

**urth**  
**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION**  
**REPORT (Section 48)**

on

**THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE**  
**SCHOOL AND RELIGIOUS**  
**EDUCATION**

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**School:** Our Lady's Catholic High School

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**School URN:** 119779

**Headteacher:** Nigel Ranson

**Chair of Governors:** Philip Rydeard

**Inspector:** Anthony J Finnerty and John Young

**Date of Inspection:** 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> January 2013

This Inspection Report is produced for the Rt. Reverend Michael Campbell O.S.A., the Bishop of Lancaster, and for the Governing Body of the school (Education Act 2005, Section 48). The inspection reviews, evaluates and plans further improvements in the school's witness to the Catholic faith and Curriculum Religious Education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation.

The inspection schedule follows criteria set by the National Board of Advisers and Inspectors.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Our Lady's Catholic High School is located in Fulwood, Preston. It is of average size. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The number of students who have a statement of special education needs is slightly below average. It is a specialist school in mathematics and computing and has been awarded Master Status in computing and is a Microsoft Academy. The school has received the Geography Quality Mark and Artsmark Gold.

## FACTUAL INFORMATION

### Pupil Catchment:

Number of pupils on roll:	896
Planned Admission Number of pupils:	180
Percentage of pupils baptised RC:	73.2%
Percentage of pupils from other Christian denominations:	8.2%
Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths:	5.1%
Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation:	13.5%
Percentage of pupils with special needs:	12.9%

### Staffing

Full time teachers:	47
Part time teachers:	9
Percentage of Catholic teachers:	66%

### RE Department Staffing:

Number of full time RE teachers:	4
Number of part time RE teachers:	2
Percentage of Catholic teachers:	100%
Percentage of teachers with CCRS:	100%

### Percentage of learning time given to RE:

Yr 7	10%	Yr 10	10%
Yr 8	10%	Yr 11	10%
Yr 9	8%		

### Parishes served by the school:

St. Francis, Goosnargh	St. Mary's, Lea
Holy Family, Ingol	St. Mary's, Newhouse
Our Lady & St. Edward's, Preston	St. Andrew's, Cottam
Sacred Heart & St. Walburge's, Preston	St. Robert's, Catforth
SS Mary & Michael's, Garstang	St. Mary's, Cloughton
St. Anthony's, Preston	
St. Edmund Campion, Preston	
St. Mary's, Fernyhalgh	

## **Overall Effectiveness**

**1**

## **Capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

### **MAIN FINDINGS**

There is a calm, friendly and welcoming atmosphere throughout Our Lady's Catholic High School. Belief in the God given dignity of each individual ensures mutual respect and a culture which encourages students and staff to develop in every aspect of their lives. As one student said "everyone matters and everyone knows they matter". The school community seeks to reflect the values proclaimed by Christ in the gospels, and succeeds in this aspiration to a large degree. It is an outstanding Catholic school and provides an education which enables students to flourish. The school's pursuit of excellence, its care and provision for all pupils, the high quality of Religious Education and the centrality of prayer are all witnesses to its distinctive Catholic character.

Outcomes for pupils are at least good and often outstanding at all key stages. Current and secure data provide a particularly positive picture of their progress and achievements. The determinedly high standards set throughout the curriculum, linked to support systems and professional realism, suggest the capacity to continually improve in this respect is outstanding. Students value, and gain profound benefit from, the Catholic character of the school. Prayer is at the heart of the daily experience of all members of this welcoming Christian community and whole school liturgical celebration is valued.

School leadership is characterised at all levels by reflection and self-evaluation, providing confidence that there will be continuing improvement in this area. At all levels of the school community there is a sense of ownership and an enthusiasm to play a full role in its life. Robust systems and strong structures for communication and support give confidence that there will be sustained improvement in all aspects of an already highly successful school. An exceptionally dedicated and confident governing body uphold a strong and well formed vision for the school.

Provision for Catholic education is excellent. The school takes care to appoint key staff capable of delivering high standards of teaching and learning and who are actively committed to the values and ethos of the school. Assessment practices are well documented and rigorously implemented in line with school policy and this has a positive impact on student achievement. Sound evaluation of student needs has led to appropriate development in teaching and learning. All assemblies are well

planned and incorporate student involvement to varying degrees. Experience of daily prayer is provided and supported for all students.

### **What the school needs to do to improve further**

- Enrich and deepen pupil experience of places of worship and religious practices such as pilgrimage by further developing a programme of visits to sacred places and by embedding it into the Religious Education curriculum.
- Implement the decision of the governors to ensure that the full provision of time for Religious Education is allocated in each year group.
- Continue to develop the prayer life of the school by providing formation for tutors in meditative techniques and in the use of scripture.

