



## **CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL**

St. Cuthbert's is a successful and popular 11-16 comprehensive school serving a number of Catholic communities across Rochdale Local Authority. The school is larger than average nationally, with 1030 pupils on roll. The intake profile of the school is changing significantly, with an increased proportion of each intake eligible for free school meals. 60% of pupils are baptised Catholics and 17% are from minority ethnic groups. These changes in local demographics have resulted in the proportion of disadvantaged pupils and those identified with additional needs now being above national averages and increasing. Prior attainment of pupils before joining the school is broadly in line with the national average and the attendance of pupils is slightly above national average. 50% of the school staff are Catholic.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS GOOD**

St Cuthbert's is a good and improving Catholic high school with many outstanding features. *"Governors, leaders and teachers at all levels, refuse to accept socio-economic background or gender as an excuse for underachievement. We are committed to creating a culture that is calm, orderly and aspirational."* This statement, which is prominent in the school strategic improvement plan and read alongside the school's mission statement, provides a very clear whole school commitment to a 'preferential option for the poor'. Throughout the inspection this commitment was passionately articulated by governors, senior leaders and school staff. The effectiveness of the school is further enhanced through the creation of a safe, secure and stimulating physical environment in which pupils are given every opportunity to flourish and thrive. Pupils value and respect their school environment, which features a whole range of visual images and messages which underpin and reinforce the schools mission and determination to 'deliver the Kingdom'. An emerging feature is the capacity of the school, through an explicit commitment to continuing professional development, to develop its own middle leaders with opportunities for both personal and professional growth of all staff; being a key commitment of governors and senior leaders.

## **KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:**

- A very strong team comprising of staff with diverse responsibilities provide outstanding pastoral care.
- Staff and pupil relationships bear witness to Christian values of justice, compassion, forgiveness and love. Diversity is celebrated ensuring that everyone is treated with dignity and respect.
- Leadership at all levels is ambitious, striving for excellence and improved outcomes for all pupils.

## **THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS OUTSTANDING**

Governors and senior leaders are fully committed to the Church's mission in education. The Gospel teachings form the core purpose and both direct and drive all that leaders do. The schools' 'preferential option for the poor' is clearly articulated in self-evaluation and strategic planning documents by the following statement; *"Governors and teachers at all levels refuse to accept socio-economic background or gender as an excuse for underachievement. We are committed to creating a culture that is calm, orderly and aspirational. We are committed to making Pupil Premium learners 'premium learners' full of aspiration."*

Self-evaluation of the school's work at all levels is a coherent and reflects rigorous monitoring, searching analysis and self-challenge. Celebration of achievement and success is central to and expressive of the life and mission of the school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is evidenced across all areas of the curriculum. Governors make a highly significant contribution to the work and the Catholic life of the school. They have a high level of commitment, a depth of wisdom and are extremely well organised, thorough and effective in their approach. The Governors who met with inspectors identified the inspirational, professional and spiritual leadership of the headteacher as a key driver in the improvement journey of the school. The relatively recently appointed Head of RE is also providing outstanding leadership and has demonstrated a significant impact in raising standards in RE across both key stages.

### **THE QUALITY OF THE WORD IS GOOD**

The mission statement of the school underpins the ethos of St Cuthbert's community and is prominent through display in classrooms and corridors, in the staff handbook and on the school website. The mission manifests itself in strong pastoral support for pupils, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, right through to staff continuous professional development, including staff induction. Religious education is a core subject as shown by appropriate curriculum time, appropriate staffing levels and budget allocation, is comparable with other core subjects. The curriculum meets all the statutory requirements and the curriculum overviews show that all the Religious Education Curriculum Directory [RECD] requirements are met. Inspection evidence would support the school's own evaluation that teaching is consistently good and that outcomes within the RE department are improving. Discussions with senior leaders, governors and the subject leader reinforced the school's accurate analysis that standards in RE are rising rapidly, but that there is still further improvement required in relation to the end of key stage 4 examination results. The use of both the Catechism and religious Scripture was a very prominent feature of lessons. There was a clear plan to improve teaching and learning, assessment and pupil outcomes by the relatively new RE head of department. This would occur through robust quality assurance procedures, for example, through analysis of mock results, standardised tests, mapping of RECD objectives with assessment objectives, peer observations and more rigorous work scrutiny. This was externally reviewed and showed that the self-evaluation of the department was accurate. The aim of the RE department is to rapidly improve the level of challenge within lessons and there has been a definite change of culture and expectations instilled within the department. The overall result of these changes has been an improving trend in GCSE outcomes in terms of both attainment and progression and the impact of the recently introduced key stage 3 'standards' is evident in both assessment outcomes, work scrutiny and conversations with individual pupils. An issue from the last inspection, the closing of the gap between boys and girl attainment, has been rectified.

