



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for
Blessed George Napier Catholic School

URN: 141146

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

Date: 20-21 September 2023

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The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops’ Conference	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- Students are confidently aware of the school’s Catholic identity and they strive to be active witnesses to its mission. They know it is this which makes their school unique.
- The pupil leadership and mission teams are inspirational and articulate leaders, committed to improving how the mission is lived out.
- A strong sense of community is led by highly committed staff at all levels, who work hard to ensure Blessed George Napier Catholic School is an inclusive, loving community.
- Attainment and progress in religious education are high. Outcomes are always at least in line with other core subjects and are often better.

- The administration of the sacraments and the observance of holy days of obligation are given the highest priority and are a source of celebration throughout the school.

What the school needs to improve:

- Develop teachers' questioning so that they routinely use it to assess students' achievements during lessons, ensuring this informs their planning and delivery of subsequent learning episodes in religious education.
- Support all students to lead prayer confidently and competently, utilising a broad range of ways of praying.
- Ensure rigorous self-evaluation processes reflect a good level of self-challenge so that reliable judgements are based on secure evidence.

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

2

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

Leadership

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

2



All students understand that they have been created in God's image and should respect one another's innate dignity. This is because staff frequently reinforce this to them. Consequently, students are happy and secure at Blessed George Napier, as demonstrated by their high attendance levels. Students, particularly those in the sixth form, articulate great pride in their school and are very secure in its identity as a Catholic community. They speak eloquently about the school's role within the Church in Banbury and globally. Students cannot articulate knowledge of the school's mission because it is too long. However, they communicate the school's ethos through a limited understanding of its motto, 'Vincit Veritas', 'Truth Prevails', and a good knowledge of the school's gospel values of compassion, respect, truth, service, and forgiveness. Many students are actively involved in activities that enable them to respond to the demands of Catholic social teaching, such as the principles of stewardship and the common good through the eco club and the principles of dignity and solidarity through the British Sign Language club. Whilst students can speak about the importance of such activities linked to these principles, most do not yet understand them enough to do so confidently. Chaplaincy activities are universally appreciated: house festivals, engagement with local senior citizens and the pilgrimage to Lourdes are good moral and spiritual development opportunities; the pilgrimage in particular is spoken of with fervour and delight by students. Students' behaviour sometimes shows a lack of consideration for others around school and in lessons. However, standards are improving because of a targeted effort to ensure the school is an inclusive and supportive community.

The mission statement clearly expresses the Church's mission in education. This is regularly revisited with staff and students in a shortened form alongside the five identified gospel

values. This leads to high staff confidence in understanding and contributing to it. They are enthusiastic in their support for delivering the mission so that it makes a significant impact. One staff member reported, 'It has been a source of great joy to me how my faith has flourished since I have been teaching here, a happy side effect of being surrounded every day by the Catholic ethos at the heart of our very special school.' The physical environment expresses the school's Catholic faith, though it is tired in places. As such, some features have become meaningless to students; and some areas of the school have no signs of its heritage. Chaplaincy activity is superb; central to school life and lovingly planned with great care, it focuses on using God-given gifts to serve Him and the Church.

Leaders ensure that engaging staff training is effective because it matches the school's identified development targets and is followed up by frequent revisiting. Leaders, including governors, conduct themselves as disciples of Christ and ensure that their policy decision-making always aligns with Catholic principles. For example, they ensure all students are included in extra-curricular activities and spiritual formation opportunities. Governors diligently work and ensure Blessed George Napier Catholic School fully complies with all bishops' directives. Subject areas have identified where Catholic social teaching features in the curriculum, and this is now being embedded. Self-evaluation is inaccurate because it is not rooted in a rigorous enough level of self-challenge based on the national framework for inspection. Pupil evaluation occurs but does not routinely lead to them being involved in planning improvements.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

2

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....

2

Outcomes at Key Stage 4 show that pupils make consistently good progress in religious education. Attainment is high, including for those with additional needs, further demonstrating the school's commitment to being fully inclusive. In Key Stage 5, outcomes are in line with diocesan averages. Students' religious literacy is improving because of a recent focus on developing the use of keyword tests and the accurate use of subject-specific vocabulary. Most students can recall what they have learnt in previous lessons, though with a degree of inconsistency. When students are engaged and well-motivated in their learning, they ask insightful questions relating to the issues they study; for example, in a lesson about Jewish beliefs surrounding the afterlife, a student asked, 'What does it mean to have your soul cleansed in Sheol?' There is, however, a significant degree of passive learning in religious education lessons, mainly because students' enjoyment of lessons varies considerably. This is reflected in many low-level behaviour issues, which teachers do not routinely identify and respond to; students say it is not always easy to concentrate in religious education lessons. When students enjoy their learning, a passive attitude remains because teachers spend too long talking. Most students produce good quality, well-presented work, though the consistency of this also varies, sometimes resulting in too little work being completed. High-quality work is not routinely modelled for students, meaning they do not always know the standard they should aspire to achieve. Nevertheless, students are developing their knowledge and skills as prescribed by bishops' requirements.

