

## Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St John Rigby Sixth Form College

URN: 130523

Carried out on behalf of the Most Rev. Malcolm McMahon, Archbishop of Liverpool on:

Date: 22-23 November 2023

### Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....

1

### Catholic life and mission (p.2)

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.4)

The quality of curriculum religious education.....

1

### Collective worship (p.6)

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

1

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

✓

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

✓

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

N/A

## Summary of key findings

### What the school does well

- Students and staff fully embrace the Catholic identity and mission of the college through a strong culture of welcome and inclusion.
- Leadership is hugely impressive at senior and middle levels, fostering a culture of support and care for one another.
- Chaplaincy is 'front and centre' of the college, supported by a dedicated lay-chaplain, with the chapel as an effective place of prayer.
- Strong lesson planning is evident for both A level and core religious education with a focus on religious literacy and learner engagement.

### What the school needs to improve:

- Improve attainment in A level religious studies to ensure that outcomes are in line with other subjects.
- Develop further the opportunities for students to evaluate their planning and leadership of prayer and liturgy.

## 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

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

1

### Provision

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

1

### Leadership

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

1

St. John Rigby Sixth Form College is a joyful, happy and supportive community. Students express great pride in their college. They know their time in sixth form is relatively short and they speak about how much they will miss this college when the time comes for them to move on. They express appreciation for the wide-ranging support they receive from staff and the outstanding 'wrap around' care from the pastoral team. Staff, meanwhile, describe life in the college as being about "students coming before anything else". There is a real spirit of collaboration and teamwork which many staff describe as being a 'family atmosphere'. Gospel values underpin the mission of the college with students understanding and able to articulate the values of John Rigby: faith, courage, integrity, commitment, freedom and forgiveness. They also understand the demands of Catholic Social Teaching, exploring it in their weekly 'Values for Living' core religious education lessons. This prompts them into action locally through supporting The Brick, and globally through campaigning and fundraising for Cafod. Students have a real sense of their uniqueness and self-worth which leads them to show great respect and care for others. This is evident in exemplary behaviour in lessons and in movement around the college campus. Chaplaincy is at the heart of the college and students highly value the support offered by the lay-chaplain. The weekly Philosophy Club offers enrichment and

challenge, with one student explaining with enthusiasm his presentation about the different philosophical approaches of the two most recent popes.

Governors, leaders and staff are committed witnesses to the mission of the college and the importance placed on relationships is clearly evident with the Principal focusing on this in his first learning walk of the academic year. Staff are passionate about working in this college and speak in the most moving terms about the Principal and how he has had made such a difference to the college and to them personally. A strong culture of welcome and inclusion extends to students of all faiths and none. Governors are committed to the curriculum offer for Level 2 students despite the financial challenges this brings. The college mission statement and chaplaincy slogan 'Roots to grow and wings to fly' are known and lived out through all aspects of the college. There is a strong focus on neurodiversity research projects as part of the college's mission to support all students. The spiritual development of students is a priority with the chapel being at the heart of the community, and the values for living programme offering students different experiences of prayer. An effective relationships and sex education policy is in place explaining how the approach taken is rooted in teaching of the Catholic Church and aims to develop the whole person. The subject is taught within values for living and tutorial time with staff ensuring that their teaching underpins Catholic understanding of sex and sexuality.

Leaders recognise the importance of partnerships at all levels. The college engages fully with the Archdiocese and has formed excellent links with partner schools and parishes. It enjoys an excellent reputation in the area and parents speak in the highest terms of the work and care for their children. Governors are fully committed to ensuring the best education, formation and outcomes of the students. The weekly values for living topic is communicated to all staff so that it can be explored in other curriculum areas, making this a truly Catholic curriculum. Effective, open leadership has resulted in strong morale with staff feeling supported, valued and empowered to undertake their work effectively, with a real sense of joy. Staff feel listened to with senior leaders responding positively to suggestions for improvement. Leaders have developed rigorous processes for self-evaluation of the Catholic life and mission of the college with regular review and monitoring. Formation of staff is highly effective with a highly valued ethos day of reflection at the start of the academic year.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

1

### Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

1

### Provision

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

1

### Leadership

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

1

Students show very positive attitudes to their learning in religious education and excellent behaviour is seen in lessons due to their high levels of engagement. The department delivers core religious education in their values for living programme. As a result of lessons targeting student interest, there is excellent progress in these lessons. Religious literacy is a strength of lessons with students being introduced to, and becoming more confident with, key terminology. A Year 12 lesson introduced students to a variety of arguments for the existence of God and challenged them to reflect upon different viewpoints. Recall of prior learning is a feature at the start of lessons, and there are many opportunities for independent learning and class discussion. The use of self-assessment sheets in A level lessons is excellent practice as they provide students with key information on what they have done well and what they now need to do to improve. A level data is slightly below national average for 2023 and this has been identified as an area for improvement by the college in its self-evaluation.

