



## Prior Park College

URN: 109347

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Clifton

29 February–01 March 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

#### Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

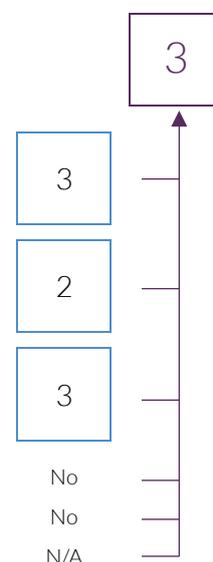
#### Collective worship (p.7)

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

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

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

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



### What the school does well

- Leaders and governors have created an inclusive community where diversity is valued, and relationships are underpinned by love and mutual respect.
- Students are happy, confident and feel safe. They are well supported and proud of their college.
- Students and staff share a spirit of generosity and participate in a wide range of activities to help and support others.
- Religious education is led and delivered by teachers with high expertise in their subject knowledge and a genuine commitment to their students.
- All holy days and seasons are celebrated, and provision is made for preparing and receiving the sacraments.

## What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen the centrality of Christ in the daily experience of students and staff, so that they can better understand the Catholic life and mission of the college.
- Ensure that general religious education in the sixth form is given the required 5% of curriculum time for each repeating timetable cycle.
- Develop an understanding and approach to prayer and worship that enables full, active, and conscious participation by students.

## 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**

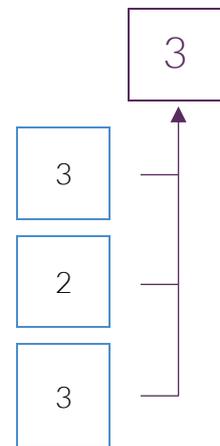
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

**Provision**

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

**Leadership**

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



Students demonstrate a strong understanding of the college values of generosity, curiosity and courage but do not articulate an understanding of the college’s mission being underpinned by its Catholic identity. Older students recognise the college motto “deo duce, deo luce” but are not able to explain its significance. Relationships between staff and students are positive, affirming, and supportive; student behaviour is excellent. Students value the warm, inclusive ethos of the college and the many opportunities, particularly sporting, afforded to them. They have a sense of self-worth and demonstrate respect for themselves and others. They engage in a range of activities that help others such as the Cafod fast day, Legs4Africa or sleeping out to raise money for the Genesis Trust which supports the homeless and vulnerable. The Eco Prior group champions environmental issues. Students understand the importance of supporting those in need locally, nationally, and globally and caring for our world, but they do not express their actions as a response to the demands of faith or Catholic social teaching. The college mission and service committee comprises a small group of older students who are active in planning and leading a range of activities. There is no active junior chaplaincy team at the time of inspection.

The college mission statement is centred on shared values and love for the students. It is known and lived but the link to how it is shaped and informed by the Word of God is not overt. Staff enjoy working at the college and are committed to its mission and values. One member of staff stated “Love is at the centre of our school...there is so much care, consideration, and kindness visible day to day. It runs as a thread throughout the college.” There is an embedded culture of welcome and the presence of students from a variety of countries and cultures is valued. Staff provide high levels of pastoral care. One parent spoke of the “caring and nurturing approach” of the college. The full-time lay chaplain has a strong understanding of the importance and benefits of a varied chaplaincy provision, and her support is valued by the

staff. She is instrumental in the sacramental programme offered to students. The college environment contains some signs of its Catholic character, but beyond the chapel and theology classrooms, there are inconsistencies and many missed opportunities. Personal, social and health education and relationship, sex and health education are carefully planned and communicated.

Leaders and trustees are deeply committed to the college and its students. They have an unwavering focus on love and kindness being at the centre of college life and an appreciation of the tradition of the college as a Catholic educational establishment. There is a sense of the faith identity of the college being something that has been inherited and needs to be maintained, rather than being celebrated and grown. College documentation and in particular marketing materials do not always sufficiently reflect the Catholic identity and mission of the college. Leaders and trustees have policies and structures in place which provide supportive pastoral care for staff, notably the recent appointment of an assistant head with responsibility for wellbeing. The induction programme for new staff includes a session with the lay chaplain on the faith life of the college. Staff professional development sessions include an annual session on the faith identity of Catholic colleges. Leaders have established purposeful relationships with local parish priests and colleges in the Trust and Camino partnership. The development of the Catholic life and mission of the college is not prioritised in college documentation or plans and there are no systems for monitoring and evaluating it.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

**Pupil outcomes**

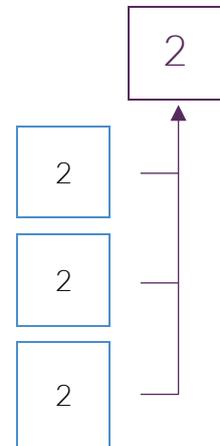
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

**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 develop secure knowledge in their learning of religious education as required by the *Religious Education Directory*. They make good progress in knowing and remembering more against the planned curriculum and broadly achieve in line with expectations. Students' attitudes to their learning in religious education are generally positive. Not all students and parents understand why religious education is a core subject and therefore compulsory for all students. In lessons, students participate cooperatively and demonstrate a desire to do well. Sixth-form theology students demonstrate particularly high levels of enthusiasm and engagement. In all year groups, relationships between students and their theology teachers are positive and mutually respectful. In lessons, students have many opportunities to make notes on the information provided by staff and to recall previous learning. Their knowledge acquisition is strong. Students at Key Stage 3 have more opportunities to present their learning in a variety of ways than older students and the work displayed in classrooms is predominantly that of younger students. Students of all ages are confident in discussing their learning. They know how well they are doing, and older students know their target grades.

