



## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **St Augustine's Catholic College**

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URN: 137375

Headmaster: Mr D Forster

Chair of Governors: Mr C Kinsky QC

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**Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Clifton  
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005**

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Date of inspection: 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> January 2020  
Date of previous inspection: 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> September 2014

Lead Inspector: Mrs A Barrett  
Additional Inspector: Mr G Maher

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## Description of school

St. Augustine's Catholic College is a mixed 5-form entry 11-19 Catholic secondary academy in Wiltshire under the Trusteeship of the Catholic Diocese of Clifton.

The school serves the parishes of St Anthony of Padua (Melksham), St Catharine (Frome), St Edmund (Calne), St George (Warminster), The Immaculate Conception (Devizes), St John the Baptist (Trowbridge), St Bernadette (Westbury) and St Thomas More (Bradford on Avon).

There are 1,002 pupils on roll, 81.4% of whom are baptised Catholic, 16.6% from other Christian denominations and 0.9% from other faiths. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.

The proportion of pupils who have a SEN statement or an educational health and care plan is in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those speaking English as an additional language is below the national average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support from the pupil premium is below the national average.

There are 5 full time and 2 part time teachers in the RE department. There is a part time lay chaplain. All teachers of religious education (RE) have a specialist qualification in the subject. Within the whole teaching body, the percentage of Catholic teachers is 32%.

There have been significant changes in leadership, governance and staffing since the last inspection. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2018, with the current chair of governors taking on the role in November 2019. In addition, five of the seven Foundation governors are new to their role. Within the RE department two new teachers took up post in September 2019 alongside thirteen other new staff (of whom nine are teachers, two are teaching partners and one working to support pupil behaviour).

St Augustine's is part of a diocesan hub of Catholic schools (including 8 primaries and 1 other secondary) and a member of the Clifton Secondary Headteachers Group. The school has been an associate Lasallian College for a number of years drawing its inspiration from the spirituality and educational principles of its founder, St John Baptist de la Salle.

### Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)

#### Grade 2

- This is a good Catholic school with outstanding provision and outcomes in religious education (RE). The school's strong Catholic ethos pervades every aspect of its life and is highly valued by all its members.
- Leaders and governors are fully committed to the Catholic life and character of the school and are determined to develop and grow this aspect as part of this next step of its ongoing and upward journey for improvement.

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- Staff are fully committed to the school's Catholic character and ethos. They promote and exemplify high standards of behaviour and thereby contribute to a harmonious community of mutual respect.
  - Overall, pupils make excellent progress in religious education (RE) and enjoy their learning because of the positive relations engendered by their teachers, and the engaging approaches to the teaching of the subject.
  - The behaviour of pupils is exemplary, with excellent support and guidance provided by the pastoral team. Pupils have a deep respect for themselves and are acutely alert to the needs of others within and beyond the school community.
  - Pupils take full advantage of the opportunities the school provides for their personal support and development and as a result are happy, confident, well-mannered individuals who demonstrate great pride in their school.
  - The new headteacher has been instrumental in further enhancing the school's strong systems for pastoral care, including a clear focus on improving mental health among pupils. He, in partnership with leaders and governors, is committed to renewing and further improving all aspects of its Catholic life.
  - The head of RE is an outstanding practitioner and role model for the department, with a clear vision for her department, which is shared by all.
  - The quality of pastoral care shown to all members of the community, both pupils and staff, is outstanding.
  - The chaplaincy provision is highly effective in supporting and promoting the Catholic life of the school.
  - The experience of living and working in a faithful, praying community makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development.

### **The capacity of the school community to improve is good**

The capacity of the school to improve is good. Two of the three areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection have been effectively addressed. However, the action point relating to enabling pupils to further develop their skills for planning, writing and leading their own liturgies is still pertinent and remains an area for development. Inspectors, however, are confident that, under the guidance of the new headteacher and governing body, there is a determination to address this and the other areas for development identified in this report. This bodes well for the future.

