



Mary Immaculate High School

URN: 401888

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Cardiff

24–25 January 2024

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

Catholic life and mission (p.3)

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

2

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

2

Collective worship (p.7)

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

2

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

No

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

No

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

2

What the school does well

- Mary Immaculate High School is a school which respects the dignity of every member of the community.
- The school's mission is a clear expression of mutual respect, love, and service where no student is left behind.
- The level of pastoral care provided for all members of the community is exemplary.
- The religious education department is well led, and all members of the department make a significant contribution to students' spiritual and moral development.
- Prayer provides a variety of meaningful opportunities for all students to grow in faith.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to develop student leadership to provide further opportunities for students to plan and lead activities that reflect the Catholic life of the school.
- Ensure the minimum requirement of 10% curriculum time for religious education in all year groups as laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- Ensure opportunities are put in place to develop the sacramental life of the school including the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

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

Pupil outcomes

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

1

Provision

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

2

Leadership

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

2

2

Students' contribution to the Catholic life of the school is excellent. They feel welcomed into the family of the school regardless of background, faith, or ability. Students articulate pride in their community and appreciate the praise and encouragement they receive, particularly through the award of 'Balance' points. They acknowledge it is a school which respects the dignity of everyone and express clearly how Catholic virtues apply to them in their daily lives. Students with different strengths and challenges value the unstinting, and often unspoken support that they and their families receive. This reflects the ethos of 'respect, care, compassion and love' and is a strength of the school. Students' understanding of their role in the Catholic life of the school is evident in the way they treat each other, their teachers, and visitors to the school. Through student voice, the school parliament, the eco school's group and the chaplaincy team, a wide variety of activities are organised to support the needs of others in the local and wider community. Students demonstrate an understanding of Catholic Social Teaching through their support for the local SVP, 'Operation Christmas Child' and Cafod, including the 'Big Lent Walk'. Students understand the core purpose of 'achieve the best for all' and know what is expected of them to ensure that they can learn in a purposeful way.

The school's mission is a clear expression of mutual respect, love, and service. All staff are fully committed to developing students' understanding of faith and students speak enthusiastically of the tangible sense of care that results in a community in which nobody is left behind. The school's concern for all students is further evidenced in the work of 'The Bridge'. Students facing daily challenges are looked after and offered a quiet space to think and share their worries. The school's environment reflects its mission and identity well through signs and images which are visible throughout the school. Behaviour is exemplary as a result of policies which are

communicated clearly. Students confirmed that good behaviour is the norm because they all respect and want the best for each other. One year 7 student explained how they are always encouraged to be 'the best version of themselves'. The PSHE and RSE programme is carefully designed and planned to reflect Catholic Teaching, especially Catholic Social Teaching and principles. Individual subjects have begun to review schemes of work to ensure they understand fully how their subject contributes to the Catholic ethos of the school. Further development is planned for the ethos training day in March.

Leaders and governors demonstrate a shared commitment to the Church's mission in education. They articulate their understanding of the role they play in providing a Catholic community of faith in action. The headteacher has an inspirational vision for Catholic education and is ably supported by a dedicated and enthusiastic leadership team. Leaders and governors seek to develop the Catholic character of the school and the quality of life of students and their families. The 'Culture Day' in the summer term enables students to celebrate the many different cultures represented in the school. This was initiated by the students and supported enthusiastically by school leaders. Governors are very knowledgeable and experienced. Through regular visits and the ethos committee, governors ensure they are well informed of the successes of the school and areas for further development. Students voice is used well through focus reviews, however, their involvement in the monitoring and evaluation of Catholic life and mission is underdeveloped. The number of Catholic students entering the school has declined since the previous inspection and consideration needs to be given to review the catchment area of the school to address this for the future.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

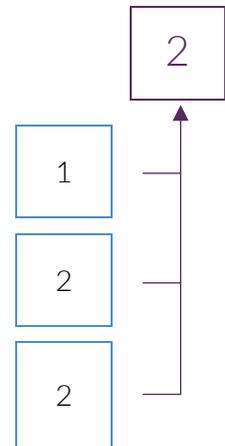
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

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

Leadership

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



Students engage extremely well in a variety of activities and clearly enjoy the opportunities provided to discuss and reflect spiritually, ethically, and theologically. Students from varied starting points, including some from a low baseline, make excellent progress in each key stage. Results at GCSE are broadly in line with other core subjects in the school. However, a significant gap remains in the attainment of boys compared to results achieved by girls. The department is fully aware of this, and strategies have already been put in place to address this. Behaviour in lessons is consistently excellent. In the best lessons, not a moment of learning is wasted, and students are engaged in 'do now' tasks to review prior learning as soon as they enter the classroom. The department provides excellent support for learners of all abilities and 'the big question' is used consistently in lessons to enhance, sustain, and address challenging activities. Students are therefore able to explore complex ideas and are very willing to support and be supported by their peers. Key vocabulary is revisited regularly which supports students in becoming religiously literate. They use religious language confidently and in context. One year 11 student's explanation of the Trinity was particularly impressive.

