

**INSPECTION REPORT**

**Thornleigh Salesian College, Sharples Park, Bolton, BL1 6PQ.**

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Inspection date 23 November 2016

Reporting Inspectors Mr Simon A Smith  
 Mr Michael Wright

Inspection carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Type of School Voluntary Aided  
 URN 105264  
 Age range of pupils 11-18  
 Number on roll 1,409 (including 270 in Sixth Form)  
 Appropriate authority The Governing Body  
 Chair of Governors Mr John Corrigan  
 Headteacher Mrs Alison Burrowes  
 Head of Religious Education Miss Nuala McKenna  
 Date of previous inspection February 2011

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<b>The Inspection judgements are:</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Explanation of the Grades</b>  1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3=Requires Improvement 4 = Inadequate
Overall effectiveness of the school	1	
The quality of Catholic Leadership	1	
The quality of the Word	1	
The quality of the Welcome	1	
The quality of Welfare	1	
The quality of Worship	1	
The quality of Witness	1	
The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements		

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

Thornleigh Salesian College is a larger than average Roman Catholic 11-18 school serving the north of Bolton and drawing from seven partner primary schools and parishes: St Osmund's, St John's, St Brendan's, St Columba's, Holy Infants & St Anthony's, St Joseph's and St Thomas of Canterbury. The school is part of Bolton Catholic Schools Education Partnership (BOSCEP), which involves the twenty-one Catholic schools in Bolton local authority. The school is under the trusteeship of the Salesians of Don Bosco (SDB), an order dedicated to ensuring that young people fulfil their spiritual, social, moral and academic potential. The identity and ethos of the school is inspired by the life of Saint John Bosco. As a comprehensive school, 37% of students are disadvantaged and the number of students who have an Education Health Care Plan is above the national average. More than 75% of pupils transfer to the school's sixth form provision following Year 11.

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

Thornleigh Salesian College is an outstanding Catholic college that educates its pupils in the tradition of St John Bosco and the Salesian heritage. This means the college: being present to students in their midst; assistance; accompaniment; standing with them and walking with them with real affection. The education students receive takes into account the college's local, national and international context and every pupil is very much aware of their own place in a much wider, global family. These principles drive the college forward as the very visible governors and leadership team give the greatest priority to the vulnerable and challenged – with outstanding outcomes for these groups of pupils. Very high levels of staff commitment and a unity of purpose energise already good relationships into outstanding ones stimulate wonderful partnerships beginning in the home, with the college, to the church and into the playground. The school is a place of living purpose and conviction that brings out the best in everyone, able to fulfil their potential in the image of Christ.

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

- A highly focussed and driven leadership team, who are committed to continuous school improvement and spiritual growth and formation of its pupils and staff.
- Genuine care, love and respect for all in the college's community, resulting in relationships that play a significant and visible part in the success of the college.
- The witness to God through the strength of the pupil voice is outstanding, demonstrated in acts of worship, innovative liturgies and charitable giving.

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

The governing body sets the tone for the leadership team in the college and they recognise their role in the stewardship of the church's mission in education. The headteacher is passionate about preserving the school's Salesian tradition and nurturing a very positive climate in which formation of pupils and staff can take place. Furthermore, the highest standards are expected in securing excellent outcomes for all pupils. Respect and love secure a vibrant witness to the Catholic faith. Governors and the leadership team resource the school and target the vulnerable and challenged, in particular. Such resourcing extends to religious education. The religious education department is led by a committed leader who has the highest expectations and standards for her team in delivering a programme of learning that also meets the requirement for 10% curriculum time allocation and 5% in the sixth form. In addition, the quality of teaching continues to further improve so that every lesson is at least good and often outstanding, including the sixth form. Governors have supported this in the increasingly sophisticated way they challenge middle leaders in teaching and outcomes through forming a Performance and Scrutiny Committee. In this way, professional challenge is clearly focussed on the core subjects and the spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences for pupils and the wider community and this has directly contributed to the continuing improvement agenda through effective evaluation of the leadership team's actions. Every decision made and opportunity offered is to lead them closer to the experience of the living God.

### **THE QUALITY OF THE WORD IS OUTSTANDING**

Religious Education is at the core of the curriculum and the excellent teaching in the department leads to very strong outcomes for pupils. In a school with excellent overall progress, the religious education department makes a significant contribution to the success of the school. The department is well resourced and very well led. The curriculum leader ensures the consistent high quality of teaching and assessment through regular monitoring of the department. Pupils have very high levels of religious literacy and the introduction of the study of Mark's Gospel in Year 9 has enhanced their appreciation of scripture. Teaching is well-matched to the needs of pupils who appreciate the care and support offered by staff. Outcomes in religious education are above the national average and in line with other subjects of the core curriculum. In part, this is because teaching in lessons observed was good or better. In outstanding lessons, relationships form the basis on which teaching is developed with in-depth subject knowledge, excellent strategies to support learning and a genuine commitment to enable students to be the best they can be. Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural Education (SMSC) is carefully planned and pupils understand how their beliefs and values impact on their lives and the school's sex and relationship education policy is delivered in line with the church's teaching.

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

The quality of welcome is outstanding. Visitors are made very welcome in the school while being subject to robust safeguarding procedures. The school takes a great deal of care to ensure that new pupils starting at the school are welcomed into the community through well planned transition and induction process. The dedicated team of staff who support Year 7 pupils liaise with partner primary schools to aid transition and a number of high quality 'taster days' in the summer term are beneficial to this process. Of particular note are the two additional days at the end of the summer term which develop and strengthen personal relationships in preparation for Year 7. Sixth Form students are similarly inducted; around 75% of students in the sixth form are from Thornleigh Salesian College. A 'sense of belonging' is helped by a number of events that are jointly arranged with other Salesian schools, such as sporting fixtures and musical events, as well as visits to partners in Tanzania undertaken by sixth form students every other year.

