



# Archdiocese of Birmingham

## Section 48 Inspection Report

### **BLESSED EDWARD OLDCORNE CATHOLIC COLLEGE**

Timberdine Avenue, Worcester, WR5 2XD

Inspection dates:

20-21 October 2021

Lead Inspector:

Chris Martin

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#### **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS:**

**Outstanding**

Catholic Life:

Outstanding

Religious Education:

Outstanding

Collective Worship:

Outstanding

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*Overall effectiveness at previous inspection:*

*Outstanding*

#### **SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS**

This is an Outstanding Catholic school because:

- The Catholic Life of the school is outstanding. It is interwoven into every aspect of school life and the curriculum. The impact on pupils by the time they leave the school is profound; pupils develop into people of good character for the greater glory of God.
- Religious Education is outstanding. As well as being highly skilled subject experts, teachers are authentic witnesses to a life of faith and inspire pupils in their learning.
- Collective Worship at the school is outstanding. Provision is well planned and varied. It engages pupils and inspires them to take the messages into their daily life and interactions with others.
- During the pandemic, the school made a determined effort to maintain its outreach and charity work as far as possible. As a result, it was a beacon of light and hope in the local community.
- Leaders have dedicated considerable time to reviewing the mission of the school and planning ahead at a strategic level. As a result, there is a clear vision for the future and detailed plans to sustain improvement.

**FULL REPORT****What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- To further develop the opportunities for pupils to be more involved in the planning, initiation, and delivery of all aspects of Collective Worship.
  - Pupils need to be routinely involved in planning, researching, and delivering their own prayers in both form time and assemblies.
- To ensure the Catholic curriculum becomes deeply embedded across the school.
  - All subject areas should work towards the English department model where the centrality of faith enriches learning opportunities and pupils gain a greater understanding of God's world.
- To closely monitor the delivery and impact of the new Religious Education curriculum to ensure the school realises its aspiration to improve attainment and progress for all pupils.

**THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>The quality of the Catholic Life of the school</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	Outstanding
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school	Outstanding
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school	Outstanding

**CL1 The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school**

- Catholic Life is judged by the school to be outstanding, and this is accurate.
- Blessed Edward Oldcorne Catholic College is a place firmly rooted in faith. There is a tangible sense of community in the school, evidenced in the genuine warmth between staff and pupils. Those new to the school immediately recognise this and comment that there is something special about it.
- The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school articulated in its core purpose – that is, to develop people of good character and for the greater glory of God.
- Renewing the school's mission statement has had a hugely positive impact on the school community; teachers constantly talk about the bespoke virtues and the pupils aspire to make them a lived reality in the school community and in their own lives.
- Pupils hold their teachers in a very high regard (numerous pupils, without hesitation, said the best thing about the school was the teachers).
- The feeling of mutual respect and trust between staff and pupils has been enhanced by the adoption of restorative justice practices across the school. Staff have been trained on this approach. Pupils enjoy 'circle time' and listening to the views of others when discussing moral and ethical issues in

their form groups. Staff have a framework to encourage pupils to put themselves in the place of others, thinking about the impact of their behaviour on their neighbour and to practise forgiveness. Persistent absence and exclusion rates have fallen significantly since the programme has been adopted.

