



# St. Edmund Arrowsmith Catholic High School

URN: 106540

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Liverpool

25–26 January 2024

## 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 curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

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

Yes

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

Fully

## What the school does well

- The leadership provided by the head teacher and senior leadership team is inspirational and enriches the community.
- The school's Catholic life and mission is vibrant and fully supported by staff.
- Chaplaincy provision is highly valued by students and parents.
- The promotion of religious literacy in religious education teaching and learning is a key strength of the department.

## What the school needs to improve

- Reinstate enrichment activities beyond the classroom for the spiritual and moral development of students.
- Reduce the number of action points in the self-evaluation by identifying key priority areas.

- Fully embed a consistent approach to student feedback across religious education.

## 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

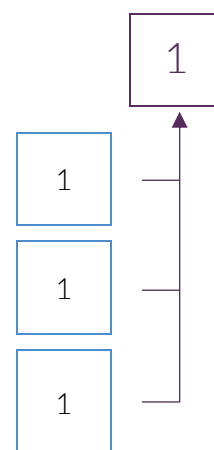
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### 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



This is a successful, happy and joyful community. Students are rightly proud of their Catholic identity and speak with great enthusiasm about their school and the teachers. The mission statement has been recently relaunched, and it is known, understood and lived out by all. One Year 7 student commented, "We felt welcomed and at home really quickly. There is a good sense of community here." Students refer with confidence to the positive and inclusive culture of the school, praising its consistency. They describe their participation in chaplaincy activities and how they contribute to their own spiritual and moral formation. One student explained how the teachers sow seeds of faith and was able to quote the parable of the mustard seed to illustrate his point. Students recognise and contribute to the demands of Catholic social teaching, although they are not able to articulate this fully. However, they respond through local and global charities that include food banks and Cafod, as well as support for refugees. The behaviour in lessons visited was consistently outstanding. Students make full use of the chapel before, during and after the school day. They value the opportunities to get to know, and become friends with, students from different year groups through the Faith in Action and 'LiveSimply' awards.

Great consideration has been given to expanding the mission statement of 'Preparing the way of the Lord' through ACTIONS. Staff and students have embraced this which has led to a strong sense of community where all are welcomed, valued and supported. Staff speak in the highest terms about the school, its leadership and each other. They view their school as a family. Muslim students and staff from a neighbouring school are invited in for Friday prayers to show how this

culture of welcome extends beyond the school gates. Staff are fully committed to their vocation and are described by the students as inspirational role models. Pastoral care is central to student progression in the school and ensures that all students, including the most vulnerable, are treated with dignity and respect. The completion of an impressive new pastoral hub has been designed and developed with the needs of the students at the forefront. The school's chaplaincy provision is led by a fully committed and much-loved chaplain. A significant number of parental questionnaires recognised the hugely positive impact of chaplaincy on the lives of their children. Provision of relationships, sex and health education meets statutory and diocesan requirements. It is carefully planned to suit the needs of all ages.

The head teacher is a truly inspirational, charismatic, and committed Catholic leader of this community. Staff describe him as, "compassionate and someone who listens and makes students his priority. He knows them by name and they love him." He is supported by a highly impressive senior leadership team who are unwavering in their determination to provide the best education for their young people. Catholic life and mission is always the first priority in school improvement planning, and the first area covered in induction programmes for new staff. Governors are wholly committed to the mission of the school and actively involved in the life of the community. Link governors take their role very seriously, offering support and challenge to their departments before reporting back to the full governing body. Links with parishes are strong, particularly with the Confirmation programme, and this has resulted in high numbers of students choosing to receive the sacrament. The Catholic nature of the school runs across different curriculum subjects, making this a truly Catholic curriculum. The school's self-evaluation is honest and thorough, and clearly focused on its mission as a Catholic school. It would be helpful, however, to reduce the number of action points into key priorities.

## 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

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

1

Students clearly enjoy religious education and were fully engaged in all lessons visited. They benefit from opportunities to work in pairs and small groups. Student books showed that they have a sense of pride in their learning and in their work. Literacy is embedded in the curriculum with lessons and classroom displays promoting the use of GCSE key terms. Students were confident in using complex religious terminology. In most lessons staff were adept at utilising questioning to develop students' knowledge, reflection and evaluation. Students are given opportunities for discussion and in one lesson students shared the experiences of family members in Lourdes, enabling them to learn from each other. Opportunities for independent learning were evident in a Year 11 lesson, developing techniques for answering GCSE evaluation questions. Students spoke of feeling empowered when given the opportunities to work independently. Students make strong progress across both key stages and the school is rightly proud that virtually all students are entered for GCSE. Attainment is slightly below English and is a target for development. Significant progress has been made to reduce the gender gap at GCSE with effective strategies implemented for male students.

