



Report to Parents/Carers detailing priority improvements at STM

January 2024 – October 2024

Dear Parents and Carers,

As many of you know, I was away from my role at St Thomas More for 14 months. During that period, Ofsted visited and conducted their assessment based on the school's circumstances at that time. Since my return in January, my Leadership Team, the staff, and I have focused on key priorities (as outlined by Ofsted) to ensure that STM offers the highest quality of education for our pupils.

This report is not exhaustive and does not cover all the school's efforts; however, it offers a summary of the key priorities we have been focusing on. Although concise (but still a lengthy read), I hope it provides you with a clear and accessible overview of our work and the progress achieved.

Like many schools across the country, we face ongoing challenges in recruiting teaching staff, and for us, this includes a permanent Chemistry teacher. This reflects a broader national shortage of teachers in key subjects, which affects schools throughout the UK. Additionally, there is a scarcity of high-quality supply teachers specialising in Chemistry. Nonetheless, we remain fully committed to filling this role with a qualified and reliable educator as soon as possible. Our priority is to ensure the highest quality education for our pupils, and we continue to work diligently to address these challenges.

While we believed we had secured a longer-term solution from September 2024, I was not satisfied with the professional standards and conduct shown. Despite the benefit of having a subject specialist on-site, I will not compromise on the professional

expectations or safeguards we uphold, so the position became vacant again just before the October half-term.

Aside from Chemistry, I am pleased to confirm that all other teaching positions are fully staffed by our dedicated team, an accomplishment that stands out given the national trend.

Every half term, I report in detail to the ISIC Committee. Formed upon my return, this committee ensures that my team and I are held to a high level of accountability, with external quality assurance provided by the Trust. More information about the committee's role can be found on our website.

To drive our commitment to improvement, we conducted an external review during the first half of this academic year. I am pleased to report that the findings were highly positive, highlighting the significant efforts and progress made by our team. I can confidently assure you that our school has transformed considerably since the Ofsted report from January 2023.

Looking ahead, we await two inspections: the CSI (Catholic Schools Inspectorate) and Ofsted. For Ofsted, we will be inspected under the September 2024 framework, where single grade inspections have been scrapped in favour of a more nuanced evaluation approach that doesn't assign an overall grade but instead provides feedback across various areas. I look forward to these inspections as an opportunity to showcase the progress we've made.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support—it truly makes a difference.

Mr Redfern
Headteacher

Overview of key priorities

1. Catholic Life, Mission and RE
2. Standards and Behaviour
3. Character Curriculum - Personal Development: PSHE, RSHE & Careers
4. Supporting Disadvantaged and Special Educational Needs (SEND) Pupils
5. Ensuring High Standards in Teaching and Learning
6. Quality of Education: Curriculum Development and Middle Leadership Initiatives
7. Enhancing Communication

1. Catholic Life, Mission and RE

Since January, significant developments have been made in the areas of Catholic Life, Mission, Collective Worship and Religious Education (RE) at the school. The school has taken several strategic steps to strengthen Catholic identity, enhance collective worship, and support pupil engagement in RE and Catholic values.

Catholic Life and Mission Initiatives

The school has introduced several initiatives to reinforce Catholic values and community engagement:

- Revisioning of the whole school direction based on the Mission Statement, with policies and procedures revisited in line with the mission.
- Strong focus across the school on #BeMore and ASPIRE.
- CPD and Mission Integration: Catholic Social Teaching (CST) principles have been displayed in classrooms and woven into curriculum maps for all subjects. Staff have undergone training to integrate and discuss these principles across subjects. Pupils reflect regularly on the mission and CST, with further support and experiences provided via drop down days from The Briars and CAFOD.
- Form and Class Noticeboards: Dedicated noticeboards in form bases reflect Catholic Life themes, which form tutors actively use to involve pupils.
- From September 2024, we changed from a house system to Year Group Saints, with pupils democratically electing a charity focus: Each year group has adopted a specific saint and corresponding charity, creating a sense of purpose and engagement:
 - Year 7: St. Thérèse of Lisieux (CAFOD)
 - Year 8: St. Francis of Assisi (RSPCA)

