



# Archdiocese of Birmingham

## Section 48 Inspection Report

### ST PAUL'S SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Vernon Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B16 9SL

Inspection dates:

4-5 October 2021

Lead Inspector:

Rachel Waugh

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#### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS:

**Outstanding**

Catholic Life:

Outstanding

Religious Education:

Outstanding

Collective Worship:

Outstanding

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*Overall effectiveness at previous inspection:*

*Outstanding*

#### SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

This is an Outstanding Catholic school because:

- Catholic Life permeates all aspects of the school, from the fabric of the building to every lesson and activity that takes place. The school is firmly grounded in the mission and heritage of the trustees of the Sisters of Charity of St Paul the Apostle, and the mission of Mother Genevieve Dupuis, '*Do your very best for the children*'.
- Religious Education lessons are well planned, and teachers are skilled in ensuring consistently effective delivery. As a result, outcomes are exceptional in Key Stages 3 and 4 and are now very good in Key Stage 5.
- Collective Worship is integral to the daily life of the school. Prayer and liturgy, in its various forms, inspires pupils in their vocations and leave a lasting impression on their spiritual and moral development.

**FULL REPORT****What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Secure the outcomes for Key Stage 5 Religious Education to ensure that all the strategies put into place come to fruition.
- Consolidate the liturgical formation of pupils in Years 7 & 8, following the disruption to education over the last two years.
- Re-establish the pupils of St Paul's School for Girls as beacons of faith, hope and joy in the wider community.

**CATHOLIC LIFE**

<b>The quality of the Catholic Life of the school</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	Outstanding
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school	Outstanding
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school	Outstanding

**CL1 The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school**

- All pupils appreciate, value, and actively participate in the Catholic Life and mission of the school. It is the foremost reason for choosing to attend the school and for choosing to continue studying in the Sixth Form. All pupils recognise and value the unique heritage and tradition of the school.
- Analysis of pupil voice activities demonstrates their overwhelming appreciation for the integration of Catholic Life into various aspects of school life, including awards evening; the Pauline Press school newspaper; prayer at the beginning of sports day; Year 13 graduation and prom and the inclusion of the celebration of Mass as part of residential itineraries that take place at weekends.
- The pupils are actively involved in the ongoing evaluation of the mission of the school. During the first four weeks of joining St Paul's School for Girls, pupils in Year 7 are asked to consider how they can contribute to the life and mission of the school. Their thoughts and ideas are encouraged and subsequently implemented.
- Chaplaincy Champions play an active role in the Catholic Life of the school and contribute to retreat days. For example, Sixth Form students lead night prayer at the Year 7 sleep over and there are plentiful examples of pupils highly valuing the Catholic Life of the school by undertaking leadership roles in activities for other year groups.
- The pupils present a deep respect for themselves, others, and the environment. Behaviour is exemplary and this is recognised and valued by the students. On the rare occasion when an issue is raised, it is addressed immediately by staff who are well equipped to do so, and who are respected by the pupils. Pupils lead the eco-schools programme and so ensure their role as stewards to God's creation is fully embraced in school.

- There is a hugely positive atmosphere around the school and a genuine sense of praise and thanksgiving. Most notable is pupils' participation in the extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities available to them, including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and the RAF Combined Cadet Force, which promote the school's mission.
- Pupils benefit from hugely positive relationships throughout the school and the level of pastoral care provided to support their journey. The Guardian Angels programme is fully embraced by Year 10 students, with a genuine desire to support the personal development of pupils in Year 7, and more recently in Year 8 also.
- Pupils are happy and confident because of the exceptional pastoral care and support they receive. All students are known by name; staff truly know the individuals who form part of the school community.
- All pupils are incredibly proud to be part of St Paul's School for Girls. The mantra '*I am a St Paul's girl – there is nothing I cannot achieve*' is both believed and lived by all pupils.
- Chaplaincy provision is highly valued. Retreats are enshrined in the school calendar and are a highlight for all the pupils. All staff who are form tutors attend retreats to work with their form group. The pupils look forward to residential retreats and pilgrimages, including experiences at Lourdes, Walsingham, Soli House and Savio House.
- Pupils have a mature understanding of loving relationships due to the partnership of the pastoral and Religious Education teams when planning and delivering the relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) programme.
- There is a profound understanding amongst pupils of what it means to have a vocation and they are positive and joyful about the impact they can have on their lives. Pupils feel privileged to be working alongside the religious sisters, who have an active vocation in the life of the school.
- The Catholic tradition of the school is highly valued and respected. The pupils know the origins of the school and the privilege bestowed upon them. They feel blessed to have the religious sisters living alongside them.
- Many of the pupils at St Paul's School for Girls enthusiastically offer their gifts to their parishes and the wider community as altar servers, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, charity ambassadors and volunteers as part of the pragmatics course.

