



Blessed Thomas Holford Catholic College

URN: 106376

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Shrewsbury

22 April 2026 – 23 April 2026

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 RE

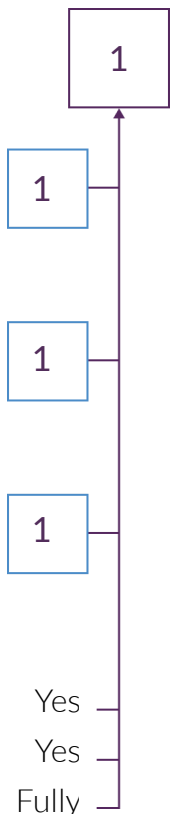
Collective worship (p.7)

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

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

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



What the school does well

- The headteacher is passionately committed to the staff and students at the college, with her servant leadership being an inspiration for all.
- Leaders make sure that Catholic social teaching principles are at the forefront of their strategic thinking and policy formation. This motivates students to act on the principles of service, justice and charity.
- The subject leader has an inspiring vision for religious education. Plans for further improvement are clear and his regular support gives all staff in his department an opportunity to align with this vision.
- The chaplaincy team, ably led by the assistant headteacher for Catholic life, is effective in its work. Their creative provision forms the backbone of a rich and full Catholic experience.
- Prayer and liturgy are offered in a wide variety of ways and the use of technology to achieve this is outstanding. Consequently, students participate and respond well during these times.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure consistency in assessment and feedback in religious education so that all students know where they are in their learning and what they need to do to improve.
- Create opportunities for students who are not involved in the school's faith groups to be involved in the planning and preparation of prayer and liturgy, and seek to widen the opportunities for students to undertake particular ministries through a programme of formation.

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 feel inspired by the mission at Blessed Thomas Holford Catholic College; this is evident in their commitment to doing their best in both their learning and personal development. They apply themselves well in lessons and demonstrate ambition, recognising their God-given talents and using them to fulfil their potential. Students speak clearly about feeling known, valued and loved. Many confidently explain the significance of imago Dei, being made in God's image and likeness. They recognise the inherent worth of the individual, applying this understanding in their relationships with others, which are based on dignity and respect. This extends into the wider community, with students demonstrating a strong commitment to justice and service, supporting charitable initiatives such as Cafod and Caritas. The principles of Catholic social teaching are at the heart of the college's work and students speak eloquently about these principles, understanding the theology that underpins them. The chaplaincy team, expertly led by the senior lead for Catholic life and mission, is valued highly by all members of the college family. This is true also of the pastoral support and guidance offered by the pastoral team, with one student commenting, 'I wouldn't be the person I am without the support of the pastoral team. They are always there for me'.

The college's mission is clear to all, with staff openly sharing their vision. They model the attributes they are nurturing in students and, as a result, pastoral care is outstanding. The recently revisited mission statement has brought about a renewed focus on Christ-centred priorities for the whole college community. The chaplaincy team is skilled in using this to provide a rich range of opportunities that enable students to flourish spiritually, morally and personally. As creative and influential drivers of Catholic life, the team has established a

vibrant offer that is highly valued, with staff and students speaking positively about their own spiritual development and the stronger sense of community that is evident in college. The opportunities for prayer, service and formation are numerous and this serves students well. Groups such as St Vincent de Paul (SVP) offer students meaningful ways to put their faith into action through their involvement in these initiatives. Staff go above and beyond to ensure that students, their families and the wider community are supported, with the college being wholly inclusive towards all faiths and backgrounds. Comments from the wider community evidence the strengthening of the college's Catholic life provision over recent years, highlighting the culture change that has taken place.

The headteacher's vision for Catholic life and mission is rooted in Gospel values and the principles of Catholic social teaching . Her vision is clearly shared by staff and governors, ensuring that it remains central to college life. The college's commitment to ensuring that Catholic social teaching is evident in all aspects of the curriculum has great impact. Building on the foundational work of the deputy head, the assistant headteacher for Catholic life has this year worked with the headteacher to embed a quality assurance process that ensures all leaders and governors know their college well. This draws on the views of a wide range of stakeholders, including students, which inform future planning and improvement. There is a dynamic partnership with parents, and this ensures they are fully engaged with the mission of the college. Parent forums serve to ensure that the wider community is aware of initiatives and developments. Staff speak positively about the support they receive from leaders and governors, feeling known and listened to. Professional development for Catholic life and mission is carefully planned across the academic year, enabling staff to understand and actively promote the college's mission with confidence and commitment. Consequently, the college makes good use of the comprehensive training offer from the Diocese of Shrewsbury.

Religious education

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 key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

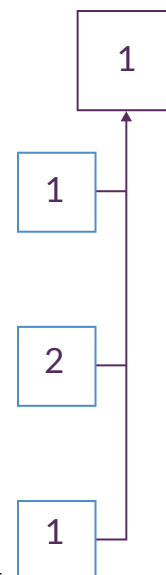
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 are developing secure knowledge, understanding and skills in religious education. They are enthusiastic about their lessons, being fully engaged and demonstrating excellent behaviour. Strong relationships and a climate of mutual respect enable them to feel valued, and this allows them to develop an appreciation of the subject. Students are reflective with their work and many show a curiosity about religious education that spurs them to achieve more. This results in impressive focus from students, especially in Key Stage 4. Religious literacy is excellent and students use this well during recall sessions. They are confident when contributing to discussions, using their religious vocabulary well and responding enthusiastically to the variety of activities on offer. This includes the Candle Conferences, where students take part in a debate curated by a prominent theologian. Students are familiar with independent work and concentrate well when they are doing this. They demonstrate knowledge and understanding that is aligned with the rigorous requirements of the *Religious Education Directory*. Academic outcomes are consistently above national figures, and comparisons with other core subjects are significantly positive. This success is rooted in a culture of belonging and shared purpose, enabling all students to flourish academically and spiritually.