## **PUPILS**

### **How good are outcomes for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups?**

**1**

Pupils' learning and enjoyment in Religious Education is outstanding. Attainment at Key Stage 4 has followed a rising trend. Subject outcomes are far beyond national averages in terms of both key measures: 90.9% gaining A\* – C and 54.5% of pupils achieving A\*/A at GCSE. These 2012 figures show 4% and 11% gains respectively on the already outstanding 2011 outcomes. Progress made by pupils is similarly impressive with 93% making expected progress and 75% exceeding it. The school's own assessment of outstanding progress in Key Stage 3 is validated by the Key Stage 4 outcomes. It is worth noting that this excellence in RE broadly matches and in some respects exceeds the similarly fine outcomes for pupils in the other core subjects. Progress and the quality of learning for groups of pupils and those with particular learning needs and/or disabilities are also outstanding: 71% of pupils in receipt of pupil premium make expected progress and 43% exceed this. The large majority of pupils with Special Educational Needs, including those with Statements, made or exceeded expected progress. From Year 7 entry, pupils say that they value the subject, with the majority enjoying their learning. The expectation that they will achieve highly in this subject is widely expressed and believed by pupils from an early stage – with good reason. As one pupil said "You can do your best and you are supported to do your best".

Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school's Catholic life, acquiring and living by such key Gospel values as the 'Golden Rule'. They say that all in the school feel reciprocally supported and respected, recognising that this applies equally to adults and pupils within the school community. Consistency of expectation in behaviour is valued, such that while pupils readily admit that school is strict, they swiftly qualify this with a very positive expression of how good it is to know both what is expected and to give and receive respect in equal measure. School life is much more to pupils than the aim of great academic progress and so the wealth of possible clubs and activities which flourish at lunchtime or after school draw very many pupils. The school's culture - emphasising the positive with celebration of achievement and success - is much valued. In Religious Education lessons, the school's persistent expectation of equal respect for each person as made in God's image is regularly proven during discussion of moral issues. Volunteering to support younger pupils in the homework club is just one example of a pervasive enthusiasm for service of others locally and more widely. The Spectrum programme shows that concern for those in grief has a practical dimension. The strong chaplaincy serves to enrich pupils' spiritual lives and facilitates their contribution to the Catholic life of the school.

Student response to Collective Worship varies but all students acknowledge the fact that it is central to the school's life and they respect the significance of prayer in the lives of fellow students. The bedrock of mutual respect present throughout the school encourages a mature approach from pupils. Behaviour and participation is exceptionally good in the major liturgical events of the year and some pupils are keen to be part of the planning for these occasions. There is a great openness on the part of the young people and there is an expressed desire for spiritual development which can be further advanced by retreat days and formation in personal prayer. Pupils at Our Lady's belonging to world faiths other than Christianity feel their needs are addressed respectfully.

## **LEADERS AND MANAGERS**

**How effective are leaders and managers in developing the Catholic life of the School?**

<b>1</b>
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There is strong leadership at Our Lady's; leaders listen, and leadership is shared across all levels of the school. The promotion and support of the Catholic life of the school is strongly connected to the senior leaders' own expression of personal commitment to Christ. The head teacher provides a model of professional honesty, dedication and hard work. All leaders and managers make explicit the school's mission of service and, by giving the highest priority to promoting, monitoring and evaluating the Catholic life of the school, enable all members of the community to grow in faith. The recognition given to the demands made upon staff and the encouragement given by the provision of support days at 'Tabor', and through other channels, is impressive.

The monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education provision is systematic, rigorous, and targeted at securing improved outcomes for students – it is honest and realistic. A strong team of teaching specialists works well together to share ideas and to review progress. In consequence the regular evaluation of teaching and learning is robust and enthusiastic and this has led to clear priorities for development being established which are planned for appropriately.

Governors are actively involved in the Catholic life of Our Lady's. They ensure continuous improvement through monitoring and evaluation, governor briefings, and by their frequent presence in the school and their close connections, through the link governors, with different parts of the school's life. The governors know the school very well, and they speak passionately and knowledgeably about the impact of the Catholic character of the school as a witness in the wider community. They are rightly proud of their school. Governor strengths and skills are broad and are effectively

deployed. They play a full and very active role in planning the strategic development of Our Lady's.

The range of partnerships which the school is constantly developing enriches its Catholic life. Leadership at all levels is active in promoting Our Lady's partnership with the family of primary schools. Partnerships are developed far beyond this – the most extreme being a developing global link, fostered among enthusiastic Year 8 pupils with peers in Longridge, with a favela in Rio de Janeiro. Many other links with secular and explicitly Catholic charities are part of the school's life: partnership flows through the life of this school. The school is committed to improving the lives of all and its work with many organisations makes an outstanding contribution to pupil development and well-being. Much of this was exemplified in the planning and outworking of last year's School Mission: Travelling Together in Faith.

