

# Archdiocese of Cardiff



## Catholic School Inspection Report Bishop Hedley Catholic High School, Merthyr Tydfil

<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>7-9 October 2019</b>
<b>Reporting Inspector</b>	<b>Mrs Kathryn Burke</b>
<b>Accompanying Inspector</b>	<b>Mr David Blackwell and Mr Wiktor Daron</b>
<b>Type of School</b>	<b>Secondary</b>
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	<b>11-16</b>
<b>Number on roll</b>	<b>563</b>
<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>
<b>Chair of Governors</b>	<b>Fr Christopher Hancock</b>
<b>School Address</b>	<b>Gwaunfarren Road Pendydarren Merthyr Tydfil CF47 9AN</b>
<b>Tel No.</b>	<b>01685 351860</b>
<b>Email Address</b>	<b>office@bishophedleyhigh.merthyr.sch.uk</b>
<b>Parishes served</b>	<b>Parish of Mary Immaculate, Cynon Valley St Mary's, Merthyr Tydfil St Illtyd's, Merthyr Tydfil St Aloysius, Merthyr Tydfil St Benedict's, Aberfan, All Saints, Ebbw Vale Immaculate Conception, Tredegar St John's Rhymney and St Mary's, Brynmawr</b>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	<b>11 November 2013</b>
<b>Headteacher</b>	<b>Mrs Sarah Hopkins</b>

Catholic School inspection aims to assess outcomes, provision and leadership and management in each of the three Inspection Areas:

**Inspection Area 1: Catholic Life and Ethos**

**Inspection Area 2: Curriculum Religious Education**

**Inspection Area 3: Collective Worship**

Inspectors provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on prospects for improvement, both of which are based on the judgements arrived at in inspecting the three areas.

<b>Judgement</b>	<b>What the judgement means</b>
Excellent or Outstanding	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector leading practice or practise that is both consistent and highly effective.
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate and Needs Improvement or Requires Improvement	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory and Needs Urgent Improvement or Inadequate	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The table below shows the terms that Archdiocesan inspectors use and a broad idea of their meaning. It is for guidance only.

<b>Proportion</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>With very few exceptions</b>	<b>Nearly all</b>
<b>90% or more</b>	<b>Most</b>
<b>70% or more</b>	<b>Many</b>
<b>60% or more</b>	<b>A majority</b>
<b>Close to 50%</b>	<b>Half/around half</b>
<b>Below 40%</b>	<b>A minority</b>
<b>Below 20%</b>	<b>Few</b>
<b>Less than 10%</b>	<b>Very few</b>

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Archdiocese of Cardiff Schools website: [www.rcadcschools.org](http://www.rcadcschools.org)

## Context

Bishop Hedley Catholic High School is a voluntary aided, English medium, 11-16 school serving the Heads of the Valleys within the Catholic Archdiocese of Cardiff. There are 563 pupils on roll. This is slightly higher than during their last Section 50 inspection in 2013. However, in 2013 the school had a sixth form provision but this no longer exists in the school.

The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is 17.6% which is above the national average of 16.4%. The school has about 25% of pupils on the special educational needs register and 26.1% of pupils come from homes where English is not the first language. 58.4% of the pupils are baptised Roman Catholic and 25.2% are from other Christian denominations. Pupils of many faiths and those without any faith attend the school.

The school serves seven Catholic feeder primary schools from a wide catchment area covering areas such as Merthyr Tydfil, Hirwaun, Aberdare, Ebbw Vale, Rhymney, Merthyr Vale and Tredegar.

The headteacher has been in post since September 2018 and is supported by four Assistant Headteachers. The Pastoral system is made up of progress leaders, one for Year 7, one for Year 8 & 9, and one each for 10 & 11. Assistant Heads oversee year groups.

The School is a Curriculum Pioneer and Innovation School. The Head of Religious Studies is also the Lead practitioner for curriculum development within the Central South Consortium.

The individual school budget per pupil for Bishop Hedley Catholic High School in 2019-20 is £4,783 per pupil. The average per pupil in the secondary schools in the local authority is £4,709.

**Summary**

**How effective is the school in providing Catholic education?**

**Excellent**

Catholic education at Bishop Hedley Catholic High School is based on its Mission Statement to 'Educate, Encourage, Excel in Christ' and its ethos is firmly rooted in Gospel values. The school provides a strong and secure Catholic education because:

- the governing body are fully involved and bring a wealth of experience and skills to the school in order to support continued improvement.
- the headteacher has a clear vision for Catholic education and provides clear and effective leadership.
- teaching in the Religious Education department is good or better in the majority of cases with elements of excellent practice.
- provision for prayer and worship is excellent. Students experience a wide range of liturgical celebrations and opportunities for prayer, all of which contribute strongly to their spiritual and moral development.
- standards in Religious Education are good and are improving. The students make good progress. Attainment at Key Stage 4 have improved significantly in recent years.
- the chaplain makes a significant contribution to the ethos and spiritual life of the school and his work in fostering positive relationships is exemplary.
- the school is a welcoming and inclusive community where pupils feel valued for everything they achieve.
- effective pastoral care promotes student well-being.
- pupils and parents are immensely proud of their school and speak enthusiastically about the school's distinctive Catholic nature. This is also recognised by Estyn who described pupils as *'proud to be members of the school'*
- pupils have been involved in evaluating, discussing and amending the school's mission statement to fit the purpose and mission of the school day.

**What are the school's prospects for improvement?**

**Excellent**

The school's prospects for improvement are excellent because:

- areas previously identified as in need of improvement have for the most part been addressed.
- very good leadership and vision is provided by the headteacher and the leadership team. They are ably supported by an effective and dedicated Head of Religious Education.
- the school's self-evaluation document is very good at outlining features of the Religious Education provision within the school.

- there is a team of dedicated Religious Education teachers who are committed to driving the department forward and raise standards.
- the whole staff displays a genuine commitment to the Catholic ethos of the school.
- guidance and support are provided by the governors.
- The link governor for RE provides good support and challenge within the Religious Education department and for the Catholic life of the school.
- pupils and families are actively involved and passionate about the Catholicity of the school.

## **Recommendations and Required Actions**

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

**R1:** Provide consistency in planning, designing and monitoring collective worship during tutor time to ensure that the Catholic pupil profile is incorporated into the everyday life of the school.

**R2:** Review the consistency, monitoring and evaluation of marking across the Religious Education department, ensuring quality feedback which enables pupils at all key stages to further improve learning.

**R3:** Increase the opportunities for pupils to be actively engaged and challenged in developing their own learning in lessons.

### **What happens next?**

The school will submit a Post-Inspection Action Plan to the Director of Religious Education that shows how it will address the recommendations. Submission should be within 45 working days of publication of the report. Progress in addressing the recommendations will be monitored by the Archdiocese.

## **Main Findings**

<b>Inspection Area 1: Catholic Life and Ethos</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
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The school's leadership is truly committed to the Church's mission in education. The development and maintenance of a genuine Catholic ethos is viewed not only as a core leadership responsibility and priority but the overriding aim of the school. The headteacher and senior leaders have a clear vision for Catholic education and provide outstanding leadership and example in this area. The headteacher is unequivocal in her determination to build on the pre-existing strengths of the school and continue to develop pupils' understanding of their faith and improve pupil outcomes for all pupils irrespective of their ability levels or particular needs. The headteacher is ensuring that robust systems are in place to achieve this and that the leadership roles of the senior team reflect this key aspect of school improvement.

As a direct consequence of the staff's commitment to the school's Mission Statement the Catholic education the pupils receive at Bishop Hedley High School is excellent. The Mission Statement is very clear and seeks to "Educate, Encourage and Excel in Christ" and is firmly rooted in Gospel values. The pupils, guided by senior members of staff, led a review of the school's mission statement in 2018 and opportunities for contributions were provided for the wider community. The mission statement is displayed in all classrooms. Pupils, both Catholic and non-Catholic, are very proud of their school and speak enthusiastically about the distinctive Catholic nature of Bishop Hedley High School and embrace the many opportunities provided for all to grow in faith. Parents and staff are also very proud of the school and the school is clearly highly regarded within the local community as a very good Catholic school. Trust and respect between pupils and between staff and pupils is a key strength of the school and this leads to very good individual relationships and a genuine respect for others within the school environment. This, in turn, leads to very good behaviour in lessons and around the school at break and lunchtimes from almost all pupils. The school's Relationships and Sex Education programme follows the Archdiocesan Fertile Heart Scheme which is firmly based on respect for others and self. The pupils are therefore polite and considerate to each other and they are extremely polite and helpful to visitors.

The Pupil Leadership Team and Student Parliament facilitate pupils becoming directly involved in school life using a systematic and coherent approach. Pupils engage and are very much involved in numerous charities both locally and nationally. These include Lenten Challenges, Lenten Lunches and termly Community Lunches. More specifically a Hunger Lunch in Lent raises both funds and awareness of the work of CAFOD. In Advent the whole school collects for the local food bank to assist families that have few resources of their own. In addition pupils help to choose which charities they wish to support allowing them to express and deepen their commitment to helping others in a variety of contexts. The pupils' significant contribution to collective worship is a further reflection of the Catholic ethos in practice. Behaviour in assemblies is very respectful and the pupil SVP group confidently lead and deliver liturgies at both Key Stages. This group also leads on the increasingly influential pupil chaplaincy which provides excellent opportunities for pupils to explore their spiritual development and emotional growth. The pupils are very respectful of the displays and artefacts around

the school that are a constant reminder of the Christian message. The Chapel is used regularly and the prayer garden is conducive to outdoor worship and prayers when the weather is favourable. Pupils take the opportunity to participate in retreats, visits to places of pilgrimage and the wider liturgical life of the school. Retreats in previous years have been held at Kintbury and have been very well attended. This year's retreat to Crickhowell was fully subscribed. Activities on the retreat included Stations of the Cross, Mass at Llanthony Abbey and mountain walking. Pupils from the school have also been on pilgrimage to Rome.

The staff at the school, both teaching and non-teaching and at all levels of leadership are committed to the Catholic aims, mission and values of the school. They are fully aware of the individual and the collective responsibilities irrespective of their subject or support specialisms. This is evident in how CPP is promoted throughout the school and staff participation in retreats and reflection days. A reflection day for the whole staff at Belmont Abbey was useful in embedding, enabling and encouraging staff to confidently promote the teachings of the Church within a school context. Professional development opportunities are available to support the needs of all staff including the Diocesan "New to a Catholic Education" course and Masters level studies specifically designed for teachers wishing to lead Catholic schools. Policies and structures are in place and followed which support the Catholic ethos and Mission Statement of the school. For example the Positive Attitude to Learning Policy and the Restorative Justice Approach which has been adopted to promote forgiveness are both effective initiatives. The pastoral organisation of the school is both pro-active and caring and has the confidence of both pupils and parents alike. Similarly the PSHE and RSE programmes delivered by form tutors in tutorial time are key aspects of the curriculum and fully support pupils' development throughout their time at the school. These programmes are enhanced by outside speakers who are sympathetic to the nature and values of Catholic Education. The annual Mission Day organised in Year groups focuses on scripture-based teaching in relation to a number of topics including diversity, self-respect and issues related to the problems faced by refugees.

The headteacher is well supported by her Senior Leadership Team colleagues and their work together is very effective. Relationships within the team are professional and positive and they work together to ensure the school's Catholic life is central to their strategic direction going forward. Self-evaluation is effective and the areas for further development and improvement are identified in the School Improvement Plan. The Chair of Governors has a detailed knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. He is fully committed to his role, provides appropriate support and challenge to the headteacher and Senior Leadership Team. He is both very enthusiastic and realistic regarding the future development of the school. The Governing Body is encouraged to be fully involved and governors bring a range of experience and skills to the school in order to support continued improvement. The governors understand their role in holding the school to account for the Catholic life of the school. Foundation governors are linked with members of the senior team to evaluate the priorities for school improvement. This assists the governors' understanding of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and ensures that ratification of the SIP is based on informed judgements. The governors receive updates and reports from the Head of RE on both the spiritual life of the school and academic progress. Similarly information regarding charitable activities and fund raising are also made available to the Governing Body.

Parents and carers appreciated the genuine support and care the school offers to both individual pupils and to their families. They were made to feel welcome in school, felt valued and listened to and appreciate the way that issues or concerns are dealt with. Parents also commented on the very good relationships that exist between staff and pupils. Although only a small percentage of parents and carers completed the Questionnaire (4.4%) those that did overwhelmingly agreed that they are happy with their child's Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school. A few would like a little more information on the curriculum in RE and PSHE but for the majority this was not an issue. Parents and carers also felt the school was at the heart of the community and former pupils were very proud of the fact that they had attended the school.

<b>Inspection Area 2: Curriculum Religious Education</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
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At Bishop Hedley there is a positive attitude towards learning and learners are becoming increasingly religiously literate, growing in confidence, knowledge, understanding and skills. Attainment in RE at KS3 is very good and GCSE results compare favourably with similar schools in the Archdiocese.

Nearly all pupils arrive at lessons ready and willing to learn. Nearly all pupils listen attentively and work diligently on a variety of appropriate tasks and clearly enjoy their lessons. The standard of work in exercise books is good. Nearly all books are well presented and contain a range of work, including evidence of independent work, as well as tasks directed by the teacher. There is good evidence of GCSE skills with key concepts being used appropriately and in context. Pupils are able to reflect on their learning and explore the Catholic Faith and how it applies in their daily lives. A variety of differentiated activities, together with appropriate discussion and well-structured questions, enable pupils to develop effectively their knowledge, understanding and skills. Nearly all pupils are fully engaged in their learning and strive to achieve well in all aspects of their work.

Learners follow a curriculum in Key Stage 3 that is mapped to the ICONS scheme of work and the Religious Education Curriculum Directory. The school have also planned for the new Curriculum for Wales 2022. The planning and evaluation of the scheme focuses on increasing religious literacy of all pupils ensuring depth of knowledge and understanding, mastery of skills and development of faith and spirituality. Attainment at Key Stage 3 is strong and consistent. Attainment at Level 5+ is 92% which is pleasing and has been consistent for the last 3 years. Attainment at Level 6+ is excellent with 57% of learners achieving this level by the end of the Key Stage and Attainment at Level 7 has also improved over the last 3 years. This is currently at 17% which is an increase compared to the previous year's figure.

Attainment at Key Stage 4 is pleasing and compares favourably with schools across the Archdiocese, taking into consideration context and economic deprivation. All pupils at Bishop Hedley sit the WJEC Religious Studies GCSE, with a small percentage sitting the Short Course as the school judges them to be unable to access



the full course. These complete Unit 1 of the Full Course alongside the Level 2 Equality and Diversity Course.

Bishop Hedley has the 3rd highest percentage of FSM pupils in the Archdiocese and current attainment is at 79%. These results are the 2nd highest in the Archdiocese based on entry and cohort sitting the WJEC specification. The school also has the 3rd highest percentage of FSM pupils in the Archdiocese and outperformed all but one of those with a significantly lower percentage.

At KS4 there is a gender gap with regards to attainment with girls outperforming the boys by 21%. However, this has been addressed with single sex classes being introduced in the top band at KS4 as a strategy to achieve this. The boys' classes are smaller than those for girls, and the lessons and pedagogy is tailored to their learning needs.

In 2018/19, 20.6% of pupils at Bishop Hedley qualify for free school meals and performance and attainment of these pupils is strong at both KS3 and KS4. At KS3 75% of FSM pupils achieved a minimum of Level 5 and at KS4 64% of FSM pupils achieved A\*-C at GCSE Religious Studies.

It is evident from schemes of work that the more able and talented pupils are being challenged in Religious Studies with the KS3 scheme of work having elements of A Level topics, such as the Cosmological Argument, which stretch pupils and encourage them to think critically. At both KS3 and KS4 all MAT learners achieved their predicted grades with 100% of MAT learners achieving A\*-A at GCSE.

Bishop Hedley has a high percentage of EAL learners. In Year 11, 33% of learners are EAL and 83% of EAL learners achieved or exceeded their GCSE target in 2019. In Bishop Hedley 26% of learners have Additional Learning Needs and lessons and planning are differentiated to ensure all pupils can access and progress in their learning.

Overall, teaching is good with some excellent features across the Religious Education department, promoting purposeful learning across all key stages. Lessons are well planned and resourced. Pupils arrive at lessons ready and willing to learn. They participate reverently in prayer at the beginning of lessons. Most pupils listen attentively and work diligently. A very few were observed in off-task behaviour. Teachers plan effectively to ensure that pupils of all abilities are challenged appropriately and are able to achieve. However, some tasks set limit pupils' potential and do not create the right level of challenge. Pupils clearly enjoy Religious Education and make good progress due to their teachers' ongoing commitment to improving their learning and the pastoral support they provide. Most exercise books are marked regularly and most teachers provide comments which enable pupils to improve their work. However, feedback must be more rigorous and challenging to allow pupils to make further progress and must be consistent by all teachers in the department to reflect the very best practice seen. Marking focuses appropriately on the accuracy of pupils' written work.

Tracking is in place and is embedded. It is used effectively to monitor progress against targets which allows for early identification of pupils who are under-performing so that

intervention is both timely and appropriate. Religious Education is currently taught by three full-time specialist RE teachers. Religious Education staff are well-qualified and make good use of their learning environment by ensuring rooms are well presented and displays support and enhance the learning. Pupils receive 10% curriculum time for Religious Education at KS3 and KS4 which meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and expectation of the Archdiocese.

The link Religious Education governor is a parish priest and chair of governors. He is supportive of the leadership of the school and the Religious Education department. Leaders and managers promote, monitor, evaluate and review the provision for Religious Education to improve outcomes for pupils. They are aware of what the next steps are in terms of monitoring outcomes, evaluating assessment and in taking a more rigorous and forensic approach to tracking.

All the parents/carers who completed the parental questionnaire were overwhelmingly supportive of the school and the Religious Education department. Many parents/carers believed that the school gave them a clear understanding of what is taught in Religious Education and many felt that the school keeps them well informed about their child's progress in Religious Education. Nearly all the parents/carers agreed that the school enabled their children to achieve a good standard of work in Religious Education.

<b>Inspection Area 3: Collective Worship</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
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Pupils respond very well to liturgies, assemblies and all aspects of collective worship. They have a sound understanding of the key celebrations in the liturgical calendar. They express their beliefs confidently and put them into action through the extensive charity work that takes place, such as SVP and CAFOD. Pupils treat each other with a high level of respect.

Pupil reverence during prayer and worship is a strong feature. All pupils have ample opportunity to participate in a variety of liturgies and act with reverence and respect. A particular strength is the work of the SVP group in preparing and presenting assemblies. The school chapel is used regularly for prayer and reflection by staff and students alike. School assemblies focused on the theme of the Rosary and enabled pupils to make connections between faith and life, providing an opportunity for quiet thought and reflection of the life of Our Lady.

Pupils take part by serving and reading in Voluntary Mass. Voluntary Mass has become incredibly popular with over two hundred pupils attending on a regular basis. A Welcome Mass is held before the summer break for Year 6 pupils who will be coming to the School as the new Year 7 at the beginning of the academic year. The celebration of Mass is central to the life of their school and the end of a pupil's journey in the school in Year 11 is also marked with a Mass.

Pupils make an excellent contribution to collective worship and benefit enormously from it. The liturgical life of the school is well supported by a large number of students

and staff. They take responsibility for and ownership of the planning and presenting of liturgies and classroom based daily acts of worship. They contribute also, through their exemplary behaviour and their care and support for each other.

All staff and students respect the daily acts of worship and key stage assemblies impeccably.

Assemblies are well planned and imaginatively resourced using appropriate visual stimuli and music. Pupils and staff have the opportunity for private prayer in the chapel, which is located at the heart of the school.