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### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Leaders and governors should implement a more formal system for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the provision for the Catholic and prayer life of the school and the impact of actions taken to further improve these aspects.
- Provide support for staff (especially new staff) to facilitate pupils in developing their skills in planning, writing and leading and evaluating their own worship.
- Involve pupils in developing the Catholic character of the school in a planned, consistent and systematic way so that they contribute fully to the school's evaluation of its Catholic life and mission and contribute fully in planning improvements to it.

### a) The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school

- The school's strong Catholic ethos pervades every aspect of its life and is highly valued by all its members. Most pupils are confident and enthusiastic in articulating the distinctiveness of their Catholic school. They demonstrate a deep respect for themselves and are acutely alert to the needs of others, within and beyond the school community.
- The behaviour of pupils is exemplary, with excellent support and guidance provided by the pastoral team. Pupils have a deep respect for themselves and are acutely alert to the needs of others within and beyond the school community. This strong culture of respect for others is evident in all aspects of school life.
- Pupils take full advantage of the opportunities the school provides for their personal support and development and as a result are happy, confident, well-mannered individuals who demonstrate great pride in their school.
- Pupils value the opportunities the school provides for their personal support and development which enables them to be happy and confident individuals. They are encouraged to develop a good understanding of loving relationships and sexual development within the context of a Christian understanding of love.
- Pupils respond positively to the range of opportunities to contribute to school liturgies and Mass through, for example, playing in the orchestra, singing in the choir, preparing artwork, serving, setting up for mass and packing away afterwards and reading. Sixth form students play a valuable role in helping younger pupils to practise reading, taking control of multimedia, preparing drama and reflections.
- Pupils in years 7-11 benefit from opportunities to join the school's chaplaincy team. The re-introduction of the 6<sup>th</sup> form chaplaincy prefects, alongside a Faith Prefect on the senior team, is a welcome development. The 6<sup>th</sup> form students provide good role models for the whole school community, with the Faith Prefects having responsibility for planning and leading workshops on lower school retreats.
- Pupils are quick to respond to activities which encourage concern for the poor and working for social justice. For example, through their involvement in Diocesan events such as the Lourdes Pilgrimage, national and international events such as World Youth Day, Lasallian camps and the FLAME Catholic Youth Conference. They embrace opportunities to fundraise for CAFOD, support the local foodbank and the 6<sup>th</sup> Form 'Sleepout' for the homeless.
- Pupils value those opportunities to take on positions of responsibility and leadership roles in the school's Catholic life, such as membership of the chaplaincy team, Year 10 CAFOD Young Leaders, Youth Parliament and the GLOW Youth Group.

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- Pupils value the opportunities that the school provides for their personal support and development and as a result are largely secure in their emotional and spiritual growth. They have a clear understanding of the school values, based on the 'S.P.I.R.I.T of St Augustine'<sup>1</sup> but are less secure in articulating their understanding of the school's roots in its Lasallian identity, and of being part of a national and worldwide Lasallian family. Pupils would benefit from revisiting this in order to gain a deeper understanding of what it is to be 'Lasallian'.
  - Pupils accept the responsibilities of living in a Catholic school community and value and enjoy those activities which the school provides which promote the Catholic life of the school and the wider community. However, opportunities for almost all pupils to contribute in a planned and systematic way to the school's evaluation of its Catholic life and mission and take a lead in planning improvements to it are underdeveloped. Discussions with pupils indicate a desire to develop these skills and put their own stamp on developing the school's Catholic character. Leaders and governors have identified this as an area for development and are working to address this through the guidance of the Catholic Life Committee.
  - The school should therefore build further on pupils' commitment to their Catholic school by involving them more fully in developing its Catholic character. This would empower them, as partners, to take a lead in planning, strengthening and evaluating its Catholic life and character. There is clear evidence that the school is confident and ready to take this next step.
  - Pupils greatly benefit from the strong links with the parish communities, especially St John's which is nearby. Irrespective of their faith background, they are confident in expressing pride in belonging to the school, and in their own religious and cultural identity and beliefs.