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

Welfare is at the heart of the Salesian tradition and is very much kept alive by students and adults supported by governors and parents. 'All welcomed, all equal, all respected' is a phrase which was seen throughout the school and is lived out in practice. Prayer was frequently seen during the inspection acting as a trigger for discussion, contemplative reflection and action, especially in form groups, meaning that students' welfare and regard for each other was prevalent. 'Where will your world lead you today?' was a provocative theme witnessed in form time and engaged each student fully, prompting some wonderful responses. Students commented to the inspector this was typical of the wholesome relationships experienced each day by pupils. In some lessons that were observed, spiritual, moral, social and cultural education (SMSC) was seen to be very much embedded in lesson planning. Students were able to very clearly articulate their wider social responsibilities to the school community in the place of a strong student voice through the student council, for example, in raising funds for a wide range of social justice causes at home and abroad in the school's network of communities in Tanzania and Kenya. A very high level of care and respect for others shows that the love of Christ in many everyday situations is visible, for example, in the way in which students interact with each other and the chaplaincy team come together to create worship opportunities during social time. Adults frequently explained that such positive outcomes for the challenged and vulnerable are largely due to the high degree of empathy, tolerance and forgiveness students show. The involvement of outside agencies, families and members of the secular and the Salesian community help to secure very strong outcomes for these pupils as well as help in their formation and personal growth.

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

Students take part in a weekly act of worship as a year group, in addition to the daily acts of worship that set the tone for students and staff. During the inspection, the staff liturgy was delightfully presented with a rare mix of humour and formation that engaged everyone enabling adults to the go about their vocations invigorated by the power of prayer. Mass was celebrated for a Year 7 form group at lunchtime. The mass was simple but a powerful

witness to faith. Students join in innovative liturgies and were exceptionally comfortable in doing so. Whilst the presence of the Salesian chapel is a daily reminder of the rich heritage of the school, the chapel is used purposely as the heart of the school's liturgical practices. The chaplaincy room, supported by a very able and creative chaplain and well-resourced chaplaincy, supports this and is a place of prayer and contemplation for some, a sanctuary for others and a place of fun for all. Liturgy is not dull at Thornleigh. The quality of worship activities is outstanding; which are systematically reviewed and evaluated frequently. Plans are in place to further develop liturgical experiences and opportunities. Pupils commented on their experiences and the impact of such opportunities ensure their spiritual growth and development. The opportunities to attend retreats at Savio House and national youth events such as Flame are welcomed and appreciated.

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

'Mission Possible' was a mission week held in 2015 that gave every pupil the opportunity to engage in their faith development. Nurturing every individual's faith is a priority of the governors and the leadership team. There are many opportunities for witness and includes a range of policies, such as the behaviour policy, which is formed using Gospel values of forgiveness, understanding and compassion. Students were able to articulate, throughout the inspection, how the Gospel values permeate their school lives and actions: 'staff going the extra mile' was frequently referenced as was articulating 'children know that they are loved'; the use of the Bosco Garden in the summer months as a place and space for reflection and contemplation; the leadership opportunities delegated to students through the council and opportunities to get involved in national issues such as the general election and membership of the youth parliament. The lay chaplain is a vibrant source of support to all adults and students. One student commented that 'our chaplain makes a big difference to me and on the life of the college'. The frequent retreats to Savio House are open to all and help fulfil an important dynamic in achieving social justice and reconciliation in the college. Mentoring programmes at all levels throughout the school make a difference to the lives of everyone and help secure a happy place to love and learn.

### **AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:**

- Continue to grow opportunities to bring families and parishes together, in order to further develop pray and worship with their children.
- Further strengthen sex and relationship education in the school.
- Provide for religious education teachers' professional development and formation to help ensure religious education has the best outcomes of all the 'core' subject areas at the college.

23<sup>rd</sup> November 2016

Dear Students

Thank you for welcoming us to your school during our visit a few weeks ago. You have an outstanding school that reflects well on all your community and, of course, yourselves! Supported by the governors and Mrs Burrowes, all the staff in your school continually strive for excellence every day and work very hard to build up a sense of family and community. They keep your school's Salesian Tradition at the heart of everything they do for you.

During our visit, we observed religious education, English and History lessons. We also saw an assembly and participated in form time. We met the school council and enjoyed a presentation about the superb work your school community has undertaken in the last year or two and that which is planned for the coming year. What is planned clearly builds on, and supports, the work of the school leadership team and governors in making the college one of the best in the wider area.

We were especially impressed with how you support and look after more vulnerable members of your school community and how your faith spurs you on to make a difference in other people's lives, especially through your charitable works not just in Bolton, but further afield in Tanzania and Kenya where you are making a difference there too! You should all be congratulated for your charity to the poor and the vulnerable.

The governors and Mrs Burrowes have very high aspirations for you all. They will now work together to see how you might become a closer part of parish life through the development of prayer and liturgy with your families. They will also ensure that religious education becomes the very best achieving of the core subjects. This is a challenge, but one which the leadership team and all the staff will take on!

You attend an outstanding Catholic school. We know you will be proud of that.

Yours sincerely

Mr S A Smith  
Mr M Wright  
*Section 48 Inspectors*

## **Summary Report to Parents**

On 23 November 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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