CATHOLIC SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE INSPECTION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND ACADEMIES

St Bede's Catholic College

URN: 137627

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Clifton

15 October 2026 – 16 October 2026

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

1

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 diocesan directives	Yes
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

This Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection was carried out under canons 804 & 806 of the code of canon law. For maintained schools and academies in England it fulfils the statutory requirements of s.48 of the Education Act 2005. For maintained schools and academies in Wales it fulfils the statutory requirements of s.50 of the Education Act 2005.

What the school does well

- Staff, pupils, and parents recognise St Bede's as a welcoming family community that is centred on the dignity of the person.
- Staff have an excellent understanding of Catholic social teaching and incorporate it into their curriculum.
- All are cared for, especially the most vulnerable, and leaders go out of their way to support pupils and staff especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Outcomes in religious education, both in terms of examination results and in terms of faith exploration, are excellent because of the skill and vision of the religious education lead.
- Leaders, especially those responsible for Catholic life and chaplaincy, are excellent role models and have a clear vision for effective and welcoming chaplaincy for all.

What the school needs to improve

- Make consistent use of higher order questioning in religious education lessons to allow for deeper understanding of content for all pupils.
- Develop opportunities to further form pupils to be creative planners and leaders of prayer.
- During times of prayer in the school day, offer further variety of prayer styles and traditions to allow for full, active, and conscious participation from pupils.

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

1

Pupil outcomes

1

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

Provision

1

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

Leadership

1

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

Pupils at St Bede's flourish because the community is committed to following the teaching and example of Jesus to value the dignity of all, especially the vulnerable. One parent said that 'St Bede's is a wonderful school which has helped each of my children to identify and develop their God given gifts.' Parents were especially effusive about how St Bede's supports pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities. This support is seen in outstanding examination outcomes and in lessons observed by inspectors. Pupils and staff commented on the role Catholic social teaching plays at the heart of the curriculum and pupils talked about its principles fluently in lessons and with inspectors. Pupils used these principles and the 'St Bede's Way' to explain how members of the school community interact. Some pupils involve themselves in chaplaincy provision in a way that is a true ministry and service to the school and the wider community; for example, in being ministers of communion and the choir performances. The parish priest and parents spoke with admiration of the level of pupil engagement in weekly mass. Pupils are engaged in evaluating the Catholic life of the school through student voice.

St Bede's lives out its charism and mission in the pastoral care which it provides, making it a place of welcome for all and a place of hospitality where staff truly go the extra mile. Many stakeholders, including parents and governors, attested to the staff ambition for all pupils in all areas of their life. Parents, for example, regularly said that the effort of staff was a strength of St Bede's. Pupils also take ownership for promoting this welcome. For example, pupils

leading assemblies during Black History Month shows a care, welcome, and celebration to all members of the community. The school site bears witness to the Catholic life of St Bede's through the centrality of the chapel, the house saint icons, and the naming of buildings. Pupils played a significant role in selecting the house saints. The chaplain, and those who support him, have a clear vision of effective chaplaincy. A range of stakeholders including governors, staff, pupils, and the parish priest made specific mention of the chaplain. A parent said, 'the chaplain is a real strength of the school, he knows the pupils and supports [them] both spiritually and pastorally.' The RSE at St Bede's fulfils the statutory requirements and is centred on the vision of the human person and the values of the St Bede's Way.

Catholic life and mission are evident in school policies which are compliant with diocesan requirements. The behaviour system, for example, is based on dignity and love. Staff understand what it means for St Bede's to be a Catholic community and are authentic in promoting and living this. One parent said, 'I see teachers at mass on a Sunday, [but] more importantly my daughter does.' The ethos and the dignity with which people are treated is modelled by school leaders embodying servant leadership. One staff member said, 'the love of Christ is visible from the top down.' Staff gave multiple moving examples of care they received in times of illness and bereavement, and new staff receive strong induction into the St Bede's Way and Catholic social teaching. Staff value the wellbeing opportunities on offer and the number of staff who have served the school for a significant number of years is testament to the leadership. Links between the school and the parish are exceptional because of the relationships fostered between the chaplain and the clergy with pupils serving both as readers and eucharistic ministers. Governors support the Catholic life of the school and make practical and financial decisions which put Catholic life at the heart of the school. Surveys, learning walks, and governor visits ensure that a range of evidence is gathered by leaders of the provision and impact of the Catholic life. Chaplaincy undergoes the same performance reviews as department faculties, recognising its centrality.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

1

Pupil outcomes

1

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

1

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education

Leadership

1

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education

The well implemented schemes of work allow pupils to reach the standards expected by the *Religious Education Directory (RED).* Pupils make consistent progress in religious education which leads to GCSE results significantly above national average. The 2026 GCSE results continued a pattern of strong attainment over previous years where religious education achieved the highest percentage of 7-9 grades of the core subjects. Outcomes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are very strong. Outcomes are also excellent in terms of pupils reflecting on their own faith. One parent said that 'religious education helps students to grow up in a spiritual experience'. There is close tracking of pupil progress with early interventions taking place with positive effect and high expectations for all. The religious education lead emphasised 'Christ is at the centre, and no child is left behind'. Religious literacy is high and genuine curiosity was seen in many lessons where students spoke about dignity, natural moral law, and Catholic social teaching with fluency. In all lessons students were attentive and worked independently on tasks with a sense of purpose leading to outstanding behaviour. This was especially evident in the 'Do Now' tasks. Teachers are enthusiastic and show a real love for their subject which inspires the pupils, for example this was seen in a Year 13 core religious education lesson where all students engaged in a discussion about where morals come from. Some pupils said that, despite being atheist, they valued the chance to reflect and discuss in lessons. Pupils respond to feedback given through self or peer assessment. Inspectors also saw examples of 'live marking' during lessons to allow rapid improvement from students.