- Year 9: St. Maximilian Kolbe (UNICEF)
 - Year 10: St. Teresa of Calcutta (Macmillan)
 - Year 11: St. Oscar Romero (Mind)
- Year 7 and 8 celebrated their new saints' feast days with non-uniform days, liturgies at St Anne's Church, and charity-focused activities, receiving positive feedback from the community. Other year groups to follow in the academic year.
 - Pupil Voices: Feedback was collected after Feast Days, showing increased pupil engagement with the saint themes and a positive response to the shift from the previous house system.
 - Year Saint Community Outreach: Year 7 participated in a "Cornerstones" day to explore each pupil's uniqueness in God's image, while Year 8's community cleanup was highlighted by the Buxton Advertiser, reflecting the school's charitable impact.
 - Pupil Leadership Team, Pupil Council, Ambassadors of Hope and the Chaplaincy Team lead effectively as the school boosts pupil leadership opportunities.
 - Increased staff involvement in parish life has strengthened ties between the school and church, creating a shared sense of mission. Headteacher last spoke to the parish in September 2024.
 - Pupils are now visiting St Anne's Church more as part of their feast day celebrations and RE curriculum.
 - CSI inspection: The CSED (evaluation document) is complete and ready for the imminent DSI Inspection.
 - Pupils feedback from September indicates a stronger connection to Catholic values, which pupils view as an integral part of their school experience.

RE Department Enhancements

The RE Department has introduced key changes to improve curriculum delivery and pupil engagement:

- Dedicated RE Teaching Staff: Improvements were made in January 2024, with further redeployment of staff in June 2024. Since September, all RE classes are led by STM staff, with most classes staffed by SLT. There is a major national shortage of RE teachers, so curriculum plans for September ensured full and stable coverage by utilising SLT.
- RE reaccommodated in school, bringing together RE and English classrooms so they function better as a collective.

- **Teacher Development:** One staff member is retraining through a diocesan RE programme, supported by the Assistant Headteacher with ongoing CPD and collaboration with Trinity All Saints University.
- **Behaviour and Engagement:** Pupils demonstrate pride in their work within well-structured classrooms. Regular work scrutiny has shown effective assessment and progress.
- **Structured and Calm Learning Atmosphere:** Enhanced RE staffing has led to calmer classrooms with clear expectations, and work scrutiny confirms consistent teacher feedback.
- **RE Curriculum continues to be developed using the RED Directory.** All KS3 will have been revamped by September 2025 as per national expectation.
- **Delivery of Schemes of Learning:** The RE curriculum is being delivered effectively, with model answers and guided learning aiding pupil development.
- **External quality assurance (QA)** notes significant improvements within RE due to staffing changes and continued curriculum developments. Pupil voice backs up external judgements.

Collective Worship Initiatives

The school has enhanced collective worship practices to deepen pupils' spiritual engagement:

- **Celebrations of the Word:** These sessions are now largely pupil-led, featuring hymn singing in Years 7, 8, and 9, and chaplain-led weekly sessions. Staff CPD on leading these celebrations and incorporating daily prayers was provided by Mrs Bennett and the chaplain, Dan.
- **Staff reflections** are held weekly at a briefing to further build community and exemplify ethos.
- **Fr Gerry** offered drop-in sessions for pupils at lunch focused on the variety of prayer.
- **Special celebrations** are created and delivered by the Chaplaincy team for events such as Remembrance Day, Ash Wednesday etc. Various methods are used such as in person or video media.
- **Whole school Liturgy:** Relocated back into the Hall to create a more intimate atmosphere. Liturgies always feature a Chaplaincy team-led service with live music from the school band.
- **Chaplain and Pupil Involvement:** The chaplain's increased presence at events and Celebrations of the Word has enhanced visibility and accessibility. Year 7 pupils

and a member of the Pupil Leadership Team are now actively supporting Chaplaincy activities, led by the Chaplaincy Team.

Summary

This report highlights the school's dedication to strengthening Catholic identity, enhancing RE learning, and promoting collective worship as a cornerstone of the school community.

2. Standards and Behaviour

Since January, the school has initiated a comprehensive reset under Mr Redfern, Headteacher and Miss Pimblett, Assistant Headteacher for Behaviour and Standards (AHT). Miss Pimblett was appointed to the school from St Mary's, Chesterfield (an outstanding school) and started at STM in January 2024. Key initiatives and changes have been implemented across several areas, with a focus on creating a positive learning environment, improving pupil behaviour, and enhancing staff roles within the pastoral team.

Leadership and Responsibilities

- Miss Pimblett was appointed to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to lead on behaviour, standards, and safeguarding (DSL).
- Restructure of the pastoral teams with clear roles and responsibilities for pastoral staff, ensuring accountability.
- Heads of Learning (HOLs) appointed and responsible for driving standards and behaviour, with support from their Pastoral Managers, with quality assurance provided by the Assistant Headteacher and Headteacher.