Teachers are mostly secure in their subject knowledge, meaning they impart new knowledge to students with clarity and confidence. All teachers are deeply passionate about the value and importance of the subject to students' lives and communicate this clearly in their explanations. Consequently, teachers know that religious education significantly contributes to students'

moral and spiritual development and provides time and space for reflection on key issues. A wide variety of learning styles are catered for in religious education, including extended writing, artwork, drama, and oral reporting. This means students' needs are met in this respect, and they especially value more creative opportunities to express their learning. In the best examples of questioning, teachers routinely review learning and challenge students to deepen their responses before moving on to the next aspect of knowledge. However, this practice is limited. Teachers do not always adapt tasks and explanations in response to students' answers. Some good resources have been produced to support learning, especially for sixth form core religious education lessons. There is widespread use of video clips to support learning. However, these are often used without direction towards what to listen for, meaning students are unsure about upon what to concentrate. Feedback is not always precise or regular enough for students to know how to improve their work.

The subject leader has a good vision for how religious education can benefit students at Blessed George Napier Catholic School. She has worked hard with her team to accommodate the requirements of the new *Religious Education Directory* for Year 7. The well-designed curriculum enables students to deepen their knowledge as they progress through the school. Leaders and governors have worked extremely hard to navigate through the extraordinary challenges in staffing and circumstances the last few years have brought, and are congratulated for prioritising religious education. Engaging enrichment opportunities, such as an opportunity for A-level students to hear Richard Swinburne speak in Oxford, help bring the curriculum to life. Self-evaluation is inaccurate because it is not securely based on a rigorous level of self-challenge. The department is well-supported by a knowledgeable and committed link governor.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

Leadership

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

2

Most students participate in prayer reverently and confidently with responses, gestures, and reflection on the issues and themes presented to them. This is evident in larger-scale opportunities for worship, but more variable in tutor groups. Students have a good knowledge of traditional prayer, of using the wonderfully crafted school prayer book, and of liturgy, demonstrated by the weekly celebration of Mass, regular opportunities for Eucharistic Adoration and a biannual celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which is deeply cherished by all. They do not have a detailed understanding of a wide variety of prayer, and especially of more contemporary styles, as they have limited experience of them. Sixth formers are used well to model and lead prayer to younger students during assemblies; these prayers are well-constructed and appeal to their peers. Students have a good knowledge of the liturgical year and understand its importance in the school's life. However, they lack confidence about how prayer changes during certain liturgical seasons. Students know that prayer influences the curriculum, because prayer in some lessons links to their learning. Students' opinions about prayer are sought as part of leaders' evaluation processes, which has improved the school's prayer provision. As a result of student feedback, the pupil leadership team now leads prayer more often. Students understand the importance of prayer in school, though they struggle to offer concrete examples of how prayer has inspired them to action.

Prayer is central to school life; each day is built around prayer, including morning prayers, during regular assemblies and meetings, and the Angelus is prayed daily. The community always ensures prayer features in significant moments of joy and sorrow. The Ordo is always followed within the school, meaning scripture passages are seasonally appropriate, mark local feasts and memorials, and follow national and global celebrations. Because of this approach to planning, students are familiar with the Bible's key messages, particularly how they relate

to the five gospel values that the school's mission identifies. Senior leaders model good prayer practice because they competently link biblical themes to everyday life and require students to reflect upon and discuss them. Prayer provision is mainly traditional and is wonderfully enriched by the outstanding choir. The choir is treasured within and beyond school due to high-quality performances such as biennial productions of *Born For This* and a concert in the Cathedral of St Michael and St Gudula in Brussels. The school chapel is a central space where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved and it is always accessible, which students and staff value. The quality of prayer spaces throughout the school varies, with some being up-to-date and regularly used whilst others are neglected, meaning they are not always conducive to prayer. There is a tradition of excellent links with the parish to support the school's sacramental prayer life. Parents are invited to submit their prayer intentions to the school. However, there is a desire from a significant number of parents for the school to renew and refresh opportunities for them to be more regularly involved in the school's prayer life.

A well-written prayer policy ensures leaders' expectations are clearly communicated to staff, with relevant training offered to support staff in meeting them. They have a strategy for growing the skills taught for pupil leadership of prayer, though it does not yet impact enough students beyond the sixth form. Leaders and governors prioritise the sacraments and holy days of obligation and ensure these celebrations are well resourced. Staff value leaders' open-door policy concerning advice and support about prayer. Leaders' self-evaluation of standards is inaccurate because it is insufficiently focussed on a secure understanding of the expectations set out in the national framework.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Blessed George Napier Catholic School
School unique reference number (URN)	141146
Full postal address of the school	Addison Road, Banbury, OX16 9DG
School phone number	01295 264216
Name of head teacher or principal	Niamh Dolan
Chair of governing board	Paul Concannon
School Website	www.blessedgeorgenapier.co.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	The Pope Francis Catholic Multi Academy Company
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	11 to 18
Trustees	Archdiocese of Birmingham
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	July 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Ben McArdle	Lead inspector
Andrew Maund	Team inspector
Luke Salkeld	Team inspector

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement