

# DIOCESE OF MENEVIA



## Inspection Report on the Religious Dimension of the School

**Headteacher:** Mrs Emma Pole (Acting)

**Reporting Inspector:** Mrs Maria B. Rimmer

**Accompanying Inspector:** Mrs Rita Price

**Inspection dates:** 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> March 2018

**Acting Chair of Governors:** Mr Steve Avo (Vice Chair)

**Type of School:** Mixed Voluntary Aided Catholic Comprehensive

**Age range of pupils:** 11-18

**Number on roll:** 1,328

**Date of previous inspection:** 26<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> March 2012

**School Address:** Mynydd Garnllwyd Road, Morriston, Swansea, SA6 7QG

**Tel. No:** 01792 772006

**Email address:** bishopvaughan@hwbbmail.net

**Parishes served:** St David's; Our Lady of Lourdes; St Illtyd's ; St Peter; St Joachim and St Anne; Holy Cross; Blessed Sacrament; St. Bride's; Sacred Heart; St Benedict's, Sketty; St. Benedict's, Clydach; Our Lady Star of the Sea; the Cathedral Church of St. Joseph

**Local Authority:** Swansea

*Canonical inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Menevia and inspection of denominational education under Section 50 of the Education Act 2005.*

During each inspection inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

**Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?**

**Key Question 2: How good is provision?**

**Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?**

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on prospects for improvement.

<b>Judgement</b>	<b>What the judgement means</b>
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector leading practice or practise that is both consistent and highly effective.
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The table below shows the terms that Diocesan inspectors use and a broad idea of their meaning. It is for guidance only.

<b>Proportion</b>	<b>Description</b>
With very few exceptions	Nearly all
90% or more	Most
70% or more	Many
60% or more	A majority
Close to 50%	Half/around half
Below 40%	A minority
Below 20%	Few
Less than 10%	Very few

**Copies of this report are available from the school,  
and on the diocesan website: [www.menevia.org/](http://www.menevia.org/)**

## Introduction

The Inspection of Bishop Vaughan Catholic High School has been carried out in accordance with the Framework and Schedule for Section 50 Inspections (2010) issued by the Diocese of Menevia and approved by the Bishop. The process of inspection in the Diocese has been developed as an activity of the Church to support schools in both maintaining and developing the quality of Catholic education provided.

The inspection of the school was carried out by two appointed Inspectors from another diocese. They visited the Religious Education lessons and held meetings with the acting Head Teacher, two Parish Priests, members of staff and pupils. They also received a summary of the parents' questionnaire. Inspectors observed the school's work and provision, including prayer and collective worship, and undertook learning walks. They looked at a range of evidence, including, in particular, the school's own self-evaluation, the school's development plan and the work of the pupils.

## Context

Bishop Vaughan Catholic School is an 11-18 mixed comprehensive voluntary aided school in the Diocese of Menevia. The school serves Swansea local authority and surrounding areas. There are currently 1328 pupils on roll including 256 in the sixth form. The school works in partnership with neighbouring schools to provide sixth form education.

Since the last inspection there have been important changes to the governing body. The school lost its recently appointed Chair of Governors, who died suddenly. Among its new foundation governors are two experienced educators and a parish priest with significant links with the school through the parish.

Just less than 20% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above the Welsh average of 17.0% for secondary schools. Around 52% of pupils live in the 20% most deprived areas in Wales. The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is 2% which is very close to the national average. Very few pupils receive support to learn English as an additional language although a minority come from a minority ethnic background. There are virtually no pupils who speak Welsh as a first language or to an equivalent standard.

The current acting Headteacher took up her post in September 2016, but has worked at the school since 2006 and joined the leadership team in 2012. The senior leadership team consists of the acting Headteacher, two acting deputy headteachers, two assistant headteachers, one of whom is acting, and three associate senior leaders. The school was last inspected in March 2012.

Since the previous Section 50 inspection the school has made positive progress against all the recommendations identified from this inspection. Having said this, some aspects perhaps still need to be further developed and embedded. Since the previous inspection standards in Religious Education have for the most part steadily improved.