Measures to improve Standards and Behaviour

Several steps have been taken to address behaviour and standards across the school:

- Data Management: MIS changed to Arbor - new standardised proforma has been introduced for pastoral staff meetings, ensuring systematic tracking of behaviour and reporting.
- Arbor Parent App to launch in Advent 2 (before Christmas 2024) for parent tracking of behaviour, positive or not.

- Further specialist training for AHT and line management of pastoral staff, including better links with external agencies like CAMHS, Zink, and local authorities.
- Family Engagement: AHT and pastoral teams have engaged with families of key pupils, maintaining regular communication via phone and email. Establishing this partnership with families has been crucial for pupil support.
- Mentoring: A mentor scheme introduced for Year 11 pupils (2023-24), offering additional focus and support where behaviour is a challenge.
- Behaviour Monitoring: Line Management Meetings now include a dedicated focus on behaviour, with Curriculum Middle Leaders updated weekly on detentions.
- Review of the Behaviour Policy in line with the SRS Trust expectations, launched September 2024.
- Additional training, guidance and resourcing for staff to accompany relaunch of Behaviour Policy.
- Reset assemblies are now a regular feature, held each half term to realign opportunities around pupil expectations and learning. These are complimented with AHT videos shared in form time.
- Improved Referral Forms: A new internal referral system for level 2 support (Inclusion and Family Support) has been introduced, with more targeted interventions and better evidence from level 1 support (pastoral staff).
- The new ASPIRE Points reward system, launched at Easter 2024, will track pupil behaviour, with data shared weekly to help tutors keep pupils informed of their positive progress.
- Damascus Room: The removal of the isolation room, Damascus, has significantly reduced the number of pupils removed from lessons, reflecting tighter behaviour control.
- Increased Staff Visibility: Staff visibility has increased during break and lunchtimes in key areas, such as corridors and toilets, with 92% of pupils reporting a positive change. Staff outside of the school building visible with new hi-vis vests for visibility.
- Lesson Transitions: Pastoral staff and SLT have been supporting lesson changeovers to ensure smooth transitions and minimize any corridor disruption and/or congestion.
- Uniform Standards: A new uniform supplier sourced, with school skirt changed due to parent concerns around consistency of skirts used by pupils. Pupils and parents consulted on the changes, and a better uniform section on the website launched.

- Stronger links with external partners, including CAMHS and local authorities, have been established to support pupils' mental health. CAMHS is working with the school to provide resources and workshops for parents, such as a session on managing child anxiety, which was attended by 15 families.
- Staff development is a priority, with all teachers attending Trust INSET days, focusing on positive behaviour management and de-escalation techniques.
- Additional CPD sessions have been held, including training on safeguarding and Prevent and impacts on behaviour.
- Pupil and parent feedback has been sought on behaviour and teaching – including internal surveys and parents' evenings. Pupil voice highlighted the need for continued improvement in specific areas of the school, leading to an updated duty rota that ensures better coverage of these hotspots including toilets, where impact has been strong.
- From January 2024, the school consistently reports falling debits and behaviour points, between January and July of this year, this was a 84% decrease for all pupils. This shows a significant rise in expectations and support for pupils.
- Suspensions are evenly spread across genders at STM, with a 38% decrease in sessions lost due to suspensions from January to July 2024. This suggests that suspension is an effective response to challenging and unacceptable behaviours, alongside an encouraging trend of pupils increasingly adjusting their behaviour to meet expectations.
- In a recent whole school survey (November 2024) involving all pupils:

96% of pupils say that school is a friendly place

98% of pupils say that they have strong friendships at STM

99% of pupils say that they understand behaviour expectations and often comply, with 13% of pupils saying they sometimes get it wrong

99% of pupils say they behave well at break and lunchtimes with 11% of pupils saying they sometimes get it wrong

96% of pupils say that they feel safe in school

96% of pupils say they always know where to get help for issues such as bullying and mental health concerns

95% of pupils agree that they like the adults in school who work with them

The majority of written comments by pupils say that the best thing about this school is its staff and teachers

Summary

The school has made significant strides in improving behaviour and standards, with a strong focus on ethos, cooperation, consistency, accountability, and partnerships with families and external agencies. Continued efforts are expected to further enhance the school culture and learning environment as we continue through this academic year.

3. Character Curriculum - Personal Development: PSHE, RSHE & Careers

Since January, significant developments have been made in the areas of Personal Development (PD), PSHE, Careers and Relationship, Sex, and Health Education (RSHE) across all year groups. The school has taken several strategic steps to improve curriculum delivery, pupil engagement, and career opportunities.