This is a highly skilled religious education department comprising of committed, hard-working practitioners who have high expectations of their students. Subject knowledge of all teachers is excellent including those who come from another specialism. Lessons are collaboratively planned to include a variety of learning activities. An effective Year 11 lesson involved movement around the classroom as the students embarked upon a personal pilgrimage reflecting upon the stations of the cross. Year 7 students have the opportunity to visit the chapel to experience Christian meditation. When teacher questioning is at its best, it encourages students to reflect more deeply and to make links with previous topics studied. This

linking of new and previous knowledge was particularly impressive in Judaism lessons. Praise is effectively used by all teachers in the department and is a strength of lessons, particularly in the nurture group. Classroom 'wall of fame' displays further enhance this culture of celebration. This reflects the strong, positive relationships that exist between staff and students in this department, and around the school.

Governors and senior leaders ensure that religious education meets the time requirement. The department is well-resourced with staffing and accommodation in line with other core subjects. The religious education team are reflective practitioners, and this is evident in the thoughtful design and mapping of the curriculum. Topics on beliefs and practices are skilfully interwoven for the Judaism component of the GCSE course. They are working hard with their implementation of the new Religious Education Directory (RED) for Year 7 students and are currently considering the most appropriate GCSE specification for their students. The department engages fully with professional development opportunities both internally in their teaching and learning research groups, and externally with the Archdiocese. Leadership of the department is very strong, with excellent support from a talented assistant headteacher, and it is wholly student-centred. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the department is keen to increase and reinstate enrichment activities both within and beyond the classroom, and across all year groups, for the spiritual and moral development of students. Self-evaluation processes are thorough, robust and honest.

## 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

Students experience a variety of prayer and liturgy opportunities in school. Morning Prayer in the chapel is a moving and thoughtful start to the day and is well attended by staff and students. It is led confidently by students. In all forms of prayer and liturgy observed, student engagement and participation were strong. They are comfortable reflecting in silence, reading aloud and responding collectively. In the week of the inspection the assembly had been carefully planned by the geography department and a team of students. It was a thought-provoking experience with one student delivering a powerful reflection on the Gospel of the week. Students were challenged to reflect on how scripture relates to their lives and the world in which they live. Prayer and liturgy planning follows the liturgical year with effective use of liturgical colours on presentation slides. Students can confidently articulate how prayer impacts their daily lives. A striking prayerful atmosphere was evident in all experiences of prayer and liturgy: in the chapel, classrooms and the assembly hall. Students described how they value the challenge posed to them from the final 'send forth' element of their prayer and worship.

Prayer and liturgy is a central feature of school life and is built into the rhythm of the school day. Morning prayer offers a traditional start to the day, based on the Office of the Church. In form classes 'Thought for the week' includes scripture and an offering for the day ahead. Scripture was central to all experiences of prayer and liturgy observed and, in the best examples, it was skilfully explained to students. There is a set formula for all staff to follow. It is clearly a great support to staff, and hugely valued, although it could restrict creativity and spontaneity from more confident members of staff. Creative uses of space for prayer and liturgy are evident throughout the year with both students and staff speaking enthusiastically of the use of outside spaces for whole school masses and the service of Remembrance. Community members and

families are invited to celebrate with the school community when appropriate such as the annual carol services. In these services music and chaplaincy combine to offer an experience that brings the whole community together. Strong links exist with the local parish, for example, students attending Mass in church during Lent.

There is a well-written and impressive prayer and liturgy policy designed specifically for this school and its context. It is lived out and is a huge support to staff, regardless of their religious background. Monitoring of prayer and liturgy takes place and is led by the chaplain. She has visited form classes to model good practice, and this is further evidence of the supportive and collaborative culture that permeates the school. Careful planning of the sacramental programme for Confirmation results in a very high take up. The chaplain works with local clergy to facilitate opportunities for students to receive the Eucharist and Reconciliation. Formation of staff is a high priority so an annual spirituality day is a feature of the professional development calendar. New staff receive training on the delivery of prayer through the daily 'Thought for the Day'. A set of very attractive staff training slides provide very clear guidance on what prayer and liturgy should involve through the four stages of Gather-Listen-Respond-Send Forth. Finally, there is thorough, ongoing, reflective evaluation of prayer and liturgy as evidenced in the Chaplaincy Improvement plan.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	St. Edmund Arrowsmith Catholic High School
School unique reference number (URN)	106540
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3594805
Full postal address of the school	St. Edmund Arrowsmith Catholic High School, Rookery Avenue, Ashton-in-Makerfield, Wigan, WN4 9PF
School phone number	01942 728651
Headteacher	Mark Dumican
Chair of Governors	Stephen Westhead
School Website	<a href="http://www.arrowsmith.wigan.sch.uk">http://www.arrowsmith.wigan.sch.uk</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	11-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	1 March 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

## The inspection team

Ben McMullen	Lead
Sarah Daley	Team
Louise Conway	Team
Jennifer Rowlands	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