In 2017/18 the main priorities for the school as identified in the school's development plan were as follows:

1. To consolidate and extend community and parish links
2. To raise/maintain attendance levels
3. To further improve outcomes by targeting a L2i figure of 62% and maintaining positive trends at KS3, 4 and 5
4. To ensure outcomes in Welsh that compare favourably to FLAW data
5. To continue to make effective use of school resources to reduce the impact of poverty on educational attainment
6. To further develop excellence in teaching and learning and to triangulate judgements
7. To evaluate the curriculum changes made in order to inform further improvement planning
8. To continue to develop Literacy, Numeracy, Digital Competency and Welsh across the curriculum
9. To continue to develop leadership capacity at all levels

## Summary

### How effective is the school in providing Catholic education?

**GOOD**

The inspection judged that Bishop Vaughan School is a good Catholic school that is true to the Church's mission in providing learning and opportunity for all, rooted in explicit values of the Gospel.

### What are the school's prospects for improvement?

**GOOD**

The acting Headteacher, the governors, members of the religious education department, chaplains and other leaders and staff have in place the structures and strategies to ensure improvement.

## Recommendations and Required Actions

In order to improve further as a Catholic school, the school should:

1. Evaluate the impact of the school's emphasis on Gospel values within pupils' learning and experience.
2. Review the scope and extend the range of opportunities for prayer and worship across the school.
3. Synthesise and streamline the (currently) two separate and inconsistent processes for self-evaluation, improvement planning and quality assurance in respect of the religious life of the school.
4. Clarify the job descriptions and responsibilities for religious educators, for those working in chaplaincy and for the Charity coordinator
5. Review, plan and provide for the sixth form students, a core programme in religious education that informs and supports the students in their learning programmes.
6. Consider further the effective transition of pupils into year 7 by gathering data on the standards already reached by pupils in religious education, across community schools, voluntary schools and Catholic primary schools, to ensure entitlement and progress.

## Main Findings

### KQ1. How good are outcomes?

**GOOD**

#### How well pupils achieve, and enjoy learning, in Religious Education

The majority of pupils achieve well and enjoy their learning in Religious Education. Nearly all learners want to achieve well, to feel secure and supported in class, and show confidence in their teachers.

Nearly all pupils enjoy the opportunities to discuss difficult, sensitive and controversial topics in a safe and supportive environment. However, only on a very few occasions, were pupils heard to offer extended oral responses during observations of lessons.

Whilst the Religious Education Department's drive to raise standards and progress has a keen eye on outcomes at Key Stage 4, teachers focus most closely on "teaching to the test", so that opportunities to consolidate a thorough understanding of, appetite for, and engagement with learning in religious education are sometimes overlooked.

## **How well pupils attain in Religious Education**

At GCSE, given the high number of pupils entered, the outcomes reached by pupils are very good. Attainment at Key stage 4 outcomes shows an improvement in 2017 of 4% and reaching 64% at A\* - C. The school entered 217 pupils (96.4% of the cohort). Girls out-perform boys. Notable positive standards were achieved by pupils with free school meals, more able and talented pupils and pupils with [special educational] additional learning needs and pupils with English as an additional language.

Standards reached at the end of Key Stage 3 are less well defined because they do not take into account attainment in Religious Education on entry. Assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 is not yet sufficiently robust in the work of levels of attainment in Religious Education.

At Post 16, students who opt for advanced level Religious Studies attain very well. From a healthy cohort of 25, a 100% of students gained an A\*-E grade and 85% gained A\*-C grades. In addition, a small group of 5 students showed exceptional interest by taking religious studies outside of their school day, gaining very good results, including two with A\* outcomes in the subject.

The measurement of attainment in sixth form general religious education at this point, lacks proper definition and needs review.

## **How well pupils contribute to, and benefit from, the Catholic life of the school**

The majority of pupils in all year groups demonstrate a genuine sense of belonging to the Catholic community of Bishop Vaughan Catholic School. Most pupils in the school value and respect the Catholic tradition and many grasp the importance and value of links to the parishes and other Christian communities the school serves. Nearly all pupils are considerate to others and demonstrate care and respect for sacred spaces, sacred times and the religious artefacts in the school.

The school places an important emphasis on Gospel values based on the Beatitudes, and these are printed in exercise books and pupil Planners. However, opportunities to explore these Gospel values in pupils' learning and wider experiences at the school are not always developed.