## **CL2 The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school**

- The mission of the school '*Be all things to all people*', is clear.
- Staff are truly committed to the mission of the school. The staff pray and retreat together during the school day and beyond.
- Catholic Life is at the forefront of induction, continuous professional development, and performance management. Deep learning days support the staff development as much as the opportunities provided for pupils.
- All staff are directly involved in the Catholic Life of the school through the daily feasts that are celebrated, the department saints initiative and their regular nomination of pupils, who reflect the characteristics of the saints, for awards.
- There are high quality relationships throughout the school. There are strong senses of identity and community. All are supported in a compassionate and joyful way whilst maintaining a calm and purposeful learning environment.
- Catholic Life is evident in every room, corridor, and space around the school. The St Paul's Gallery celebrates the spiritual and artistic creativity of pupils by showcasing their work. The entrance to the school is permeated with the *OWLS* board, where

pupils have identified how they have been blessed 'Only with the Lord's Strength' throughout the pandemic. All form rooms have their own sacred spaces, and the blessing of the chapel and grotto are valued by all.

- Catholic Life is described as the red blood cells running throughout the school and is evident in every frieze that is displayed. The school publicly celebrates its Catholic Life by ringing its bells for solemnities and feast days.
- All staff promote excellent standards of behaviour, which is based on mutual respect for the dignity of the human person. The quality of language expected throughout the school exemplifies this.
- Catholic Social Teaching is evident throughout the curriculum by way of marking saint's days, issuing prizes, holding discussion, and teaching and demonstrating the values it enshrines.
- Moral and spiritual development is embedded throughout every day. All pupils have a voice in this school, and it is heard. For example, senior pupils alerted staff to the use of mobile phones on the school site, which contravenes school rules; as a result, Key Stage 3 pupils now hand in their phones for storage each day. Additionally, pupils were recently moved by the Sarah Everard case and requested time to explore the impact of this and to make sense of the outcomes. As a result, pupils requested input on self-defence, which was responded to by the staff.
- Staff willingly share their faith journey with the pupils. The impact of this is remarkably powerful, as demonstrated by the fact that twenty-four members of staff are former 'St Paul's Girls'.
- Pastoral care is outstanding and supported by clear policy and practice. The most vulnerable students are supported in a profoundly respectful way. The Quo Vadis mental health programme, promoted by the Kenelm Youth Trust, is used appropriately.
- Staff are equally cared for with compassion and respect and supported by prayer and actions.
- RSHE is well planned and delivered in a way that enshrines Catholic teaching incorporating appropriate resources.

### **CL3 How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the School**

- Leadership at all levels is deeply committed to the Church's mission in education. The leadership exemplifies the vision of Mother Genevieve Dupuis, *'Do your very best for the children'*, founder of The Sisters of Charity of St Paul the Apostle. Consequently, Catholic Life is given the highest priority by leaders.
- Provision for Catholic Life is at the forefront of policies and practice. Self-evaluation is clear and challenging; it responds to the needs of the community. For example, this year has been designated as the Year of Fortitude with all retreats focussing on this theme. Leaders determined this in response to the pupils' needs following educational disruption caused by the pandemic.
- The impact of continuous professional development focussing on the Catholic Life of the school is evident throughout the community. Indeed, staff prayer and the 'Epistles' written for pupils, parents and staff throughout lockdown periods were enshrined in religious formation.
- Parents are proud and supportive of the school. Many consciously choose the school due to the high quality of pastoral care and faith life provided by the school.
- The governing body is exceptionally supporting, challenging and ambitious. Their constitution represents diversity amongst their different backgrounds, yet all are

united in their role to effectively hold school leaders to account. They are passionate about the school and proud of its unique qualities.