- The quality and consistency of pastoral care is a major strength of the school.
- Parents admire the way that the school dealt with challenges during the pandemic (regular contact with home was maintained - including sending birthday cards home to pupils - despite being physically apart). Parents would not want their children to be educated anywhere else.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is outstanding. Consequently, they listen, give thanks, and forgive.
- The school makes the preferential option for the poor a lived reality. A heart for the most vulnerable and marginalised comes naturally to staff, and leaders are relentless in their care and support for anyone disadvantaged. This is illustrated in the school's 'sanctuary' provision, where dedicated leadership and a team of well-trained staff ensure that looked after children and those with social and emotional needs are loved and nurtured back into the classroom as soon as possible.
- Compassion is at the heart of all leaders' practice. Everything possible is done to prevent any form of exclusion from school including positive and proactive mentoring of students potentially at risk. The Saint John Bosco Room, rather than being punitive, is a quiet reflective space filled with prayers and moral guidance from scripture and Catholic social teaching.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They know safeguarding arrangements are in place and are confident in them. Fundamentally, pupils are happy because they know they are valued and cared for by staff as children of God.
- The school is meeting the requirements of relationships, sex, and health education (RSHE) within the context of the Catholic Church. Discrete days – which students actively participate in and really enjoy - compliment the taught curriculum very well. Pupils experience specific and varied presentations on all aspects of relationships. As a result, pupils reflect on how God is calling them to live and develop an understanding of love within the Christian context.
- Because of the constant focus on the school virtues, pupils have a profound understanding of vocation as a response to God's call to serve.

## **CL2 The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school**

- The school's commitment to charity work is all-encompassing. All pupils participate and raise vast sums of money annually. Pupils engage with different charities throughout the liturgical year. As a result, pupils are unanimous that the school helps them to be a better person; they want to express their gratitude, be kind and give to others who are less fortunate than themselves.
- Beyond fundraising, the school strives to be a 'beacon of light' in the local area. Outreach is extensive. In addition to regular support for Operation Christmas Child, visiting Fatima House and supporting the Worcester Foodbank, the school responds to the 'Home for Good' Christmas Appeal. As a result, local people in need were given hope; unaccompanied asylum-seeking children were given quilts and many local teenagers were provided with Christmas stockings.

- Pupils of other faiths feel included and part of the school community. They feel comfortable joining in practice of faith but are also confident sharing their own religious and cultural identity and beliefs because of the respect shown by all members of the community. Muslim and Sikh students are an integral element of the school chaplaincy team and readily use the school chapel.
- The Catholic Life of the school is supported by a rich and varied curriculum, though some departments contribute to the Catholic Life of the school through their curriculum more prominently than others.
- The school aims for pupils to see themselves as citizens of the world and has recently been recognised as a Holocaust Beacon School. Referencing Pope Francis's recent encyclical, 'Fratelli Tutti', a group of Key Stage 4 pupils eloquently described the interconnectedness of all peoples. Pupils were incredibly proud to say they had paid for a roof for a medical centre in Zimbabwe even though they would never see the outcome. All pupils appreciate their duty to work against all forms of discrimination and to strive to make the world a just place for all.
- The wider curriculum reflects a commitment to Catholic social teaching. Every subject has adopted a school virtue and explicitly links learning to it. Beyond that, the English Department have selected texts from staple literature genres based on their ability to exemplify the virtues of the school. Schemes of work show how analyses of literary characters are used in lessons to develop a heightened sense of moral awareness; Jane Eyre and Great Expectations are opportunities to reflect on misinterpretations of our faith as well the corporal works of mercy. As a result, pupils in the school are religiously literate, eloquent and develop morally and spiritually throughout their time in school.
- The physical environment reflects the Catholic mission of the school through concrete and effective signs. Faith permeates every aspect of the school building in the form of statues, posters, crucifixes, and artwork. The abundance of religious imagery on display in corridors extends into classrooms where there are prayer boards and shelves in every tutor group room, with rotating seasonal and liturgical displays, acting as focal points and stimulus for daily prayer.
- The school has a strong tradition of enabling large numbers of pupils to go on retreat at diocesan centres. This has had a long-term impact in developing spirituality and strengthening the community.
- The school benefits from an experienced priest chaplain. He is incredibly committed to the school and is generous with his time, being in school every week.
- There are established opportunities for the sacraments and acts of worship in school (such as reconciliation and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament). Pupils respect the Catholic tradition and express real pride that they attend a Catholic school.
- The school responded admirably to the pandemic by keeping Catholic Life at the core of its provision. Liaising with feeder primary schools, leaders identified a need to provide sacramental preparation for children who had missed out on the opportunity during periods of lockdown. Subsequently, nineteen pupils from a local parish received the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- The school works as closely as possible with its main feeder primaries. This leads to a smooth transition, valued by parents, which enables pupils to make a secure start to their secondary education.