All pupils are comprehensively supported by the school in their moral development, and have a good understanding of right and wrong. This is largely achieved due to the high levels of nurture that teaching and support staff offer for the appropriate systems the leadership team has put in place to nurture and support pupils. Within the tutorial programme, for example, staff understand and value 'restorative justice' as a means to repair damaged relationships. The work of the *Aspire* Unit, a further example, has a clear and positive impact on the pupils for whom it caters. All the staff who co-ordinate this provision work with exceptional patience and skill to affirm and steer otherwise challenging pupils towards becoming the best that they can be.

## **How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's prayer and worship**

Pupils are respectful and quiet when gathering for prayer. They listen to what is being said and when invited to, they join in prayer openly and in one clear pupil voice. Pupils lead prayer in class and when given the opportunity, they can lead respectfully the school's prayer from the stage, such as during the week's Lenten prayer using CAFOD resources. However, pupils need more guidance and skill in how to lead prayer, how to engage those assembled, to avoid rush, and use eye contact, and emphasis. Also, the physical separation of staff from the pupils in the hall, diminishes the unity of the school community at prayer and this deserves review.

Tutor groups share a weekly prayer successfully and pupils help to lead these in class. In addition the small group of liturgy ambassadors show a personal interest in leading and a willingness to take

part in new initiatives, such as in 'soul space'. However, the range of prayers recited and shared in collective worship appear to be restricted mainly to the three most traditional.

Pupils respond well to the impressive range of opportunities for retreats and pilgrimages and those experiences are very positive. These include trips to Rome, and to the national Catholic Flame youth gathering, all underpinned by strong levels of commitment and time from staff across the school.

<b>KQ 2. How Good is Provision?</b>
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<b>GOOD</b>
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### **The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education**

The quality of teaching in Religious Education is good across the age and ability range, although there are a few exceptions. Nearly all teaching is good, and nearly all pupils are interested in their learning, and make good or better progress. However, where teaching in Religious Education is weak, time is lost on low challenge activities which lack pace and depth, and with insufficient attention paid to the concepts and theological literacy required of the lesson. In a minority of lessons, teachers make use of pauses, requiring pupils to reflect, and to evaluate or build on answers offered by their peers. Where this occurs, pupils' learning is more deeply secured, and engagement widened.

Lessons are usually very well planned, as the Head and Assistant Head of Religious Education have worked closely and effectively to generate comprehensive Programmes of Study which all department staff access, usually consistently. The impressive packs of Departmental Lesson Plans are well presented and well-resourced, but they do not meet the needs of all pupils. There is some evidence of powerful planning for differentiation, but there is insufficient evidence of planned differentiation overall, with the range and style of expected tasks not including work or activities to ensure that all types of learner are supported and challenged appropriately.

### **The effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in Religious Education**

Religious educators also have worked successfully and with support from the Deputy Headteacher responsible for assessment, to improve the quality of assessment and so academic guidance is becoming more effective. Levels of attainment are referenced in every pupil's book and assessed tasks inform the pupils of their current attainment. However, opportunities in class given to question pupils and to check their understanding orally are insufficient. Overall, more focus is needed on formative assessment so pupils know how to improve and see they have done so.

### **The extent to which Religious Education and the wider life of the school meets pupils' needs**

The delivery of Religious Education takes account of the Curriculum Directory at Key Stage 3 and at Key Stage 4. The school has appropriately implemented the 'People of God – Called to Serve scheme' across Key Stage 3 and is resourcing it skilfully. At Key Stage 4, the school is transitioning well to the new specifications for GCSE Religious Education, although Key Stage 4 assessment needs to be more clearly aligned to the new GCSE and distinct from the learning requirements of Key Stage 3.

The leadership of the department is very effective in leading this almost concurrent raft of changes to Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and at Advanced level. Despite this period of wholesale reform to the religious education curriculum in secondary schools, the Religious Education department continues to improve outcomes for pupils, as levels of dedication to serving the standards and progress achieved by every pupil are high, and the management of the full range of available resources is highly effective.