### **THE QUALITY OF WELCOME IS OUTSTANDING**

There is a culture of welcome and all pupils and staff demonstrate a very high level of confidence and outreach to all within the school community; recognising, valuing and celebrating diversity at all levels. Diversity is celebrated, ensuring everyone is treated with dignity and respect. The sex and relationship education programme is grounded within the Catholic faith and the belief that we are all God's children created in His image. Therefore, in all personal relationships everyone is treated with dignity, respect and love. The form tutor programme and RE lessons help to celebrate diversity making everyone feel welcomed and respected. The low incidence of racism helps to demonstrate this. Pupil welcome and staff induction are a strength of the school community. It is through such processes that the school's vision, expectations, standards and support are clearly presented by the headteacher and other senior leaders. All members of the St Cuthbert's school community demonstrate a very high sense of belonging and ownership of the school. Pupils are given a significant level of duty in creating and sustaining the school's sense of welcome, through their roles as prefects, sports leaders, music liturgy group, ambassadors for the school and as members of the chaplaincy team. They show hospitality and live life to the full, acknowledging Christ's presence in each other. Visitors are welcomed with love and respectful care. Clear structures and procedures are present for welcoming visitors, ensuring the safety of all staff and pupils. Parents and carers are welcomed into the community in the first instance at the Year 6 induction evening in July. They are welcomed at rewards events that occur three times each academic year throughout their child's journey and culminating in the Presentation Evening, organised after their child has left school.

### **THE QUALITY OF WELFARE IS OUTSTANDING**

An exceptionally high level of respect for, care of and service to others, as people made in the image and likeness of God, is provided by a very high quality pastoral team comprising of staff with diverse responsibilities: deputy head pastoral, two safe-guarding officers, three pastoral managers (one specifically for inclusion), five heads of year, form tutors, a lay chaplain, SEND department, Inclusion unit (the DEN) and a school counsellor. The DEN, which is the school's Discover, Educate and Nurture centre, is a school resource which is greatly valued by pupils, staff and parents and makes a major contribution in the way the

school seeks to deliver its mission. All these different agencies converge to ensure pupils are happy and safe within their school community. A multi-agency approach is used to ensure a full package of care for those most in need. School staff liaise with many different local bodies: parishes, social services, school nurse, CAMHS, Connexions, Early Break, Sunrise Team and the toddlers/teens programme to do all they can and 'deliver the kingdom'. Parents and carers receive open lines of communication. The mentoring programme and boys' achievement groups support parents in growing their children academically. Excellent safeguarding arrangements are in place to protect students and were recently praised by an external safeguarding audit. Sex and relationships education is based around the Church's teaching and offers pupils the confidence to make sound moral choices. The school has devised an extensive suite of programmes, available to staff, pupils and parents/carers on ways to stay safe from: cyberbullying, grooming and exploitation through social media. All staff have received CEOP training, prevent training and safeguarding training to ensure consistency across the school. The school creates, analyses and evaluates extensive data to measure impact in relation to trends in attendance, fixed term exclusions and incidents of bullying, all of which have improving trends.