The school is outstanding in its promotion of community cohesion: pupils freely voice their sense of mutual respect and belonging to their school community – 'Being One of Ours'. Pupils across the entire age range, themselves from a range of faith perspectives, voice enthusiasm for the discovery of what it means to belong to different faiths. This enthusiasm is strengthened by the school's pervasive culture of respect for difference. Religious Education visits in Year 8 deepen pupils' understanding of a range of local faith communities, and there is a clear desire for this to extend further. The Chaplaincy Team facilitates pupil participation in neighbourhood and religious community activities beyond the boundaries of the school itself. Our Lady's makes sensitive provision in responding to a range of needs for pupils and their families with its 'Strengthening Families' programme. Faith and Justice are the focus for two Extended Learning Days for each pupil, while other such days also comprise parental inputs. Parents of all backgrounds involve themselves in school decision-making.

## **PROVISION**

### **How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?**

<b>1</b>
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The quality of teaching in Religious Education is evidently outstanding as the Year 11 outcomes resoundingly indicate. Purposeful learning and pupil engagement are apparent. Pupils across the ability range are clear that they expect to be successful at GCSE in Religious Studies. They relish the frequent opportunities provided to discuss important matters of meaning and values which the subject offers. The provision of lively visual prompts for thought and debate deepens pupil engagement. Teachers are meticulous in securing the religious literacy of pupils, making sure that they can not only use key religious terminology, but do so coherently, forming extended abstract links. The Religious Education department also

makes a marked contribution to the development of pupils' general literacy and thinking skills. Very good relationships in all aspects of Religious Education classrooms ensure that pupils have excellent attitudes to their learning; teachers show confidence in their pupils' potential to succeed and pupils are consequently aspirational in their aims. Teachers demonstrably accompany their pupils on their journey in the search for meaning.

Our Lady's implements its rigorous assessment system with close monitoring of achievement. The Religious Education department fully participates in the system such that each pupil from Year 7 to Year 11 is aware of where they are and, most importantly, what to do next: pupils say that they 'always know how to improve'. This knowledge is routinely implemented as pupils make improvements: they follow oral guidance in class to improve responses and they respond to the regular and focused written guidance given through the marking of work. Together with the consistent quality of teaching and the excellent pupil behaviour, the system allows progress to be plainly tracked. Where progress is below target, appropriate interventions are made.

A culture has been created in which Religious Education is positively regarded by staff and pupils. Work is well matched to pupils' prior learning and contributes very effectively to the promotion of the school's mission and values. Every effort is made to ensure that Religious Education matches the needs of pupils. As a consequence pupils engage wholeheartedly in lessons and their spiritual and moral development is high. The department is well resourced with a suite of dedicated rooms and lessons are enhanced by use of current technology. The time allocated to Religious Education is slightly below the requirements of the Bishops' Conference in year 9, but is met in all other years. The quality of the curriculum is very good overall, with some areas, such as elements of Key Stage 3, undergoing revision. There is no complacency in this excellent department.

Collective Worship in all its forms, from year Masses to assemblies and tutor group reflections, is an essential part of life at Our Lady's and is generally of high quality. Great skill is exercised to ensure that traditional prayers are known and loved while innovative styles of worship are also used for celebration and prayer. It is routine for pupils to contribute to the planning of liturgical events and for them to play a role in worship. A strong and extended chaplaincy team serve the school effectively in supporting staff and pupils in the experience of worship and in the opportunities for prayer.

## SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

**Key for inspection grades:**

Grade 1 – **Outstanding**    Grade 2 – **Good**    Grade 3 – **Satisfactory**    Grade 4 – **Unsatisfactory**

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The school's capacity for sustained improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>How good are outcomes for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups?</b>	<b>1</b>
• how well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education?	1
❖ the quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
❖ the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
❖ pupils' attainment in RE	1
• to what extent do pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school?	1
• how well do pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship?	2
<b>How effective are leaders and managers in developing the Catholic life of the School?</b>	<b>1</b>
• how well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils?	1
• how well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for RE and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils?	1
• the extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory and canonical responsibilities met?	1
• how well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and well being?	1
• how effectively leaders and managers promote Community Cohesion?	1
<b>How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?</b>	<b>1</b>
• the quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education?	1
• the effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in Religious Education?	1
• the extent to which Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs?	1
• the quality of Collective Worship provided by the school?	1