

# Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic Secondary School

URN: 110107

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Portsmouth

12–13 February 2025

## 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

1

#### Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

1

#### Collective worship (p.7)

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

1

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

Fully

1

## Compliance statement

- Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference
- Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School has responded fully to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

## What the school does well

- Blessed Hugh Faringdon is a diverse and welcoming community where the dignity of the individual is expressed through the very positive relationships modelled by the staff.
- Religious education is delivered by specialist teachers who not only have excellent subject knowledge but who inspire the young people through their passion for the subject.
- Prayer is promoted, celebrated and participated in as part of the pattern of the school day, leading to a cohesive community that places Christ at the centre.
- The leadership of religious education is strong through an experienced, knowledgeable and thoughtful, faith filled leader.
- Students clearly articulate the theology of Catholic social teaching that underpins their school acts of charity and informs all school policies and practices.

## What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that in all religious education lessons effective pacing and sequencing leads to all pupils having a good understanding of how well they are doing, what they are working towards and how to get there.
- Develop the core religious education provision in the sixth form to ensure it is effectively taught and resourced, promoting student engagement and progress.

## 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**

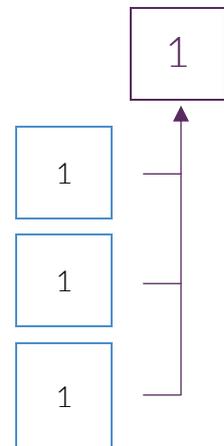
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

**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



The mission statement, 'Nothing without God', is understood and lived out in the actions of students across the school. The transmission of the school's charism is passed down and reinforced from generation to generation with a number of alumni presently employed as staff. Blessed Hugh Faringdon is an inclusive welcoming community where students are nurtured and cared for. One parent commented, 'My family is Jewish ... the school are exceptionally welcoming'. They raise awareness and fundraise for a variety of charities. Much work has been done in developing the different teams including the Chaplaincy in Action and Oremus teams and the ECO Team (amongst others) and receiving the Romero Award to reflect the school putting their 'faith into action'. Through all these activities the pupils clearly articulate the theology which underpins their actions as part of Catholic social teaching. Students are happy and safe knowing they are loved and cared for as unique individuals. A parent commented, 'The school is hugely supportive and work hard to ensure that my son feels valued and safe in school'.

The school excels at being a community based on Catholic tradition and practice. Students know and say the school prayer and engage in prayer on a personal level through the school-wide 'prayer jars' in morning registration. The implementation of a character education from the beginning of Year 7 through the Catholic Literacy Programme delivered by the headteacher and chaplain, as well as Lectio Divina, coupled with the Blessed Hugh Faringdon Way and Catholic Social Teaching empowers the pupils to live out their faith in all that they do at school and when they leave. The school goes out of its way to provide a supportive and joyful community, valuing all without exception and acknowledging Christ's presence in all. Staff care deeply for the pupils, treating them with dignity and kindness. This was reiterated by a parent who said, 'We are so happy with the spiritual education and support that he is receiving at school and cannot speak

highly enough of the dedicated staff who work there'. Parents and students appreciate the high level of pastoral care provided by staff. It is truly genuine and sincere. One parent summed it up by stating 'The school works closely with our parish priests, fostering a meaningful relationship with the children. It's a truly joyous collaboration. Blessed Hugh Faringdon embodies the core values of the Catholic faith and community.' The inclusive nature of the school is highlighted by the provision for pupils with autism in their Blessed Mary Ward Centre.

Leaders and governors place Catholic life and mission at the centre of all they do. They are energised, joyful and determined in the pursuit of this mission and a source of inspiration for the whole community. All staff (early career teachers, new staff and experienced staff) are overwhelmingly positive about their experience of working at Blessed Hugh Faringdon and new staff receive induction on working in a Catholic school, being a tutor, leading prayers and Catholic social teaching, as well as all staff having annual Ethos Days of training. The link with the local parish is strong as evidenced by the provision of regular Mass and opportunities for students to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation in school during Advent and Lent. All staff interviewed, including early careers teachers, were extremely positive about working at the school. A staff member stressed, 'I feel very proud to work at this school. It is not a business, it is a family'. The governors have high levels of expertise and are ambitious for the school. They regularly visit the school to monitor standards and will challenge the leadership accordingly. Governors and leaders ensure that Catholic social teaching drives all decisions.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

**Pupil outcomes**

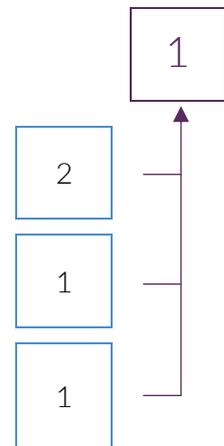
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

**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 are developing good knowledge, understanding and skills that reflect the learning required for the *Religious Education Directory* as evidenced in lessons taught, exercise books, and discussions with students. Pupils are keen to participate in lessons, are enthusiastic and enjoy their religious education lessons. They can make links between topics and use subject specific vocabulary confidently, they can make links between topics and at times ask good questions of teachers, to improve their knowledge and understanding. Parental feedback is overwhelmingly positive around the enjoyment of learning in religious education. Although, in the most recent GCSE data, there has been a drop in outcomes, the GCSE data from previous years is overwhelmingly positive and above national average. The department is fully aware of this and robust strategies have been implemented to improve upon last year's results. The recruitment and retention of students at Key Stage 5 is positive with healthy numbers studying A level religious studies, which is anticipated to increase further. Core religious education is undergoing an evolution and with the planned changes will further enhance the delivery for the students in the sixth form.