### **THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS OUTSTANDING**

With a prayer core at the heart of the school community, pupils and staff are highly confident and skilled in planning and leading prayer and worship, which is pupil-centred, creative, inclusive and relevant. From daily morning prayers to year group celebrations, the wide range of opportunities to worship together, strengthens and nurtures individuals on their own faith journey, enabling them to develop a relationship with God. In RE lessons pupils learn about the seven sacraments, making use of the school chapel and the lay chaplain, to learn about these important aspects of faith. Mass is held each Tuesday in the chapel and is led by a different form each week. Pupils who are members of the chaplaincy team work with the lay chaplain in preparing for Mass. The school music liturgy group provide accompaniment to worship. Local parishioners also attend Mass as do pupils from Holy Family RC Primary school. Each year group has the opportunity to celebrate Mass during the liturgical year and Mass is also held for the staff of the school during the academic year. There is a variety of relevant, age related prayer and worship opportunities which also fulfil the legal requirement for the daily act of worship. All assemblies are underpinned with prayer and reflection, enabling pupils to start the day in a reflective manner. Assemblies are delivered by senior leaders, pastoral staff, pupil chaplains and members of the school council. The school is fortunate in having its own chapel where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. The chapel is available for anyone that wants to use it via the lay chaplain. Every day the chapel is used for form time reflections and weekly Mass. The RE department also use it for reflection, meditation and to support their teaching of faith and practice. All classrooms, meeting rooms and offices have the school mission statement displayed on the wall, alongside the prayer of Bishop Arnold.

### **THE QUALITY OF WITNESS IS OUTSTANDING**

A particularly strong feature of St Cuthbert's is how staff and pupil relationships bear witness to Christian values of justice, compassion, forgiveness and love. There is clear evidence of Gospel values in policies and procedures across the school. Pupil voice reinforces Christian values supporting the faith life of the school. Faith in action allows pupils and staff to live their faith through charity fundraising events. There is a clear tradition during the school year of supporting charity with events including: the annual staff quiz night (supporting the Diocesan Lourdes Pilgrimage), the CAFOD Shared Harvest Soup meals and pupil/staff fundraising events during Advent and Lent. Caritas ambassadors work on various projects with the lay chaplain and the Diocesan group to explore charity work. The lay chaplain works with staff and pupils, offering support and leading the prayer and worship of the community. She works with the pupil chaplaincy team, developing their leadership skills in Liturgy and witness to faith. Pupil chaplains and junior chaplains work together on Liturgy; subsequently, allowing students to confidently lead para-liturgy and assemblies. The chaplains have recently established an IMPACT group to further improve aspects of the school community. Pupil chaplains are available in the dining room, DEN and Puzzle Club a few lunchtimes a week, to offer support to their peers and friendship for those that find it difficult to mix in large groups. The

positive impact of their contribution can be seen in a number of ways including; restorative justice, Mission to the poor and disadvantaged and religious symbols, wall art and display around the school.

**AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:**

- Further raise aspirations and progress of all learners in RE.
- Further embed the new KS3 standard and continue to measure the impact it has on GCSE outcomes.
- Continue to seek ways to involve greater numbers of pupils in the wider prayer life of the school through active participation in the planning and delivery of assemblies, morning prayers and para-liturgies.

4 March 2016

Dear Pupils

Thank you so much for the wonderful welcome you gave to us when we came to visit you as part of the recent section 48 inspection.

As an inspection team we were hugely impressed by the way in which you conducted yourselves around the school and during lessons. You clearly take great pride in your school and value the range of opportunities the school offers you to develop individually and collectively through the structured programme of activities and the whole school events which focus on the most vulnerable members of the wider community.

We have asked the school governors and Dr Meehan to continue with the recent changes in how your learning in RE, is assessed and also to ensure that all of you are continually challenged to do as well as you can in all of your lessons.

It was a privilege to join so many of you in lessons, assembly and the lovely commissioning Mass. A special thank you to those pupils who are part of the chaplaincy team and musicians who are giving that little bit extra in ensuring that St Cuthbert's is a prayerful and joyful school community.

Yours sincerely

Colin Mason, Sheldon Logue and Richard Woods

(Section 48 Inspectors)

## Summary Report to Parents

On 1<sup>st</sup> March 2016 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.

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