The religious education department is a very strong team and is well led by an enthusiastic subject leader. All teachers demonstrate enthusiasm in their teaching which results in a lively focussed learning environment. The quality of all teaching observed was either good or better. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and consequently ask incisive questions to both test and develop students' understanding in lessons. Work is differentiated effectively with red, amber, green and purple tasks being used. Students select the activity best suited to them and this provides appropriate challenge. They are encouraged to always extend themselves. The foundations for extended writing are built from year 7 and students in key stage 4 are provided with opportunities to develop this further through examination style questions. Opportunities

for creative work at key stage 3 are limited and this needs to be developed. Written work is generally well presented, however, boys' writing skills are less well developed when compared to the written work of girls. Self and peer assessment is evident in books and students respond to the feedback they are given. 'What went well' (W3) and 'even better if' (ebi) are used as the focus for written feedback. 'Dedicated improvement and reflection time' (DIRT) is used effectively to deepen students' knowledge and understanding of the topics being taught.

Leaders and governors have not ensured that religious education receives the required curriculum time allocation. Year 7, 8 and 9 are below the minimum expectation of 10%. Therefore, this does not comply with the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. Religious education is comparable to other core curriculum subjects in terms of budget, staff professional development and staffing. Learning walks, lesson observations and book reviews occur as part of the school's regular monitoring processes. There is a clear focus for development, however, department improvement planning does not include measurable targets or milestones to ensure that the department achieves the intended outcome. Teaching and learning remains the focus for development and accurately reflects the needs of the school so that they are able to continue to improve. Student voice is used to inform the future development of the department. The head of religious education meets with the governors' ethos committee each term to monitor progress and discuss issues for development. This is then reported to the full governing body. Schemes of work are currently being reviewed to ensure that they meet the requirements of the *Religious Education Directory* (RED). Work in year 7 already reflects the changes introduced.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

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

1

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

2

Prayer and worship are central to the daily life of the school. There are many opportunities for students to pray and experience moments of reflection and celebration. Students are actively involved in leading and participating in acts of worship. Prayerful silence was observed at the beginning of the year 8 and 9 assemblies. Catholic virtues are referenced each term, and a theme of the week is embedded into the school's practice and routines. Students are at the heart of this community of prayer. Training has been provided by the head of religious education and the spirituality and well-being assistant to ensure that all students experience a variety of ways of praying. High quality prayer is provided during academic tutor time in the morning and through year group assemblies. The Examen was used extremely effectively to enable students to develop personal reflection and they responded positively to this. Prayer complements the spiritual and caring ethos of the school. Students' experience has a profound effect on them irrespective of faith or their faith background. There is a deep sense of respect for other religious traditions. Students explain coherently that collective worship is inclusive, and that a space is provided for students of other religions to pray in.

Praying together is an integral part of the daily routine of school life. Students articulate that they are aware of different ways of praying including traditional Catholic prayers, meditation, and reflection. Reflection is used to allow students to make connections between current issues being experienced by communities around the world and the impact that this has on their daily lives. Students' experience of Mass is limited to the year 7 welcome Mass, year 11 leavers' Mass and Masses for Mary Immaculate Day and St David's Day. No provision is made for voluntary Mass and opportunities for students to experience the Sacrament of Reconciliation is very limited. The Sacramental life of the school is therefore underdeveloped. Retreats are available for students in year 7 in addition to a visit to St Francis Catholic Church. Although retreats for

other year groups have been planned in previous years, they are currently not planned for students in other year groups. Students are very respectful and are developing their understanding of how to put faith into action particularly through their work with the local SVP. The chapel is a calm, reflective space and is at the heart of the school and supports the ethos of the school well.

The provision for collective worship is consistent across all year groups. Leaders plan and deliver quality collective worship and have a good understanding of the Church's liturgical year. In addition, Holocaust Memorial Day was remembered during the inspection and students responded with reverence. The newly appointed spirituality and well-being assistant is dynamic and provides support for students and staff and is highly valued by all. She makes a significant contribution to developing the sense of community for the benefit of everyone in the school. The headteacher and senior leaders act as role models of good practice for staff and students by ensuring that they are regularly included on the rota for assembly. Staff report that good practice is shared and feel that they are growing in confidence in delivering prayer with students. Opportunities for students to contribute to, and participate in, the evaluation of prayer is good through student focus groups including the chaplaincy team. Governors are kept well informed about the prayer life of the school through the headteacher's report and the ethos committee. Systems are formalised and governors' understanding of the value of prayer and worship is evident in both discussions and written reports.

Information about the school

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|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Full name of school | Mary Immaculate High School |
| School unique reference number (URN) | 401888 |
| School DfE Number (LAESTAB) | 6814607 |
| Full postal address of the school | Mary Immaculate High School, Caerau Lane, Wenvoe, Cardiff, CF5 5QZ |
| School phone number | 02920 593465 |
| Headteacher | Mr Huw Powell |
| Chair of Governors | Reverend Professor Maurice Scanlon |
| School Website | https://www.maryimmaculate.org.uk |
| Trusteeship | Diocesan |
| Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable) | Not Applicable |
| Phase | Secondary Comprehensive |
| Type of school | Voluntary Aided |
| Admissions policy | Yes |
| Age-range of pupils | 11-16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Date of last denominational inspection | 18–20 May 2015 |
| Previous denominational inspection grade | Good |

The inspection team

Mr Garry Maher
Mr James Torrance

Lead
Team

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 |