The religious education department benefits from a team of subject specialist teachers whose confidence is coupled with an enthusiasm for their subject. They have strong subject knowledge and this is developed further through weekly departmental meetings. The department's collaborative approach allows staff to benefit from shared strategies for

adaptive teaching and develop high quality resources. Subject staff have embraced the rigour of the directory and plan collaboratively and effectively. This means all staff are invested in offering an engaging student experience. Teachers utilise questioning techniques that allow students to demonstrate their learning. These, alongside regular reflection opportunities, give students an opportunity to further their learning and consider how this relates to their own moral development. A variety of teaching approaches are adopted in lessons and students respond well to this. Peer assessment is used well in lessons but there are inconsistencies in teacher assessment and feedback. As a consequence, not all students are aware of how well they are doing or what they need to do further to improve. Classroom routines and expectations are consistently implemented and there is a culture of praise and warm relationships in classroom interactions.

Religious education is at the heart of the curriculum at Blessed Thomas Holford. The subject is seen as the 'core of the core', with leaders prioritising training for religious education. The directory has been embraced and implemented in full, with its academic rigour being welcomed by leaders and governors. The subject lead for religious education has a clear vision for his department. He carries out regular quality assurance that enables him to target areas for development, working closely with his team to strengthen provision and outcomes. He is fully aware of the work to be done to develop the department further and has plans in place for this. His collaboration with other subject areas to develop common strategies regarding teaching and learning is a strength and his open-door approach ensures that all staff feel supported and are confident in their roles. Leaders have developed an extensive enrichment programme in religious education and students are encouraged to participate in activities that extend their learning within religious education. The take up for these opportunities is impressive. Senior leaders and governors have a comprehensive overview of the department's work, offering appropriate and timely support and challenge. Effective monitoring and evaluation assists them in this. These processes are used to refine and improve students' outcomes.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

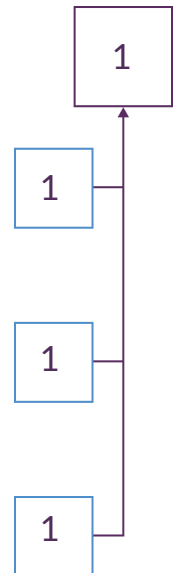
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

Leadership

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



Students appreciate the wide range of opportunities to experience prayer and liturgy at Blessed Thomas Holford, engaging fully during these moments. They participate and respond well to scripture, prayers, reflection and liturgical music that is true to the liturgical year, understanding how the liturgical year shapes their prayer experience. Students comment on the impact that prayer and liturgy have on their own lives, appreciating the moments of reflection during these times that allow them to look for ways to relate scripture to their personal situation. They understand that this allows prayer and liturgy to influence their decision making, commenting that their reflections encourage them to support others with compassion and also reflect on their own spirituality. Students involved in faith groups collaborate well with staff to prepare and lead prayer and liturgy that impacts on themselves and those in their community. This offer now needs to be widened to include others. Those who are part of this process realise they are influencing their prayer and liturgy experience, ensuring that this is relatable to their peers. Students play a key evaluative role in the college's prayer and liturgy provision and this is something that they value, noting that their comments are acted upon.

Staff are fully committed to the centrality of scripture and prayer for the whole college community. Their work complements that of the chaplaincy team, who offer a rich experience for all. Their creative approaches and expert use of technology enhance the delivery of meaningful and relevant scripture that ensure the vast majority of students are fully engaged. The college's offer is authentically Catholic and appropriate scripture forms the heart of this, with great thought being put into the outcomes for students. This was evident during the

Wednesday Word session, an early morning session that is very well attended by staff and students. Staff are confident in their delivery of prayer and liturgy and they work extremely well with the chaplaincy team to develop their skills. A well-planned programme for training and ongoing support has enabled staff to hone their skills in the delivery of prayer and liturgy. The chapel is affectionately known as 'the heart of the college' by all and is a vibrant hub, open throughout the day for those who need to use it. Students benefit hugely from the use of this space. Links with parishes and families are strong and regular visits from the parish priest enhance these.

Leaders and governors have ensured that their focus on prayer and liturgy has Christ at the centre of their work. Generous time and resourcing are dedicated to provision and, through a well-considered annual plan of provision, events take place that motivate and engage students. The prayer and liturgy policy is known by all staff and this ensures a clear vision throughout the college. Local parish priests are regular visitors to the college, celebrating weekly Mass in college. They also offer the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Advent and Lent. Leaders plan effectively for key events in the college year, marking their patron saints with prayer and liturgy events and Masses. There is a robust programme in place for formation opportunities that are scheduled throughout the year and staff comment on its importance. The evaluation of prayer and liturgy is thoughtful and regular, feeding into future planning and improving the experience for all. This has strengthened the college's offer more recently and leaders' work is recognised by those in college and the wider community. Staff formation is a priority for all and attention to detail is evident in resources that are prayerful yet accessible, reinforcing the college's commitment to excellence in provision.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Blessed Thomas Holford Catholic College
School unique reference number (URN)	106376
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3585403
Full postal address of the school	Urban Road, Altrincham, WA15 8HT
School phone number	0161-768 6030
Headteacher or Head of School	Mrs Clare Hogg
Chair of Governors	Ms Alison Sharrock
School Website	www.bthcc.org.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non Selective
Age-range of pupils	11 - 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	02 May 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The Inspection Team

Mark Taylor Lead

Carol Gregson

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Claire Margaret Wallace

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