The Religious Education curriculum is largely effective in meeting the needs of individual pupils and groups of pupils in Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and at Advanced level. However, the provision for general Religious Education in the Sixth Form needs review to ensure that every student receives their core entitlement to a relevant and coherent programme of study within the required 5% curriculum time and one that gives opportunity to reflect on the deeper human questions This observation is in line with the school's most recent planning.

### **The quality of prayer and worship provided by the school**

The provision for prayer across the school is organised and well distributed so that tutors, leaders and pupils can benefit from the weekly focus for prayer during morning worship. However, the range of prayers recited and shared in collective worship, including in staff prayer, tends to be limited to the most common and traditional. The scope for shared prayer in collective worship, including the use of music, song and poetry needs more attention. The parish priests are supportive of the school and its link with the parishes and community. The school values their visits and the rota that enables many of them to celebrate Mass during the year. The developing role of the part-time school chaplain is of good support to the school community.

The school chapel, where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, is used as a resource for prayer, liturgy, teaching and spiritual growth. Pupils show a good understanding of the respect necessary when present in the chapel. The Chapel is the focal point for the emerging work of the school's Liturgy Ambassadors, a recent, highly valuable and developing initiative which is beginning to have an impact, especially on the capacity of pupils whom are not from a Catholic background, enabling them to access the celebration of Mass more meaningfully. The very small group of Liturgy Ambassadors are predominantly from Key Stage 3, and are articulate and faithful role models for their peers. They run informal services of reflection at lunchtime, once a week, called *Soul Space*, supported by the Assistant Head of Religious Education and the Head Girl.

<b>KQ3. How good are Leadership and Management?</b>
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<b>GOOD</b>
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### **The extent to which the governing body promotes the strategic development of the Catholic life of the school and curriculum Religious Education**

Governors give their time generously to the school and members include two Catholic priests. Governors challenge the school's standards and success appropriately with an emphasis on the school's Catholic character and success. Governors receive regular reports and are kept informed on proposals for development across the school. The school describes vigilance and 'robust discussions' but with significant contributions by the governors, to proposed changes and development in religious education. In this way, they give approval to the Relationships and Sex Education programme and following discussion, to retreats and pilgrimages and charities to be funded by the school. The Catholicity of the school is supported and challenged appropriately by the full governing body to ensure the school's Catholic ethos and its capacity to respond to the wider cohort of the school are at the heart of the school's strategic development.

### **How well leaders and managers promote, monitor, evaluate and review the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils**

Governors, leaders and managers welcome the diverse nature of the school's population, and are clearly committed to achieve excellence. The acting headteacher is committed to developing the Catholic life of the School and to leading the school effectively. However, the key processes of self-evaluation, improvement planning, monitoring and quality assurance relating to the wider Catholic life of the school are not fully aligned with the parallel set of processes in Religious Education, causing some unnecessary duplication of effort, disconnected planning and, on occasion, undue overlap and a lack of clarity over the key issues and priorities. Work to address this will serve the school's core purposes well, and those responsible for same, including the Governing Body, and particularly its Religious Education and Ethos Committee, are well-equipped to undertake it. There

is a powerful commitment on the part of all those responsible for influencing these matters, as there is no complacency about provision or outcomes, and a resolute commitment to continuous evaluation and improvement.

### **How well leaders and managers promote, monitor, evaluate and review the provision for Religious Education and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils**

Leaders and managers work hard to evaluate and improve the provision for Religious Education, and to plan for improvements in outcomes. The introduction of schemes of work for Key Stage 3, for GCSE, and for advanced level specifications has required and continues to require considerable work by the Head of RE and members of the department. The systems for tracking and monitoring in religious education are robust, such that the judgements made by the school in respect of the quality of teaching and learning in religious education are accurate. However, wider self-evaluation activities are less consistent in identifying proportions of pupils and in evaluating the impact of the department's work, and improvement planning lacks precision with respect to the specific identification of milestone dates.

The Head of Religious Education knows her Department well and has worked tirelessly since the last inspection to achieve consistency in standards of teaching across the department, and to reduce unacceptable variation across the department. She is valuably supported by the Assistant Head of Religious Education. However, this post does not benefit from a current Job Description, nor is there sufficiently clear accountability for standards and progress in a specific Key Stage in the Religious Education department for this post, whereas this is the expectation, for example, in mathematics and English. The Job Description for teachers of Religious Education likewise fails to reflect the key and crucial expectations of staff in what in every Catholic school is regarded as the "flagship" department.

