

**INSPECTION REPORT**

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**Inspection carried out Under Canon 806  
and in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005**

**Name of School:** St Monica’s Roman Catholic High School, Bury Old Road, Manchester.

**Inspection date:** 1 July 2019

**Reporting Inspectors** Martin Reynolds, Leo Conley, Mark Mountcastle

Type of school	Secondary
URN	105366
Age range of pupils	11-16 years
Number on roll	1123
Appropriate authority	The Interim Executive Board
Chair of The IEB	John Costello
Headteacher	Chris Foley
Religious Education Subject Leader	Liz Crutchley
Date of previous inspection	9 April 2014

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades
Overall effectiveness of the school	3	1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3=Requires Improvement 4 = Inadequate
The quality of Catholic Leadership	2	
The Catholic Life of the school (incorporating Welcome, Welfare and Witness)	2	
The quality of Religious Education (incorporating Word)	3	
The quality of Worship	3	
The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements		

## **CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL**

St Monica's is an 11-16 school that serves the Catholic community of Bury. There are currently 1123 pupils on roll. Almost all pupils come from Catholic feeder schools, and 98.4% of pupils are Baptised Roman Catholics. The school has a lower than average percentage of disadvantaged pupils (21 %) and pupils with SEND needs (2 % EHCP, 7 % SEN K.) The school has experienced significant turbulence over recent years. In January 2018 the school was inspected by OFSTED and was placed into special measures. In the space of an academic year, the school had 4 different headteachers. In May 2018 an Interim Executive Board (IEB) was constituted. An HMI monitoring visit took place in October 2018 and found that the school had made insufficient progress towards the removal of special measures since the inspection. However, the report stated that the IEB is resolute in its commitment to more rapid improvement in the quality of education and is now providing effective challenge. In January 2019 the current Headteacher took up post as Interim Headteacher and this was made substantive with effect from September 2019.

## **THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:**

- **The newly appointed Headteacher has a clear and inclusive vision for the school and models the living out of this vision in all that he says and does.**
- **The Interim Executive Board has an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses as a Catholic school and is resolute in its determination to effect rapid and sustainable improvement.**
- **The pastoral care for pupils across all levels of school is a strength of the school.**

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT**

Whilst the school has journeyed together through a difficult period, the new Headteacher has begun to bring the stability that the school urgently needed. His resolute determination to see the school improve rapidly is infectious. Supported by an astute Interim Executive Board, a new vision for the school has been articulated which reorients the school around strong Catholic values of inclusion and service. Staff, pupils and parents are buying into this new vision and there is a palpable sense in the school that a journey to good and outstanding is on its way. As one member of staff said, 'We know what we are trying to build now, and it is right for our pupils'. Whilst the school's current Ofsted judgement has necessitated immediate and impactful actions, these have been done with compassion and integrity. Strong roots are being planted and there is a belief and emerging capacity that the school will continue to improve rapidly. The school now has stronger leadership. The Catholic Life of the school is being nurtured effectively and standards in Religious Education are continuing to improve under the leadership of the Religious Education subject leader.

## **THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS GOOD**

Through a period of significant turbulence, the new Headteacher has brought a compelling vision for St Monica's which restates for all the catholic and inclusive values of the school. Leading by example, he models the values of a servant leader and this is offering hope for the school and wider community. Staff, parents and pupils have felt this change and are committed to this direction of travel on what has been a difficult journey for many. An experienced and knowledgeable Interim Executive Board is offering effective support to the headteacher in ensuring that robust accountability systems are now in place to accurately monitor and evaluate standards in all areas. They have taken courageous decisions to ensure that the school deficit is reduced, under control and that resources are reallocated to ensure sustainable improvement. Where such difficult decisions have been made consideration of the dignity of those affected by them has been paramount. Strategic plans for school improvement place the rewriting of the school Mission Statement as a priority next year. The Headteacher clearly sees this collaborative task as formulating the contemporary expression of the Catholic values from which sustainable improvement will be born. The Religious Education subject leader has led her team with diligence and commitment through a difficult period in the school's journey. The headteacher has corrected the historic legacy of curriculum time allocations which had led to Religious Education occupying less than 10% of the taught curriculum and has taken steps to ensure Religious Education rightly becomes the core of core subjects.