**CL3 How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the School**

- All leaders are fully committed to the mission of the school and are not complacent in their approach to further its development.
- Governors give Catholic Life the highest priority, both in terms of finance and time commitment.
- Governors are clear on their vision for the school and are highly competent in securing it.
- Governors are aware that the archbishop requires them to join a Multi Academy Company by September 2022. They are working towards it.
- Monitoring, evaluating, and action planning for Catholic Life is coherent in the school. The identified drivers for all aspects of school improvement – such as 'Think SEND', 'know your students' and 'be a person of good character' - are evident in all conversations with staff and the systems embedded in the school.
- Monitoring, analysing and evaluation of the Catholic Life of the school is clearly effective. As with all features of the school, it is thorough, well-structured, consistent and enables further improvement planning. For example, leaders have identified the need to appoint a lay chaplain to further enhance the school's provision of chaplaincy, with plans in place to realise their ambition.
- Leaders have dedicated a significant amount of time to continued professional development around Catholic Life. It is high quality, relevant, regular and involves all staff. The impact of which is that the leadership of Catholic Life is spread effectively across the school.
- Staff new to the school receive a thorough induction to enable them to meet the school's expectations. The school's virtues provide a common framework and language for new teachers. The person in charge of Catholic Life (PICCL) is very approachable, exceptionally helpful and is ably supported by committed middle leaders. As a result, early career framework teachers are committed to the beliefs and practices of the school, willingly engage with all aspects of Catholic Life and could describe how every interaction with another pupil or staff member was an opportunity to encounter God.
- Records indicate that performance management is used thoroughly. All staff have a primary objective linked to Catholic Life. As a result, staff are held to account for their contributions to school improvement.
- Leaders are attentive to the pastoral needs of members of staff. The sense of community and need to care for others is typified by the recent appointment of an associate assistant headteacher with responsibility for mental health, highlighting the school's commitment to this important area of work.
- Leaders have taken effective action towards all the recommendations outlined in the previous monitoring report.

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

<b>The quality of Religious Education</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	Good
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education	Outstanding
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education	Outstanding

**RE1 How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education**

- Teachers of Religious Education at Blessed Edward Oldcorne Catholic College are authentic witnesses to their faith. They readily share their own experiences and personal faith journeys in lessons. As a result, pupils are comfortable and confident talking about sensitive moral issues and are also comfortable in using their knowledge to think ethically and theologically; they can readily give examples of their faith in action.
- Religious Education has a high status in the school. Pupils are universally positive about the subject and hold their teachers in high regard. A deep respect and reverence for the subject is profound in classrooms.
- Learning always starts promptly. In line with whole school policy, it is typical for 'Do Now' activities to test pupils' knowledge at the start of lessons. Consequently, they are actively engaged in lessons from the outset and concentrate on their learning exceptionally well.
- Due to excellent teaching and a strong culture of learning in the school, pupils work very hard in lessons; off-task behaviour is rare. Pupils show resilience and independence when tackling complex issues, such as the Trinity.
- Pupils are interested in the subject and ask questions in class which search for deeper meaning.
- Pupil attainment at Key Stage 4 has been in line with diocesan and national averages over the last five years. Extensive moderation of internal assessments takes place at calendared raising standard meetings and demonstrates that standards are rising.
- Most groups of pupils make progress that is comparable to the progress of other pupils. Leaders have accurately identified the need to restore the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to previous levels and have devised a three-year plan to achieve this.
- The quality of pupils' written work is good.

**RE2 The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education**

- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and are appropriately ambitious. As such, they are adept when modelling and explaining complex topics; teachers regularly explain the etymology of key terms and using appropriate examples with pupils to consolidate their knowledge. Consequently, pupils are enabled to access texts with a secure context-specific understanding.