- The headteacher's reports to governors are incredibly detailed, demonstrating the high expectations upon the leadership of the school and the deep respect leaders have for the commitment of the governing body to school governance. Neither leaders nor governors are complacent in setting high expectations for the school, which benefit all staff and pupils.
- St Paul's School for Girls promotes diocesan policies and supports the work of the diocese by mentoring new headteachers in other diocesan schools and providing external support for other headteachers' performance management. Recently, the school has provided resources to the Catholic Education Service to aid them in their preparations for the newly established Catholic Schools Inspectorate.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

<b>The quality of Religious Education</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	Outstanding
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education	Outstanding
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for Religious Education	Outstanding

### RE1 How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

- Almost all pupils make very good progress in Religious Education, particularly in Key Stage 4 and, more recently, in Key Stage 5 also. Significant investment in Key Stage 5 has led to considerably improved outcomes.
- Due to outstanding teaching, learning and assessment there are no significant gaps in outcomes for pupils, including between different groups of pupils, in Religious Education. Indeed, the 'disadvantaged first' priority targeting of questions to identified pupils is evidently effective in all lessons. Pupils with special education needs or disability (SEND) are well catered for within the Religious Education department and by the holistic and highly effective support of the SEND team. Strategies include the breakfast club, extended school provision, within and outside of term time, and a therapy dog.
- Pupils are religiously literate and engaged young people. Pupils demonstrate a wealth of scriptural and source knowledge from Key Stage 3 onwards. This is utilised and referred to in a variety of contexts throughout the key stages.
- Pupils think theologically and ethically, which is encouraged and developed through teachers' exceptionally skilled questioning. As a result, pupils are articulate and can justify their viewpoints with integrity and passion.
- Pupils are actively engaged in Religious Education lessons. There is no off-task behaviour: every moment is a learning experience. Pupils are ready to always learn, and their books reflect the high expectations the school has regarding their learning. Folder checks in Key Stage 5 should continue to ensure there is consistency in meeting the school's expectations amongst all Sixth Form students.

- Pupils work exceptionally well as independent learners in addition to effectively engaging with their peers in collaborative activities. In group tasks, pupils naturally go beyond the scope of the task to secure their understanding through discussion and collaboration. This is because of their inquisitive minds.
- Pupils demonstrate a genuine interest, passion, enthusiasm, and thirst for learning in Religious Education. There is an authentic love of learning which is reflected in the healthy number of students who opt to continue with their Religious Education learning at Advanced Level in Key Stage 5.
- Pupils' attainment is outstanding. Indeed, many achieve well beyond their estimated grades due to the aspirational culture of learning embedded throughout the Religious Education department. Consequently, the quality of pupils' written work is very high and comparable with standards and outcomes in English.

## **RE2 The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education**

- Teachers of Religious Education are highly qualified specialist staff with a commitment to deliver the highest quality of Religious Education and develop pupils' knowledge and skills to achieve the most favourable outcomes. Subject expertise within the department is excellent, including a Jewish colleague who supports the teaching of those aspects of the curriculum regarding Judaism.
- The curriculum has been carefully selected and sequenced to support the development of pupils' knowledge, understanding and evaluative skills. Personalised home learning and targeted intervention support pupils as required.
- Questioning is highly impressive with teachers skilled to tease out the learning from pupils, assess the quality of their answers and adjust their teaching strategies accordingly. Misconceptions are addressed routinely; as a result, pupils have a polished understanding of terminology and core knowledge. For example, in one episode of learning observed during the inspection, the distinction was drawn between freedom and free will to ensure the accurate use of the terms by pupils.
- Etymology is evident in the Religious Education curriculum and across the school, further enhancing the religious literacy of pupils.
- The pace of learning is purposeful and transition between learning activities seamless.
- Teachers employ a wide range of strategies to support learners. Though, in some instances, particularly for lower attaining students at Key Stage 5, the consolidation of tasks is not inclusive of all learners.
- Resources are carefully selected to challenge the pupils, whatever their ability. In the Religious Education lessons of more able learners in Key Stage 4, there is clear reference to A Level and Grade 9 sources of religious authority, whilst carefully crafted scaffolding is evident for learners requiring greater support. Sources of wisdom are a planned-for expectation of Key Stage 3 lessons, in preparation for pupils' future studies.
- Staff willingly share their experiences and faith to support the students in their learning.
- Pupils are trained to constantly evaluate their performance through self-reflection and peer reflection in addition for the formal points of assessment used by teachers.