The Acting Headteacher works consistently and with understanding in robustly offering an appropriate blend of support and challenge. She fully understands and embraces her responsibilities as the Line Manager for the Head of Religious Education, with whom an established and effective pattern of fortnightly minuted meetings take place across the school year. Consequently, the acting Headteacher also knows the Department well, has an excellent grasp of the key issues the Department is currently addressing, and offers strong and effective support for the Department.

### **How well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote learning and pupil well-being**

Leaders and managers strongly promote a comprehensive range of partnerships with secular and ecclesial providers, organisations and services, to promote pupil learning and well-being, and for the benefit of the whole school community, and beyond. Pastoral care and guidance is well led and managed by a committed team of Heads of Year. All of these activities have a beneficial impact on the local community, for example through work with the parishes, the Diocesan Youth Service and the HCPT. There is also a long-standing and beneficial link with St Cassian's Retreat Centre in Kintbury, where an exceptionally high proportion of the centre's Retreat facilitators are former pupils of the school.

One especially important example of effective partnership work can be seen in the range of activities regularly and effectively undertaken by the school's part-time Chaplain. He liaises well with a good range of personnel within the school, to ensure that valuable care, guidance and support are offered to individual pupils and staff, and to wider groups within the school. Local parish priests are supportive of the school, and value and encourage the range of links which support the crucial dynamics between the pupils' homes, their high school and their parish.



## **How effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion**

Bishop Vaughan Catholic School is an inclusive Catholic community in which every student is treated with dignity and respect, and these principles naturally inform the ways in which nearly all staff lead pupils to an understanding of the common good of society. Leaders and managers are successful in promoting community cohesion, and the school works creatively to identify and implement ways to promote pupils' acceptance of difference and diversity, for example through its pursuit of the UNICEF *Rights Respecting Schools* Award.

The work of the staff member whom voluntarily co-ordinates work to promote and support a diverse range of relevant charities is consistently good. She offers powerful personal witness to Gospel values. Her work yields consistently good impact, is carried out in full partnership with the school Chaplain and the Religious Education Department, and increasingly involves pupils in identifying and organising imaginative and sensitive projects. As well as raising awareness of and funds for the charities, these activities in turn develop nearly all pupils' understanding of and commitment to community cohesion. All staff support these initiatives willingly and well.

Parents are very positive about the school, about its ethos and provision.

## **What happens next?**

The school will produce an action plan within 6 weeks of receiving the final inspection report that shows how it will address the recommendations. Progress in addressing the recommendations will be monitored by the Diocese.

## Appendix 1

### Responses to parent questionnaires

The parental questionnaire received 52 responses, of which most agreed or strongly agreed with the most positive statements. A very, very few of the parents felt their children were not happy at school, while all agreed or agreed strongly that their children had learned spiritual awareness at the school, including respect and kindness. Most believed their children had been helped to develop their Christian Faith.

The parents whom responded indicated that they had been encouraged to join in the school's religious activities.

Most parents agreed or agreed strongly that their children were developing a sense of moral awareness.

Most parents are aware of the links that exist between the school and the parishes.

Most parents are happy with the school's policies on discipline and are aware of the school's safeguarding procedures in the school.

Less than 3% of parents felt unable to comment on some of the questions.

## Appendix 2

### Evidence Base

- The school's self-evaluation reports and other relevant documentation
- Meetings with the acting headteacher and religious education subject leaders
- Meetings with representatives of the governing body
- Analysis of parent/carer questionnaire returns provided by the school
- Lesson observations and learning walks
- Scrutiny of planning and assessment
- Scrutiny of pupils' work
- Scrutiny of displays and prayer foci
- Attendance at whole school acts of worship
- Discussions with pupils
- Discussions with teaching staff
- Observation of daily routines, including Form Worship

***The diocesan inspectors wish to express sincere thanks to the governors, acting headteacher, staff and pupils, parents, and the Diocesan Director of Education for the courtesy and co-operation received during the inspection.***