Pupils participate willingly and are reverent and attentive. The themes chosen by pupils and staff reflect a deep understanding of the Church's mission and are closely linked with the liturgical cycle. Daily acts of worship are carried out each day by form tutors. Weekly resources are provided by the Head of Religious Education and these are available on Google Drive. All staff are advocates of the importance of collective worship, are keen to ensure that it is delivered effectively and willingly take part in planning and delivering a variety of good acts of worship.

Greater consistency of the structure and theme being delivered in tutor times is needed. Resources provided by the Head of RE are excellent but are not being fully utilised by all staff. There is a need for a more common approach of themes that reflect the 'Pupil profile' pair of virtues being used in the Diocese at that time. The 'Catholic Pupil profile' is highly visible around the school but it was not used as a theme for many of the acts of worship observed during this inspection. This is an area that needs to be developed.

The Head of Department monitors the daily acts of worship and provides additional resources if they are requested. Pupils are given the opportunity and support to plan and participate in liturgies and to write their own prayers. The weekly voluntary Mass is very well attended. Pupils participate as readers, servers, musicians and Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist. Some are also involved in these roles in their parishes. There is evidence of a variety of other liturgies throughout the school year including penitential services, carol concerts and liturgies to pray for peoples affected by national disasters. The Rosary is said during the months of October and May as was witnessed during assembly times.

The importance of collective worship in the life of the school is outstanding. Governors, staff, families and students all actively promote the importance of collective worship. From the results of the parental questionnaire and meeting with some parents/carers, it is clear that they chose Bishop Hedley High School because it was clearly a Catholic school and it is distinctive in terms of Catholic values being at the heart of the school

Monitoring and tracking of the quality of collective worship being provided in tutor time is an area that needs to be enhanced. This needs to be more robust and rigorous to ensure it is happening consistently across the school. The excellent practice seen in some areas and all assemblies needs to be disseminated by leaders to all staff for their professional development. This will help to ensure that all students are gaining the greatest spiritual development possible during their life in the school.

## Appendix 1

### Responses to parent questionnaires

25 parents/carers completed the parent questionnaire and they were overwhelmingly supportive of the school.

In response to the specific questions:

- All the parents/carers were happy with the values and attitudes that the school fosters.
- All the parents/carers indicated that they were made to feel welcome in the school.
- Nearly all the parents/carers also believed that the school sought their views and concerns and took them into account.
- Many parents/carers believed that the school gave them a clear understanding of what is taught in Religious Education.
- Nearly all the parents/carers agreed that the school enabled their children to achieve a good standard of work in Religious Education.
- Many parents/carers felt that the school kept them well informed about their child's education in Religious Education.
- All the parents/carers were happy with the help and guidance available to their children.
- Many parents felt that the school provided a clear understanding of what is taught in personal, social and health education and, where appropriate, sex and relationships education.
- Nearly all the parents/carers believed that the school enabled their children to develop spiritually through prayer and worship.

In response to the additional questions:

- Parents/carers stated that they chose Bishop Hedley High School for a number of reasons. These included the fact it was clearly a Catholic school and it has a very good reputation within the local community. In addition, they chose the school because of the positive reports they were aware of in relation to the pupils' external examination results and the high standards expected of pupils within the school. A previous association with the school was also an important factor for several respondents.
- Parents/carers stated they felt the school was distinctive in terms of the Catholic values being at the heart of the school and this was inherent in the genuine care, support and welfare that the staff provided for the pupils and the wider community. The parents/carers also noted that a distinctive strength of the school is the very positive relationships and respect that exist between pupils and members of staff.

## Appendix 2

### Evidence Base

- The school's self-evaluation report
- Meetings with the headteacher, head of Religious Education, head of PSHE, Key Stage 3 and 4 progress leaders, chair of governors who is also the Religious Education link governor, head of Inclusion.
- Lesson observations.
- Scrutiny of planning and assessment.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work.
- School Improvement Plan and Religious Education Development Plan.
- Observations of collective acts of worship.
- Discussions with pupils.
- Parental Questionnaire returns.