The religious education lead, through his own example, successfully instils a deep commitment and set of high expectations which are enforced by the coaching and professional development offered. He has a clear vision that the subject is both academic in nature and contributes strongly to faith formation. Lessons are carefully structured to consolidate and, in the strongest cases, extend knowledge. There are shared resources from which teachers adapt and scaffold resources according to individual pupil need. Questioning strategies are used to identify where students are at in their learning. However, there are sometimes missed opportunities to take questioning further to fully challenge all pupils. This was highlighted in pupil voice where some pupils in Key Stage 4 said they were asked lots of questions but not always challenged. Parents noted the positive points awarded by the religious education department to give feedback on the progress of their child and to praise effort. Religious education teachers understand the impact on moral and spiritual development, for example, in a Year 7 lesson there were several examples given by pupils of why social action matters because climate change affects 'the poor as they don't have enough water, resources and food to live well'. In lessons and books a wide variety of tasks were seen and pupil voice has contributed to this variety. In one class the learning support assistant was supporting one pupil with joining in the discussion points, and in all lessons with another adult present the support offered made a noticeable impact on the written work of the pupils supported.

The curriculum is fully aligned with the *Religious Education Directory* (RED). There is a programme of monitoring and a second in faculty was appointed to aid its implementation. The religious education link governor visits regularly to ensure continual improvement. There is core parity; St Bede's meet the curriculum time requirements of the Bishops' Conference and budgets in English, maths and religious education are similar. There is excellent continuing professional development (CPD) provision including diocesan events, and staff have been supported professionally to undertake further study with one recently completing an MA at St Mary's University. Students talked about a trip to Rome and opportunities for volunteering and doing charity work, and there is certainly appetite amongst students for further enrichment opportunities.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

1

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

Pupils respond to prayer and collective worship in a range of appropriate ways including communal responses and respectful silence. For example, tutor prayer seen allowed students to pray their own petitions silently and pupils joined in all requests for saints to intercede. In the two assemblies that were seen, pupils were challenged to think and reflect prayerfully. Relatable examples including St Carlo Acutis, were skilfully used in one assembly to promote practical steps to respond to the theme of courage and was supported by scripture which was well-explained. Prayer in tutor groups is supported by a prayer booklet provided by leaders to support staff. Groups of students spoken to, while valuing this support, would like regular opportunities to prepare and lead tutor group prayers themselves. In events like the Advent service pupils take an active role in the readings and ministries showing the centrality of prayer. Pupils understand the role of prayer in times of need for example the death or illness of fellow pupils, and request prayers at these times. Pupils value the retreat opportunities offered as these give them a chance to explore their faith.

Prayer and collective worship are part of daily routine at St Bede's, and the plan for the year is well developed to support this. One staff member said, 'Prayer plays an important part of each morning for our students and is a focal point at the start and end of each lesson. It gives the students those moments to reflect, an opportunity which students value greatly.' The chaplain engages a group of very willing student volunteers, faith ambassadors, in helping him in planning and leading prayer and liturgy events including weekly mass and an Advent

service which are well attended. The latter of these was described as a highlight of the school year by a range of stakeholders. Parents confirm that they are invited to school events where prayer is involved. Leaders respond to requests from pupils including an immersive monastic experience for some sixth form students who also choose prayer groups as their enrichment activity. Staff worked with local clergy and the sixth form to develop a new style of reconciliation service which led to high levels of participation. The chapel is a well-used and a beautiful place of prayer at the heart of the school. It was celebrated by some staff that students had opted to be involved in saying the rosary during the month of October.

Leaders and governors value the chaplaincy provision and consequently it is well supported. They hold it to the same account as faculties and monitor it through reports, visits, and the policy. Leaders have developed strong CPD for staff and the progression of prayer skills to reflect their ambition for the prayer life of the school. A calendar and a plan of provision exist which, supported by leaders and the local parish, ensure that pupils can experience the sacraments including Reconciliation in Lent and feast day masses. Leaders understand a range of ways to lead prayer and the prayer traditions of the church. Some pupils take the lead in planning these, although pupils did recognise that they would be willing to do more if opportunities were made available. St Bede's recently becoming an Associate Lassalian School is affording many opportunities for developing pupil leadership. School evaluation of collective worship is systematic and includes pupils, school leaders and governors.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Bede's Catholic College
School unique reference number (URN)	137627
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8014602
Full postal address of the school	Lawrence Weston, Long Cross, Bristol, BS11 0SU
School phone number	0117 3772200
Headteacher or Head of School	Mr Robert King
Chair of Governors	Mrs Teresa Gilpin
School Website	www.stbedescc.org
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non Selective
Age-range of pupils	11 - 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed (Sixth Form: Mixed)
Date of last denominational inspection	10 November 2021
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The Inspection Team

David Legrand	Lead
Adrian Ross	
John Shinkwin	
Fiona Payne	

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