prayer life of the college, and he is appreciated by the whole community for the rich liturgical opportunities he has put in place and the 'Gospel for Life' programme. A recent pilgrimage to visit the Priestly vestments of St John Plessington at St Winefride's in Neston is a particular highlight of the provision for the prayer life of the school.

The policy for prayer and liturgy has recently been updated and there is generous resources budgeting. Leaders and governors have clear knowledge and understanding of the different levels of skills required to cater for all students. This is due to their own faith practices and commitment to personal formation. In turn, they are committed to providing regular formation for all staff and where appropriate for students, with a particular emphasis on enriching their opportunities for engagement, participation and undertaking a particular ministry. This commitment is beginning to make an impact. They invite formal feedback from staff and students on a regular basis to inform ongoing developments. They ensure retreat experiences for members of the sixth form and annual retreats for members of Year 7. There is a committed drive to establishing the *Prayer and Liturgy Directory* within the college. Governors' investment in lay chaplaincy is positively impacting the ongoing development of the broader Catholic life and mission for St. John Plessington Catholic College.

Information about the school

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| Full name of school | St John Plessington Catholic College |
| School unique reference number (URN) | 139031 |
| School DfE Number (LAESTAB) | 3444605 |
| Full postal address of the school | Old Chester Road, Bebington, Wirral, Merseyside, CH63 7LF |
| School phone number | 01516455049 |
| Executive headteacher | N/A |
| Headteacher | Peadar McLoughlin |
| Chair of governors | Clare McNicholas |
| School Website | http://www.stjohnplessington.com |
| Trusteeship | Diocesan |
| Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable) | Holy Family Catholic Multi Academy Trust |
| 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 | 11 July 2019 |
| Previous denominational inspection grade | 2 |

The inspection team

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|----------------------|------|
| Jane Beaver | Lead |
| Katherine Packham | Team |
| Deacon Paul Mannings | Team |
| Stuart Holland | 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 |