### **THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL (incorporating Welcome, Welfare and Witness) IS GOOD**

St. Monica's is a welcoming school and is beginning to find again its sense of pride in what it stands for. Even before pupils arrive, staff are actively ensuring that transition from Year 6 to 7 is as smooth as possible. Older students help plan a welcome day for the new Year 7 pupils and help build up a culture of welcome. A teacher of the Jewish faith praised the way the school had gone the extra mile to ensure adjustments to his timetable were made to allow him to practise his faith. Staff are a visible presence around the school and this is helping to create a positive climate in which children feel safe and their welfare paramount. Appropriate structures for safety and welfare ensure that pastoral care in the school is good and that safeguarding procedures are robust. SRE is largely delivered through Religious Education and Science lessons and the school recognises the need for further development in this area. The Headteacher has led from the front in building strong partnerships with parents in feeder primary schools. Parents value this openness and feel their views are being listened to. This is true of pupils too, one of whom said, "Mr Foley listens to us, recognises the issues and does something about it." The newly formed TRUST unit is rapidly reducing exclusions by balancing punishment with restorative justice and forgiveness. Together with a restructured SEND team, the school deploys a variety of skilled professionals to meet the needs of its most needy pupils. For example, the staffing of a lunchtime space for vulnerable pupils demonstrates the school's commitment to inclusion. This provision is good. Pupils are given opportunities to lead in the witness of Catholic values through Caritas Ambassadors. Supported by staff they have helped create a culture of service to others exemplified in activities like serving Christmas dinners for the elderly, running a food bank and performing music for the residents of Nazareth House.

### **THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (incorporating Word) IS REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT**

The standards of teaching in Religious Education are varied as is the development of SMSC across other subjects. The head of Religious Education has demonstrated dedicated and strong leadership through a difficult period in the school's history. Leaders have not sufficiently supported Religious Education both in terms of curriculum time allocations and also in promoting it as the core of the core curriculum. This has now been corrected. Leaders are aware that the school mission statement is not contemporary and does not adequately reflect the values of the school and they are now taking steps to change this.

In the sample of books seen, there was evidence of effective feedback helping pupils to make next steps in learning. This is a strength of the department. However, in some observed teaching, too many boys were disengaged and made little progress. This is reflected in the progress of boys in GCSE Religious Education which lags behind that of girls. The best teaching was characterised by good subject knowledge, skilled questioning and high expectations. Good practice and outcomes were seen in a number of Year 10 GCSE classes and in a small group of Year 10 students following the Salford Certificate in Religious Education. Improving the learning culture across the school is a priority for the leadership. Whilst there was clear evidence of innovative SMSC links between science and Religious Education, and of efforts being made to engage in the 'Big Questions' in other areas, clear evidence of SMSC across the curriculum was not consistent.

### **THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT**

The school provides opportunities for prayer and worship across the school although this is not yet consistent in frequency or quality. Staff are well served through the leadership of the Liturgy Co-ordinator who provides a variety of age-related resources. She is supported by an enthusiastic Liturgy group, who help lead the preparation of a variety of services such as a service for Ash Wednesday, a Rosary group and Service of Welcome for the new Year 7. The enthusiasm of this group is not fully impacting across the school and they could become a powerful tool in monitoring the quality of worship in Form time. The pupils were extremely attentive and respectful in the observed assembly and contributions to planning and delivery of prayer and worship from the liturgy group would only enhance the quality further. Some students felt that the regularity or quality of worship in Form Time depended on which Form Tutor they had. St Monica's enjoys the benefits of a well-resourced chapel. The Headteacher has signalled the centrality of this sacred space by moving staff briefing there on a Monday morning when staff start the working week with a prayer or reflection. He also has a clear and accurate evaluation of the next steps required to build the confidence of all members of staff to lead meaningful worship at the start of the school day.

## **AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT**

- **To rewrite the school mission statement so that it captures clearly and powerfully the inclusive ethos of the school.**
- **Develop more effective teaching strategies to engage boys' learning so that they make stronger progress in Religious Education.**
- **Ensure that more opportunities are taken in learning outside of Religious Education for the spiritual and moral dimensions of SMSC to be embedded.**
- **To ensure all staff are confident in contributing to the catholic life of the school through consistently good collective worship and to expand the reach of the liturgy group to help achieve this.**