Supporting Pupils' Career Goals

The school has placed a strong emphasis on career education and preparation for future pathways:

- **Drop Down Day:** A comprehensive Drop Down Day took place in March 2024 for all year groups, focusing on careers and PSHE. Each year group engaged in tailored activities and workshops led by external speakers, aimed at building aspirations and practical skills for future employment.
These included:
Year 11: A visit to the University of Derby to inspire aspirations toward higher education.
Year 10: Sessions on employability skills, CV writing, and police engagement.
Year 9 and Year 8: Career-focused talks from professionals in agriculture, hospitality, first aid, and the NHS, alongside form activities related to career diversity and health education.
Year 7: Engaging in STEM-related challenges, including the construction of disaster-resistant towers and discussions on financial literacy.
- **Apprenticeships and Career Visits:** Select Year 10 pupils participated in National Apprenticeship Week by visiting The Dome in Buxton, where they learned about apprenticeship opportunities, particularly in Hair and Beauty and Catering, presented by Buxton and Leek Council. Additionally, taster sessions at a local

college (Aquinas) were organised for Year 10 pupils in March, offering them first-hand exposure to higher education environments.

- Careers Interviews: Year 11 pupils have been offered a second round of careers interviews, while Year 10 pupils have had their first interviews, helping them plan their post-secondary pathways. The Head of Year 11 closely monitors college applications to ensure that pupils are making informed decisions about their next steps.
- Morrisby Audit: The Morrisby audit, an important tool for tracking career guidance and planning, continues to be utilised across all year groups, ensuring that pupils are supported in their career aspirations.
- A careers fair for all pupils took place in July 2024, with external providers from colleges, apprenticeships and employers represented.
- A new section of the website has been designed to support pupils, parents and external employers about careers education and guidance.
- £12,000 investment in a new careers advisory service from September 2024.

Personal, Social, Health, and Relationships Education (PSHE/RSHE)

- The RSHE curriculum had been integrated into form time and supported by resources from the Ten:Ten programme, ensuring that key topics around relationships, health, and wellbeing are delivered effectively.
- Dedicated Lesson for RSHE and PSHE: From Easter 2024, a dedicated 45-minute Personal Development Lesson each Wednesday was introduced to enhance the delivery of RSHE/PSHE content. Feedback from middle leaders has been positive, and this adjustment will allow for deeper engagement with important topics.
- PSHE Curriculum Revamp: A brand new PSHE curriculum has been devised across all year groups. The curriculum has been mapped to align with national standards for PSHE, British values, Catholic Social Teaching (CST), and Social, Moral, Spiritual, and Cultural (SMSC) development, ensuring a well-rounded educational experience.
- The school has joined the National PSHE Association to further support staff development and ensure high-quality curriculum delivery.
- Expanding Learning with Guest Speakers and Workshops.
- Integrated British Values and Social Responsibility in Learning both in Personal Development and across all curriculum areas.
- British Values and CST Displays: Visual displays highlighting British Values and Catholic Social Teaching have been set up at Pupil Reception, reinforcing these core values throughout the school environment.

- Listening to Pupil Feedback for Improvement.
- To ensure that the curriculum and personal development initiatives are effectively meeting pupil needs, a deep dive into the PD curriculum was conducted in June, led by external verifiers. This review included feedback from pupil voice surveys, helping to refine the PD offering and ensure it remains relevant and impactful. This was very successful!
- Recognising the importance of family involvement, the school has hosted events such as the Year 11 Study Skills Evening, aimed at equipping parents and carers with the tools to support their children during exam preparation. This event was complemented by a Revision and Support Skills Morning for Year 11 pupils, preparing them for their upcoming mock exams. This will be repeated this academic year.
- Ongoing quality assurance is showing that changes made are effective and supportive to pupils living in modern Britain.
- New section of the website detailing the RSHE and PSHE curriculum for parents and carers.

Summary

The school has made significant progress in enriching the Careers, RSHE, and PSHE curriculum. Through comprehensive planning, the introduction of focused personal development lessons, and collaborations with external speakers, pupils are receiving valuable guidance on their personal, academic, and career development.

4. Supporting Disadvantaged and Special Educational Needs (SEND) Pupils

The school has implemented a range of initiatives focused on improving outcomes for disadvantaged groups, enhancing SEND support, and boosting attendance. These efforts are organised under various categories, targeting measurable improvements in teaching, pupil support, and parental engagement.