- Teachers foster a love of the subject by signposting additional opportunities and further work to be undertaken outside the classroom, further enabling pupils' independence in mastering the subject.
- Teachers deliver material with passion, enthusiasm and often with appropriate humour. As a result, all pupils are highly engaged and exceptionally motivated to make an active contribution to group discussion.
- In almost all lessons, teachers routinely check for understanding and manipulate planning throughout lessons. Teacher scaffold exam-style questions in a non-threatening way for all pupils. Consequently, pupils' confidence in their knowledge and skills increase.
- Teachers are skilled and confident in teaching Religious Education. They adapt learning to the needs of the pupils whilst maintaining high expectations for all. Pupils with SEND are exceptionally well supported. Teaching and learning is clearly adapted to cater for their needs.
- The Religious Education curriculum is well designed and sequenced over time. Detailed assessment and tracking leads to targeted intervention for the most vulnerable groups, including the disadvantaged. Homework is used to effectively consolidate learning.
- The school's focus on 'knowing your students' is clear within the whole class feedback forms and the personalised content of the teachers' individual teaching and learning folders.
- Resources used in class are interesting, appropriate and generate dialogue. For example, a variety of images from different synagogues led to a high-level discussion about the nature, importance, and role of places of worship in Judaism.
- Teachers have high expectations of all pupils. They consistently use time effectively to maximise learning in all lessons.
- Individual success is celebrated and pupils both appreciate and enjoy the success of their peers.

### **RE3 How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for Religious Education**

- The Religious Education department is wholeheartedly supported by the leadership and management of the school.
- Governors know that Religious Education is a priority and are well informed about standards.
- Governors and leaders have ensured that the school is now fully compliant in meeting the requirements of the Bishops' Conference of England & Wales.
- Religious Education leaders monitoring of teaching and learning is thorough. There is a rigorous programme of learning walks in place. The evaluation of this monitoring has a clear impact on teaching and learning as delivery is consistent.
- The Religious Education department has its own statement on how pupils with SEND are enabled to access a challenging curriculum. Recent learning walks indicate that the department has successfully implemented appropriate teaching & learning strategies and the progress of these pupils is improving as a result.
- Pupils are routinely asked for their view on the quality of provision. The department try to respond to these views where possible to maximise enjoyment of the subject.
- The curriculum leader is an outstanding classroom practitioner. Her subject knowledge, pedagogical research, expertise and passion for the subject

inspires students and motivates other members of the department. As such, the curriculum leader is highly effective.

## COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

<b>The quality of Collective Worship</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	Outstanding
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	Outstanding
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship	Outstanding

### **CW1 How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship**

- Inspectors confirm the school's judgement that Collective Worship is outstanding.
- Respect and reverence are evident in all forms of prayer and liturgy.
- Pupils value the time they are given for reflection and their behaviour is excellent during form time and assemblies.
- The school has adopted a pupil-led 'Gather, Listen, Respond, Go Forth' approach to tutor group prayer. This starts with the lighting of a candle. Pupils visibly respond to this signal that they are in the presence of God; it helps create an atmosphere conducive to prayer and enables pupils to be ready to engage in prayer, offering heartfelt responses.
- All pupils read prayers during the academic year in their form groups, often taking intercessions from the prayer intention boxes. Greater use of opportunities for spontaneous and open prayer from the pupils could be made.
- Pupils are challenged to be a person of good character at every opportunity. In an observed assembly, the lives of saints were described against a backdrop of contemporary worship music which created a relevant aspiration for all pupils to aspire towards. As a result, a strong sense of vocation was evident – that is, doing good not for personal glory but for God.
- Pupils are consciously aware of the rhythm that imbues the liturgy of the Catholic Church. As such, they speak with confidence about the Church's liturgical year, seasons, and feasts.
- Whilst pupils routinely lead prayer in the sense of reading and undertaking other roles in assemblies, the opportunities available to them for planning their own liturgies are limited, though present.