#### **b) The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school**

- The school's mission statement is central, permeates every aspect of school life and is embedded in Gospel values. It is indeed a 'Learning community which seeks the highest standards of excellence whilst remaining committed to valuing each individual and their gifts'<sup>2</sup>. The school's motto 'Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam' (To the Greater Glory of God) is evident in all aspects of the school, including the website and school documents. The school is proud of its Lasallian roots and its links with the worldwide Lasallian family of schools.
- The school's environment reflects its mission and identity with obvious signs of its Catholic character. In particular, the welcoming chaplaincy area and adjoining chapel and the vibrant displays in the RE classrooms and entrance make a clear statement of its ethos to its members and to external visitors.

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<sup>1</sup> Self-control, positivity, integrity, respect, initiative

<sup>2</sup> School Mission Statement

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- The chaplaincy provision is very effective in supporting and promoting the Catholic life of the school and is a strength of the school. This good provision complements the school's pastoral system by providing a quiet space during the day for those in need of support. The lay chaplain is highly regarded by staff and plays a valuable role in supporting all members of the school community. In addition to working with the chaplaincy team in a number of initiatives focused around the need to serve others, she oversees break and lunchtime activities in the chapel which include Adoration, Y10 CAFOD Young Leaders programme, Sweet Scripture and Rosary. She plans the school's excellent retreat programme, class and whole school Masses and other key liturgical events, with the support of the RE department and other staff.
  - The school recognises the need to further develop chaplaincy provision by involving more pupils and staff and has responded to this by establishing a staff chaplaincy team with a remit to review, support and promote the work of chaplaincy, the Catholic life of the school and its ethos. This includes overseeing charitable events within the school community.
  - The quality of care shown to all members of the community, both pupils and staff, is outstanding with good systems in place to support this. The pastoral team is highly skilled in providing support for vulnerable pupils with Bentley, the 'therapy' dog a welcome new addition to the team.

**c) How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school**

- Leaders and governors are committed to the Catholic life and character of the college and consider it a core leadership responsibility. They ensure that the school's Catholic mission is explicit in all school policies and in the key documentation for parents, staff and pupils.
- Leaders and governors recognise the need to implement a more formal system for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the provision for the Catholic life of the school and the impact of actions taken to further improve these aspects and plan further improvements. Steps have already been taken to address this by the recent separation from the Pastoral and Catholic Life Committee, in order that it can fully focus on the school's Catholic life. The new chair of the committee recognises what needs to be done and is passionate in her commitment to addressing this
- Staff are fully committed to the Catholic life of the school, readily engaging in school activities which reflect this, including CPD on Catholic life and the annual INSET day devoted to this. Many staff are involved in preparing and leading the weekly staff prayer time in the chapel and a parent leads a lunchtime rosary group.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the whole curriculum contributes to pupils' spiritual, moral and vocational development. A recent mapping of provision across

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the curriculum, encompassing all subject areas has resulted in a SMSC Policy (January 2020). This has proven effective in enabling all departments to reflect on how they can contribute to and strengthen their links to SMSC. This now needs to be fully embedded.

- Leaders and governors are actively engaging in diocesan policies and initiatives and are effective in promoting the Bishop's vision throughout the college. This is recognised in the school improvement plan which prioritises taking further actions to 'deepen prayer, enable communion, and strengthen mission'. The new headteacher has been proactive in promoting a joint INSET day (January 2020) with another Catholic secondary school with the intention of 'strengthening the presence of Holy Scripture around the school, increasing the visibility of signs and symbols of faith, planning a whole school Mission day/week for 2020-21'. This strong focus on promoting and developing the school's Catholic life is to be commended and bodes well for this next stage of the school's journey under new leadership and governance.