**RE3 How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for Religious Education**

- Religious Education meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference of England & Wales in terms of curriculum time and appropriateness of the specifications taught. The development of the pragmatics course at Key Stage 5 enhances the curriculum and personal development of the students through its academic expectations, purposeful outreach work and the viva shared with the governing body.
- Religious Education has complete parity with other curriculum areas. It is well staffed and resourced to meet the needs of the pupils. Indeed, there is home grown talent within the Religious Education team as a former pupil is contributing to the development of teaching and learning in Religious Education.
- Despite positive outcomes in Religious Education there is a lack of complacency within the department, affirmed by a rigorous approach to monitoring and self-evaluation. The Religious Education team was at the forefront of whole school development by focussing on Key Stage 5 during its desire to secure outstanding outcomes at all key stages.
- The subject leader has a clear vision for Religious Education. She expects and models the highest of standards. Consequently, she is well placed to secure the desired outcomes for Key Stage 5, embed the pragmatics course and support her team in the succession planning for Key Stage 5 teaching, in accordance with the departmental development plan.
- The curriculum is well planned to meet the needs of the learners with clear progression, as demonstrated in the curriculum choices made for Key Stages 4 and 5.

**COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

<b>The quality of Collective Worship</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	Outstanding
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	Outstanding
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship	Outstanding

**CW1 How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship**

- Pupils demonstrate a prayerful engagement and genuine enthusiasm for the range of Collective Worship on offer. They value and respond to online and in-person Collective Worship with enthusiasm and commitment. Collective Worship is deeply embedded within the culture of the school and is described as 'what we do here'.
- Pupils perceive singing as having an important place in their response to the opportunities they are provided with for prayer and liturgy.
- Pupils show initiative in preparing and leading Collective Worship. Even during periods of lock down and educational restrictions, pupils found powerful ways to

worship together, including online Collective Worship at Christmas, Easter, and on Remembrance Day. Pupils can articulate the impact of these opportunities to worship together whilst being physically apart.

- Voluntary acts of Collective Worship are well attended. The numbers of the staff and pupil populations partaking in these activities are monitored.
- Pupils are actively involved in the creative and resourceful planning and preparation of form assemblies and sacred spaces. As such, pupils are rightfully very proud of the spaces they create for prayer. Year 7 pupils write prayer cards for Year 11 and 13 pupils prior to examinations, and Year 11 and 13 pupils leave prayer cards for the new Year 7 in their lockers.
- Art and music are vibrant across the school and feature significantly in Collective Worship. Because of this, pupils benefit from a powerful mix of traditional and contemporary forms of worship, ranging from a daily opportunity to pray The Angelus to utilising dance and drama as regular features of Collective Worship.
- Pupils have a deep understanding of the liturgical year as the school calendar is framed around it. Indeed, leaders recognise that Years 7 & 8 have not benefitted from the same opportunities for formation, due to the pandemic, and have identified it as an area of priority for development.
- Pupils have a deep respect for other faiths. They have a commitment to undertake outreach work and have elected to support Mary's Meals throughout the academic year. The work of the pupils with Fellowship and Aid to the Church in the East and the joint projects with St Paul's Catholic Primary School, including the Diocesan Intercultural Mass, have a profound impact on the pupils involved and on the school community.