Religious education is at the centre of the curriculum. The department is a strong team, and teachers have excellent subject knowledge. Staff are committed to the subject and to the teaching of a Catholic curriculum. As a result, they can ask searching questions to test and develop students' understanding of lessons. Where learning is at its best, teachers use questioning skilfully to elicit articulate responses and to consolidate and develop knowledge and understanding. During a Year 10 lesson on the Stations of the Cross an opportunity for personal spontaneous personal reflection was captured and not only added to the learning but enhanced the relevance of the topic for all. Marking and feedback is consistent across the department and pupils benefit from this. In A level lessons, learning moves at pace and there are opportunities

for students to be challenged in depth, reflect and contribute. Going forward, the best practice observed should become commonplace across the department, especially with reference to pace at the beginning of lessons and how the learning is sequenced within the lessons. Students enjoy the subject and approach their lessons with enthusiasm and interest. This was supported by a parent who commented, 'Thank you for giving my child a good religious education to follow the right path in life'. Nearly all students have a good understanding of how well they are doing, what they're working towards, and how to get there.

Leaders and governors place the utmost importance on religious education; there is absolute parity between religious education and other core subjects. Careful consideration has been given to the intent and implementation of the religious education curriculum, leading to effectively sequenced, enhanced and built-upon learning. The leadership of the department have robust monitoring of teaching standards through comprehensive learning walks, book monitoring, assessment and standardisation. The *Religious Education Directory* has been successfully implemented at Year 7 and Year 8 and planning is well underway for full implementation in Year 9. The subject lead for religious education models good practice through her wealth of experience, highly effective teaching, thoughtful leadership and as a model of faith. She is also a recognised excellent practitioner across the school, having mentored and supported other middle leaders in the school.

## Collective worship

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

### Collective worship key judgement grade

**Pupil outcomes**

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

1

**Provision**

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

1

**Leadership**

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

1

1

There is a tradition of prayer which is diverse and inclusive. All staff ensure that traditional prayer is used alongside more contemporary forms. Prayer is naturally embedded into the school's daily life, which reflects the prayer life of the Church. The chapel, which is at the centre of the school, is always open and available for students and staff alike. Students are respectful and attentive, and participate, when prayers are said in form time and during assemblies. Students in the Chaplaincy in Action (CIA) and Oremus teams play an important role in the delivery of form time prayer each morning, assisting the chaplain with planning assemblies as well as weekly Eucharistic Adoration. During a registration period the tutor made links from the Sunday Gospel (the Beatitudes) and how these can be applied in our daily lives through a spontaneous deep reflection. Pupils evaluate their retreats and acts of worship and through the CIA and Oremus teams and contribute to the future planning and development of improved experiences. This will be an important process as the new chaplain starts.

The school has a carefully planned calendar for prayer and liturgy and praying together is embedded in the school's daily routine. The liturgical calendar of the school reflects that of the Church and there are appropriate celebrations to mark the calendar. Scripture forms a central part of the structured prayers across the school. Staff are comfortable and confident in leading prayer and as a result are inspiring role models to students and each other. The senior leaders and chaplain are dynamic, professional and caring in their approach to prayer and liturgy. The inclusive nature of the school ensures that students from all faiths feel welcomed and valued members of the community, which is a strength. Tutor rooms all have a focussed prayer board, with prayers and intentions displayed. The chaplain alongside another colleague provide resources to engage, lead and participate in corporate prayer, through presentations and booklets.

Along with pupils, leaders plan and deliver high-quality worship and fully understand the value of prayer and liturgy for each community member. They place a high priority on the prayer life of the school and provide time and space for this to be developed. The current chaplain has recently retired, however, she has been enabled to manage the transition with the new chaplain, and is line-managed by the headteacher. Leaders have embedded prayer and liturgy that is accessible to all students, which inspires thoughtful, spiritual responses; pupils play a significant role in this. Staff articulate that good practice is shared, allowing them to be more confident in delivering different forms of praying to students. Students contribute to and participate in evaluating prayer and liturgy, which continues to be developed. The governing body is kept informed about the school's prayer life through governors meetings and attending important celebrations during the year. The governing body is fully involved in monitoring and evaluating collective worship.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic Secondary School
School unique reference number (URN)	110107
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8705411
Full postal address of the school	Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic Secondary School, Fawley Road, Southcote, Reading, RG30 3EP
School phone number	001189574730
Headteacher	Simon Uttley
Chair of governors	Nicky Hardy
School Website	<a href="http://www.hughfaringdon.org/">http://www.hughfaringdon.org/</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
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	June 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

## The inspection team

Andrew Bull	Lead
Trisha Hedley	Team
Claire O'Neill	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