## **Religious Education**

### **Grade 1**

#### **a) How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education**

- Overall, pupils make good progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities across the key stages. Pupils' attainment at GCSE has been consistently good over the last three years. In 2019, pupils achieved grades well above the national figures for Catholic schools and for Catholic schools in the diocese. Pupils from disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged backgrounds performed equally well in relation to outcomes.
- Improving boys' performance should remain a focus for the department, building on and learning from the success strategies adopted by one teacher in which all boys in the group achieved 100% Grade 9-5. In addition, the department should continue to employ the excellent strategies already in place to further improve outcomes for all, especially middle attaining learners.
- There has been improved performance at A Level, with students exceeding their targets and achieving grades in line with the national figures for Catholic schools and above for Catholic schools in the diocese.
- Overall, pupils enjoy their learning in RE across all the key stages, and value the commitment of their teachers who 'go the extra mile' to support and encourage them. The excellent relations engendered by teachers, combined with engaging approaches to teaching in the subject, ensure that almost all make at least good progress. Pupils' impeccable conduct reflects the department's effective strategies to promote high standards of behaviour.

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- Almost all pupils are actively engaged in lessons and demonstrate a clear commitment to improving their knowledge, understanding and skills in RE. They are committed to their learning, take pride in their achievements and have a clear understanding of what they need to do in order to improve.
  - However, at times, pupils were overly passive and compliant in their approach to their learning due to lack of challenge and pace on the part of the teacher. This is an area which is being addressed by the department.
  - The RE department places a strong focus on developing religious literacy for their pupils, providing rich opportunities across the key stages. Consequently, pupils, relative to their age and capacity, demonstrate in both their written work and in discussions, that they are religiously literate and engaged young people. Older pupils, in particular, relish the opportunities provided to develop their own informed opinions on ethical, theological and philosophical questions whilst also understanding and respecting the beliefs and values held by others.
  - Sixth form students value their General RE and consider they benefit from the range of topics explored.

**b) The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education**

- Overall, teaching is good and is often outstanding. Teachers are well qualified, committed individuals who demonstrate a deep knowledge and understanding of their subject. The two recent additions to the department have made a significant contribution in an exceedingly short space of time. Those new to the teaching of the subject or new to Catholic education are given excellent support and guidance to enable them to be effective practitioners.
- A strong emphasis is placed on enabling pupils to assess their own progress and achievement, with new systems in place to support this. Assessment for learning (AfL) is an integral part of lesson planning, as evidenced in scrutiny of written work and discussions with pupils. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and provide helpful, focused feedback which is greatly valued by them and readily acted upon.
- The new, streamlined assessments at KS3 have been particularly effective in ascertaining whether a pupil is on track, with each test corresponding to GCSE grades and the department's knowledge and skills assessment procedures. Pupils say that they enjoy, in particular, those assessments which are project based, finding them to be engaging and motivating. Overall, both teachers' and pupils' response to the new assessments has been good and progress has been consistent across the department.
- Teachers' analysis of data is effective in monitoring progress and in targeting underachieving pupils, with a particular focus on improving the performance of boys and middle attainers.

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**c) How well leaders and governors monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education**

- Leaders and governors ensure that the religious education (RE) curriculum meets the Bishops' Conference requirements and that the teaching of other faiths and traditions is effectively addressed. It has been imaginatively and thoughtfully designed to provide a coherent approach to the teaching of RE across the key stages. In addition, it makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It has been sensitively adapted, following the People of God themes, to prepare pupils for GCSE RE.
- The new head of department is an outstanding practitioner and role model for the department. She has a clear vision of what constitutes outstanding teaching and learning and has a high level of expertise in securing this vision. She has an excellent understanding of the department's strengths and areas for development which are clearly outlined in the RE SEF and Development Plan. Governors have ensured that a clear management structure is in place within the school to provide oversight of religious education. Consequently, the head of RE is effectively line-managed and mentored by the senior deputy head, with fortnightly meetings which are recorded, and outcomes are shared with the headteacher as appropriate. In addition, the head of department benefits from the guidance and support of the previous postholder (an experienced RE practitioner and member of the leadership team), and has worked in collaboration with him in developing the school's SMSC Policy.
- There are robust systems in place for leaders and governors to monitor and evaluate provision for RE and secure improvements. For example, the link governor for RE provides valuable support through engaging in link visits to the department. He, and the head of RE work together to ensure that leaders and governors on the Catholic Life Committee are kept abreast of developments in the subject through updates on all aspects pertaining to RE and pupil progress, including feedback from internal and external reviews. This, in turn, is highly effective in contributing to development planning in order to secure improvements.