### **CW2 The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school**

- Prayer and liturgy have a clear purpose, which is carefully selected to reflect the liturgical year of the Church.



- School Masses are really important events in the life of the school community. Considerable time and thought are given to their planning. They are seen by both staff and pupils as special, uplifting, and joyous occasions. One member of staff shared how they were evangelised through a school Mass.
- There is a range of opportunities for pupils to participate directly in Mass and lead some aspects of it. As well as altar servers and extraordinary ministers of the Eucharistic, there is a dedicated pupil choir, which is used to joyous effect. Music is an exceptionally strong feature of the school. During Masses, the liturgy choir typically sing beautifully and contribute to the prayerful atmosphere.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have high quality experiences of the Church's liturgical life.
- Staff prayers are held in the chapel once a week enabling members of the school community to gather and reflect on prayer intentions for the day ahead. Staff and pupils can attend voluntary Mass every Friday.

### **CW3 How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship**

- Leaders and managers are passionate about providing the highest quality prayer and liturgy. They want to make the good news of the gospel accessible and relevant to all.
- Without exception, every staff training day begins with a liturgy followed by further tailored input on Collective Worship. Due to this time and status given by leaders, all staff understand the liturgical year and understand the importance of prayer in school.
- The Catholic Life governor presents a comprehensive Collective Worship report at every full governing body meeting. Governors are fully aware of priorities and minutes of meetings show appropriate levels of challenge.
- The PICCL is an incredibly passionate and a faith-filled role model. His dedication is evident in his exceptionally detailed records and thorough evaluations of provision. Honest and rigorous evaluation of Collective Worship has resulted in a greater variety of music being used in Mass (modern worship and traditional hymns) as well as improved student understanding of liturgy (pupils are now given additional instruction on what is happening and why at appropriate times during the Mass).
- When not delivering assemblies, senior leaders visit form groups every morning as part of our 'we have come to pray with you' initiative. This ensures daily prayer within tutor groups is supported, monitored and evaluated. Monitoring notes are recorded for every visit and feedback given to the form teacher. The senior leader may also model aspects of the act of worship to further assist the tutor. Even more importantly, the participation of the headteacher and the two deputies ensures that prayer has the highest possible status in the school.
- The school always ensures Mass takes place on all Holy Days of Obligation.

**SCHOOL DETAILS**

Unique reference number	116999
Local authority	Worcestershire
<i>This inspection was carried out under Canon 806 of Canon Law and under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.</i>	
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range	11-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	1051
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Philip Carney
Headteacher	Greg McClarey
Telephone number	01905 352615
Website address	<a href="https://www.blessededward.co.uk">https://www.blessededward.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@blessededward.co.uk">office@blessededward.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	14 October 2015

**INFORMATION ABOUT THIS SCHOOL**

- Blessed Edward Oldcorne Catholic College is an averaged size secondary school serving the population of central Worcester, and beyond.
- The percentage of Catholic pupils is currently 51%.
- The percentage of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The percentage of SEND pupils is in line with the national average.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic origins is above the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with EAL is above the national average.
- Attainment on entry is average.

**INFORMATION ABOUT THIS INSPECTION**

- The inspection was carried out by two Diocesan Inspectors: Chris Martin and Ben McArdle.
- The focus of the inspection was on the impact, quality and leadership of the school's provision of Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship.
- The inspectors observed teaching across ten Religious Education lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Some of these lesson observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspectors completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic Life, the impact of Religious Education teaching on their learning over time and their experience of Collective Worship.
- Meetings were held with the chair of governors, the Catholic Life link governor, the headteacher, the RE subject leader, the person in charge of the Catholic Life of the School (PICCL), priest chaplain and parents.

- The inspectors attended class and year group Collective Worship, undertook a learning walk to look at the presentation of the Catholic Life of the school and pupils' behaviour and visited the sanctuary.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, data about pupils' attainment and progress, Analyse School Performance (ASP) data, the Religious Education action plan, and teachers' planning as well as monitoring and survey reports.