The department consists of committed, experienced subject specialists who are passionate about their subject and ambitious for their students. They create a safe classroom environment where high expectations of work completion and encouragement are the norm. Care has been taken over the sequencing of learning and lesson content is closely linked to the course requirements. There is a strong focus on knowledge acquisition and making notes from information provided by the teacher. Students in years 7 and 8 experience a wider range of learning approaches and particularly enjoy discussions and group work. In exam classes, frequent reference is made to the requirements of the exam and assessment criteria. Teachers use questioning in lessons predominantly to check student recall of prior knowledge. The use of questioning to deepen understanding is less common, as are opportunities for students to reflect and use their learning to meaningfully make sense of the world around them. Teachers use authentic resources to support learning, as seen in a lesson on Judaism. They mark student

work regularly, but the depth of feedback is variable. It is strongest in older year groups. Teachers do not consistently check that the feedback has been acted upon.

Leaders and governors maintain religious education, which is referred to as theology at the college, as a core subject. At key stages 3 and 4 they ensure that the religious education curriculum meets the requirements of the *Religious Education Directory* and that the required amount of time is given to religious education. In the Sixth Form, the provision for general religious education is part of the Prior4life programme. It does not comply with directives, as less than 5% of the taught time is given to religious education in each repeating cycle of the timetable. Leaders have ensured that religious education has parity with other core subjects in terms of resourcing, accommodation, and professional development for staff. The subject leader for religious education has a strong level of expertise and a good understanding of the strengths of his team. As part of the college's academic quality assurance, he produces an annual report summarizing the learning observations, work and marking scrutinies, and analyses of student test and exam results, that he has undertaken. A deputy head is the line manager of the subject leader for religious education and the department is further scrutinised by the link governor for religious education.

## 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

3

#### Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

3

#### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

3

3

Students have regular opportunities to participate in prayer at the college either in their form group, their house or as a whole college. Students have a strong sense of belonging to their house and recite their house prayer confidently but not always reverently. They enjoy singing hymns and do so with great gusto, often in competition with other houses rather than as an act of worship. They are less secure with traditional prayers, which they are not often invited to say. Students attend a termly whole college Mass, and the college observes all holy days with the celebration of the Eucharist. A weekly Sunday Mass is provided for boarders, who also have a well-established system of night prayer. At whole college Masses, some students are altar servers, readers and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. Student mission and service leaders prepare and lead collective worship in their houses, following the liturgical calendar. Apart from this small group of leaders, students typically have limited opportunities to prepare and lead prayer and liturgy with others. Many students do not have a developed understanding of the purpose and value of worship, do not reflect on their experience of it and have difficulty making connections between it and the wider life of the college.

Prayer and liturgy are part of college life and full provision is made for observance of the liturgical calendar and the celebration of Mass. Weekly opportunities are provided but those which involve all students tend to be routine and are not always meaningful as acts of worship. These opportunities offer a limited range of ways to pray, do not expose students to the wide variety and richness of possible approaches or encourage student leadership of prayer. The voluntary opportunities coordinated by the lay chaplain and subject leader for religious education have a clearer purpose and include a weekly exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. The weekly Gospel is shared with tutors, students and parents by email, but scripture does not always hold a central place in house assemblies or the Friday whole college gathering. Staff and students value the sacred space of the chapel but are not all aware of expected behaviours, especially concerning the Sanctuary. Music is well-established at the college and the singing of traditional hymns is a strength. Parent comments expressed a desire for a wider

range of modern music and worship. Staff and students are not expected to routinely plan, and lead prayer and many staff lack the confidence to do so. A small group of staff have in the past met voluntarily to plan and offer support to their colleagues in this area.

Leaders have planned the college calendar to set aside time to celebrate the Eucharist at key times in the liturgical calendar and provide seasonal opportunities such as reconciliation during Lent. The college has no policy on prayer and liturgy. Leaders and trustees have, in the last year, adopted a policy on faith formation but it does not comprehensively cover prayer and liturgy. Meaningful prayer and liturgy have not been defined and expectations regarding staff involvement and leadership are not clear. Leaders do not consistently demonstrate clarity of understanding on the differences between assemblies and collective worship. The lay chaplain and a small group of volunteer staff are positive role models and have a good understanding of a variety of inclusive prayer and worship, but there is no strategy to use their skills to systematically build up student participation and leadership. Systems for strategic planning, monitoring and the evaluation of prayer and collective worship in the college are not in place.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	Prior Park College
School unique reference number (URN)	109347
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8006001
Full postal address of the school	Prior Park College, Ralph Allen Drive, Bath, BA2 5AH
School phone number	01225835353
Headteacher	Ben Horan
Chair of Governors/Trustees	Ms Anne Shepherd
School Website	www.priorparkschools.com
Trusteeship	Independent
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Catholic Independent School
Admissions policy	N/A
Age-range of pupils	11-19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	October 2007
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

## The inspection team

Basia McLaughlin  
Cyprian Vella

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