The religious education team has exercised a truly collaborative approach to lesson planning, the sharing of pedagogical knowledge, resources and good practice. Planning is clearly linked to assessment of previous lessons and has clear links to the draft KS5 *Religious Education Directory*. Subject knowledge of teachers is strong and confident and there is great support given to teachers of religious education from other curriculum areas. Staff have high expectations of their students with all being challenged to improve their knowledge and skills, and to think theologically and ethically. In Year 12 values for living lessons there are opportunities for moral and spiritual development. For example, in lesson visits students were actively engaged and enjoying ethical decision-making scenarios and exploring issues surrounding marriage, relationships and parenthood. The department has recently adapted

its teaching as a result of student feedback about online learning during the pandemic. A highly effective blended learning approach is now being piloted using Microsoft Forms. This is enhancing the learning environment by stimulating class discussion and providing teachers with immediate feedback on student understanding. Resources in lessons are of high quality in both presentation and activities.

Senior leaders are fully committed to religious education and students benefit greatly from the college provision. An example of this is the bespoke values for living for Level 2 students which ensures that students gain an understanding of the Catholic faith and successfully access their learning. There is clear progression in the work of students in both A level and core religious education. The team is fully aware of the different starting points of their students, knowing that they have come from a variety of different schools (faith and non-faith), with a wide range of experiences of the subject, and they plan accordingly. The subject leader for religious education is inspirational. She is a reflective leader, willing to implement new approaches and strategies to teaching and learning. She fully understands the strengths and development needs of her team and is passionate to ensure high quality teaching for all students. The importance of educational research and professional development is recognised by the department, and supported by the college, with several colleagues having completed or currently undertaking Farmington Institute research projects. Students value the enrichment opportunities offered such as the retreat day to Liverpool where they visited places of worship offering very different approaches to worship. Processes for self-evaluation by the department are robust with the subject leader reporting to governors twice per academic year. As a result, governors have a clear understanding of departmental priorities.

## 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 .....

2

### 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

In daily morning prayer in the chapel, and in meditation observed in the values for living lessons, students show that they are respectful, reflective and responsive. They are comfortable with silence and confident in reading scripture and praying aloud but are not widely involved in preparation and planning. Students participate enthusiastically, in partnership with those from other local schools, with the Advent Cafod carol concert held annually in one of the local parishes. This is long established and a highlight in the college calendar. Some students can talk about their experiences of leading prayer although opportunities for this could be extended further. Similarly, student evaluation of their leadership of prayer and worship is limited. Times of prayer in college show variation and learners understand the cycle of the liturgical year through experiencing and enjoying the extended assemblies for Christmas and Easter.

The chapel is a most striking feature of the college. Beautifully appointed and situated in the entrance, it is highly valued by students and staff. It is usual to see a member of the community in the chapel throughout the day, taking advantage of their surroundings and the silence and stillness that are experienced there. Daily morning prayer forms part of the daily rhythm of college life and is well attended. A variety of staff members volunteer for the rota to lead prayer, and show commitment, skill and reverence in their ministry. Appropriate scripture passages are selected for exploration and reflection. Leaders are realistic about the most suitable way to offer opportunities for prayer in a college where over 60% of students have not experienced education in a Catholic school. Therefore, induction to prayer and spirituality is done with sensitivity and always respects the dignity and freedom of the individual.

Opportunities for students to experience prayer and reflection extend way beyond the chapel. The values for living schemes of work clearly indicate where prayer will be introduced throughout the year such as the Emmaus nature walks, guided meditation and prayer involving signs, symbols and aids. A weekly 'Thought for the week' is communicated on the college bulletin and is a running narrative through all curriculum areas.

A clear policy on prayer and worship is in place which effectively communicates the strategy and support offered to staff. The college has long enjoyed and benefitted from close links with clergy from the feeder parishes. In one conversation a priest spoke with the utmost passion about his affection for the college, its work and charism. He described how he always enjoys visiting the college, to work with leaders, religious education staff and the lay-chaplain in supporting the liturgical and spiritual life of the staff and students. It is unsurprising, therefore, that celebration of the Eucharist is a regular feature of the college life. Where Mass is not able to take place on holy days of obligation students are signposted to their local parishes. The highly experienced and effective lay-chaplain is instrumental in motivating and equipping colleagues to confidently lead prayer. He is a supportive presence and fully understands the needs of the community in which he works. Leaders and governors ensure that the prayer and liturgical life of the college is well resourced and this is clear by visiting the college chapel and chaplaincy. Invaluable religious experiences are offered by the chaplaincy team and this is outstanding practice.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	St John Rigby Sixth Form College
School unique reference number (URN)	130523
Full postal address of the school	Gathurst Road, Orrell, Wigan, WN5 0LJ
School phone number	01942 214797
Name of head teacher or principal	Mr Peter McGhee
Chair of governing board	Mrs Pam Tate
School Website	sjr.ac.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Not applicable
Type of school	Sixth form college
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	16-19
Trustees	Archdiocese of Liverpool
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	Not applicable
Previous denominational inspection grade	Not applicable

## The inspection team

Ben McMullen	Lead inspector
Louise Conway	Team inspector
Jennifer Rowlands	Team inspector

## 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