### a) How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's prayer life

- Prayer is considered to be an 'integral and necessary part of the day'. Every pupil, regardless of their faith background, feels welcome to participate fully in the school's prayer life. The experience of living and working in a faithful, praying community has a positive impact on pupils' spiritual and moral development, and plays an important part in supporting their learning in RE and other areas.
- Pupils respond positively to the range of opportunities to contribute to school liturgies and Mass through, for example, playing in the orchestra, singing in the choir, preparing artwork, serving, reading and setting up for mass and packing away afterwards. Sixth form students play a valuable role in helping younger pupils to practise reading, taking control of multimedia, preparing drama and reflections.
- There is good provision in the 6<sup>th</sup> Form for students to explore prayer as part of the general RE programme, where they learn more about prayer and spirituality and have opportunities to participate in a variety of prayer experiences. There are also opportunities for these students to prepare and lead times of reflection and prayer for pupils in years 7-11.
- There are opportunities for 6<sup>th</sup> Form faith and chaplaincy prefects to support younger pupils in practising their readings for Mass and helping with workshops on lower school retreats. This is effective in helping to develop their skills in planning and leading spiritual events whilst providing good role models for younger pupils.
- Pupils value and readily participate in the many opportunities to participate in prayer through form tutor worship, weekly year group assemblies and prayer at the start of each lesson. They are encouraged to plan and lead prayer in morning registration and at the beginning of lessons, but this is not yet consistent across the school. Tutors, however, value the support provided by the lay chaplain with specific prayers for each day offered during Advent and Lent to support them, in addition to tutor candle and reflective songs.
- Although provision for the prayer life of the school is good, there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in planning, writing, leading and evaluating their own worship. This should include empowering them to become confident in spontaneous prayer during tutor time. There are, however, opportunities for pupils to develop and understand what prayer is, alongside the different means for engaging in prayer, but this is inconsistent across tutor groups.
- Discussions with pupils highlighted that they are over reliant on the adults in the school and expressed a desire to be more creative, independent and resourceful in planning worship for assemblies or whole school events. This, in turn, will require a

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strong focus on enabling all tutors to become skilled in supporting pupils in the use of scripture, religious artefacts, hymns and other forms of prayer.

- In the same way that pupils enjoy and respond so positively when challenged and encouraged to become independent learners in RE, teachers should not be afraid to 'take the risk' and allow them to acquire skills in planning and leading prayer and worship, bearing in mind that many will have been given these opportunities in their Catholic primary schools. Pupils' involvement in preparing and leading worship should remain an ongoing focus for the school.
- Pupils, have a good understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts, including the patronal feast day. They demonstrate reverence and respect in prayer and collective worship.