## **CW2 The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school**

- Collective Worship is central to the life of the school. The school day is organised around and shaped by prayer and worship. There is a thirst for the full reintroduction of Mass in the school post-pandemic. The opportunities provided to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation are appreciated and valued by all involved.
- Collective Worship has a clear purpose and message. Focused on the liturgical calendar and lives of the saints, there is a wealth of resources to support the planning and delivery of Collective Worship by all stakeholders. As a result, the pupils benefit from rich liturgical and spiritual experiences.
- Collective Worship is given the highest priority in the school. Form time has distinctive time for prayer and Collective Worship.
- A secure understanding of the Church's liturgical year is evident among the staff and pupils at St Paul's School for Girls and the highest priority is given to ensure Years 7 & 8 have the same depth of understanding.
- Staff are highly skilled in planning, leading, and facilitating pupils in Collective Worship. Senior leaders, heads of year, form tutors, lay chaplain, and priest chaplain all greatly enhance the provision of Collective Worship.
- A special effort is made to present ethnically diverse iconography around the school.

## **CW3 How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship**

- The lay chaplain demonstrates excellent knowledge of how to plan Collective Worship. This skillset contributes to realising the school's vision of ensuring chaplaincy work is given the highest priority.

- Teaching staff and chaplaincy staff ensure that Collective Worship is made accessible to all pupils. The rapport the lay chaplain has built in a short space of time further exemplifies the emphasis and priority given to Collective Worship.
- All managers and leaders, including governors, are visible in Collective Worship.
- Collective Worship is provided in a variety of contexts and regularly throughout each day: pupils pray in the morning; they pray the Angelus and pray collectively at the end of the day, in addition to the opportunities for assembly and to participate in the sacraments.
- Professional development and liturgical formation of staff is given the highest priority and is evident in the prayer and liturgical routines of the school.
- Leaders place a high priority on pupils planning and leading Collective Worship. Senior leaders, middle leaders, form tutors and the lay chaplain all work with pupils in enabling them to do this.
- Collective Worship is regularly reviewed. Reviews demonstrate the effective induction and professional development of all staff in the delivery of Collective Worship. Where areas for improvement are identified by such reviews, they are actioned and supported appropriately.
- Professional development and liturgical formation of staff is given the highest priority and is evident in the prayer and liturgical routines of the school.
- The school's self-evaluation is regularly updated with all stakeholders to ensure a collective vision and strategy for development.

## SCHOOL DETAILS

Unique reference number	103531
Local authority	Birmingham
<i>This inspection was carried out under Canon 806 of Canon Law and under Section 48 of the Education Act (2005)</i>	
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range	11-18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on roll	1004
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Browning
Headteacher	Dawn Casserly
Telephone number	0121 454 0895
Website address	<a href="https://www.stpaulgl.bham.sch.uk">https://www.stpaulgl.bham.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:enquiry@stpaulgl.bham.sch.uk">enquiry@stpaulgl.bham.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	30 April 2015

## INFORMATION ABOUT THIS SCHOOL

- St Paul's School for Girls is a broadly averaged-sized secondary school situated in the parish of The Oratory of St Philip Neri, Edgbaston. The school serves 74 feeder schools.
- The percentage of Catholic pupils is currently 96%.
- The percentage of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The percentage of SEND pupils is above the national average.

- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic origins is significantly above the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with EAL is above the national average.
- Attainment on entry is above average.
- Since the last inspection a new lay chaplain and second in RE department have been appointed. There have also been two new appointments to the senior leadership team.

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THIS INSPECTION**

- The inspection was carried out by two Diocesan Inspectors: Rachel Waugh & Stephen Burns.
- The focus of the inspection was on the impact, quality, and leadership of the school's provision of Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship.
- The inspectors observed teaching across fifteen Religious Education lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. All of these lesson observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspectors completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic Life, the impact of RE teaching on their learning over time and their experience of Collective Worship.
- Meetings were held with the governors, the head teacher, the RE subject leader, the person in charge of the Catholic Life of the School (PICCL), lay chaplain, priest chaplain, the pastoral team and a group of ECTs and RQTs.
- The inspectors attended a year group Mass, form and year group Collective Worship, visited the Year 13 retreat and undertook a number of before, school, lunchtime and after school activities to look at aspects of learning and teaching, the presentation of the Catholic Life of the school and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, data about pupils' attainment and progress, Analyse School Performance (ASP) data, the school development plan, the RE action plan, teachers' planning and pupil's work.