#### **b) The quality of the prayer life provided by the school**

- Prayer is central to the life of the school for all pupils, whatever their faith background, and is the core of every school celebration. Praying together is an integral and daily experience for all pupils and staff.
- There are regular opportunities to participate in Mass as part of the whole school, tutor and year groups. Pupils particularly value their class Mass where they are more actively involved through volunteering to read, to present gifts at the offertory and as altar servers. They demonstrate reverence and respect in prayer and collective worship.
- The school ensures that the themes chosen for worship reflect a good understanding of the liturgical seasons and the Catholic character of the school. This is supported and embedded through daily prayer in tutor groups, tutor group and chaplaincy-led assemblies and those assemblies led by the senior leadership team (SLT), heads of year and the lay chaplain.
- However, the consistency and quality of pupils' experience of prayer in tutor periods is variable and is an area for further improvement. Discussions with pupils suggest that at times, it is perfunctory and overly dependent on traditional forms of prayer. Consideration should be given to developing tutors' skills in encouraging pupils' leadership and understanding the wide variety of methods and styles of prayer.
- Pupils' prayer life is enriched through a range of prayer opportunities outside the classroom, such as retreat experiences at St Cassian's and the local parish centre, participation in the national youth congress event 'Flame', Carol services, Lasallian camps, Rosary and the Education Mass at Clifton Cathedral.
- There are well planned opportunities for pupils to participate in liturgies and assemblies during Advent and Lent.
- There are regular opportunities for staff to engage in prayer. All briefings and staff meetings begin with a prayer, alongside a weekly spiritual briefing led by the chaplain and other members of staff. These opportunities help bind staff together

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through a common sense and purpose rooted in the school's Lasallian identity as a community of prayer.

- Links between school and its parishes are good. In particular, the school benefits from the nearby parish of St John's where the parish priest gives generously of his time in visiting the school, leading whole school and class Mass and all significant liturgical events for the whole school community. As a governor he provides support for the school in his role as Catholic life governor link, working closely with the RE department, lay chaplain and leadership team.
- The school has effective strategies in place for engaging with parents through questionnaires and regular newsletters. The recently introduced weekly Gazette is proving to be an excellent forum to celebrate, highlight and update pupils, parents, school community and governors regarding the school's Catholic and prayer life as well as other notable school events

**c) How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the prayer life of the school**

- Overall, leaders are confident in planning and delivering worship and prayer through the assembly programme. Understandably, some (as with tutors) will have more expertise and confidence than others in leading quality prayer. Consideration should be given to empowering them to become 'leaders of prayer', who have an informed understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts and are able to make these accessible to young people in a contemporary and pupil-centred context.
- Staff are effectively inducted into the Catholic life of the school and are provided with appropriate resources to assist them in leading prayer in tutor times. However, given the inconsistency and quality of experience of prayer in tutor groups noted in the previous section, it is important that training in helping them to plan prayer and collective worship should remain an ongoing focus.
- Although there are opportunities for the lay chaplain to review collective worship and prayer in assemblies and tutor times (in order to ascertain where support is required) this needs to be developed into a more robust and formal programme which is overseen by leaders and governors thus enabling them to have a clear overview of this area and evaluate the impact of initiatives undertaken effectively.
- The same comments and action point made in relation to the promotion, monitoring and evaluation of the school's Catholic life are also relevant to the school's prayer life. Leaders and governors recognise the need to implement a more formal system for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the provision for the prayer life of the school and the impact of actions taken to further improve this aspect and plan further improvements. Again, steps have already been taken to address this, by the recently formed Catholic Life Committee. As mentioned previously, the new chair of

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the committee is cognisant of what needs to be done and is committed to addressing this.

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## Summary of Parental Questionnaires

*There were 80 parental questionnaires received. They were extremely positive about the school and their children's education. Some parents considered that they were not provided with clear information about what is taught in RE and RSE. Some typical responses included:*

*'It has a strong sense of family, allowing growth and not just good grades'*

*'The staff care about students and are given the opportunity to practise their faith'*

*'Core values, results, discipline, work ethic'*

*'Good values in nurturing, guiding and imparting information. Good balance of freedom, guidance and discipline'*

*'The way the faith is central to everything they do'*

*'The relationships and dedication of the staff and sense of community'*

*'Excellent teaching and traditional values'*

*'The Catholic ethos runs through the school. Students are polite, helpful, respectful and have a strong moral compass'*

*'A caring community which tries to uphold standards in a fast-changing world'*

*'Our young people have really flourished here and are growing up as mature young people who will make a contribution to society'*