- A new Pupil Premium strategy has been developed, emphasising the tracking of measurable outcomes. The strategy has been reviewed by SLT, updated to reflect all areas of school improvement, and shared with staff.
- Tracking and Monitoring: A regularly updated PP pupil list shared with staff each half term.
- CPD and Focus on Vulnerable Groups: CPD has been provided to staff to support PP pupils. AIM (Additional Intervention Meetings) now include outcomes and

planned interventions for disadvantaged groups, with curriculum meetings addressing the progress of these pupils.

- Departmental Focus: Departmental improvement plans contain sections specifically aimed at improving outcomes for vulnerable learners. This includes the re-timetabling of Teaching Assistants (TAs) for greater impact.
- SEND and PP Focus: Support for pupils during key processes like options selection has been enhanced. TAs are now more integrated, providing support in core lessons, and the SENDco has joined attendance panels for vulnerable pupils.
- Attendance tracking and intervention systems have been significantly enhanced: Daily and Weekly Monitoring: Attendance is tracked daily by groups and reviewed weekly at SLT meetings. Celebrations of attendance (e.g., 100% attendance) are held half-termly to encourage positive behaviour.
- Vulnerable Pupils: Bespoke timetables have been introduced for a number of vulnerable pupils to support their transition back into school. These include therapeutic activities, such as art and phonics sessions.
- Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) Support: The school offers a suite of internal support for SEMH, led by the Inclusion Manager. The programme includes mindfulness, emotional regulation, bullying prevention, and positive relationships training.
- External Programmes: The ELSA programme supports identified pupils with emotional literacy.
- TA Support: TAs have established relationships with pupils, providing first-day calling for those with poor attendance.
- Following the departure of the temporary SENDCO in January 2024 following concerns, the Deputy Headteacher, Mrs Lancett (DHT) has taken on the role on SENDCO.
- Family Communication and Support: The DHT has contacted the families of all EHCP (Education Healthcare Plan) pupils and collated review dates for EHCPs. Weekly meetings are held with TAs to review strategic support, and additional meetings focus on access arrangements for Year 10 and Year 11 pupils in line with JCQ guidelines.
- SEND Support Systems: A strategic plan for SEND provision includes pupil passports, SEND surgery drop-ins for parents, and visual strategies for classrooms (e.g., “Dyslexia-friendly strategies” and “ASD classroom” modifications).
- Assessment and Access Arrangements: SEND pupils have had their access arrangements reviewed, and preparations for mock exams are complete. EHCP reviews have been fast-tracked where necessary (subject to Derbyshire County

Council). We are experiencing delays to these reviews due to national pressures in SEND education and a new DCC structure for dealing with SEND.

- Trust and school CPD on developing staff skills to support SEND pupils.
- Edukey Training: All staff have received access and training on Edukey, which is used to track and manage SEND support and intervention.
- Voluntary CPD on modelling and scaffolding has been offered, with a focus on SEND learners. The strategy of "I, We, You" has been adopted to support pupils in writing tasks. Dyslexia-friendly and ASD strategies have also been implemented.
- Classrooms are now equipped with visual aids, and TAs annotate children's exercise books to track their input.
- CPD on adaptive teaching continues, focusing on improving engagement and accessibility for all learners.
- Workshops and Resources: A workshop on coping with anxiety, led by a CAMHS worker, has been offered to parents, and TA-led initiatives to maintain communication with families have been reinforced.
- Improvements made to Transition and Enhanced Support for those joining the school from Year 6.
- Year 6 to 7 Transition: Plans are in place for annual enhanced transitions, with a focus on pupils identified as vulnerable. Year 6 SEN K and EHCP parents are contacted, and pupils are invited to three enhanced transition sessions before the new school year.
- We are expanding our SEND staffing to support the SENDCO in their role, primarily to improve communication with parents for those with SEND needs as well as bolstering continued support and interventions. We continue to recruit for these positions.
- Comprehensive whole school literacy strategy that supports SEND learners. All KS3 pupils have been tested for an up to date reading age. Subsequent interventions launched to develop literacy including phonics, lexia, cosy club and star reader.

Quality Assurance (QA) and Monitoring

Ensuring Quality in Teaching and Support processes ensure that the strategies for PP and SEND pupils are implemented effectively:

- Work Scrutiny and Learning Walks: SEND and PP pupils' work is reviewed regularly through learning walks, and SEND pupil progress is a key focus of QA processes.
- Feedback from pupils indicates that while SEND adaptations are common in the majority of subjects, there are a couple of subject areas that need to improve.
- External monitoring of this area is encouraging, and pupil interviews and surveys conducted by external partners notes improvements and better satisfaction of pupils with SEND.

Summary

The school has taken significant steps to enhance support for disadvantaged and vulnerable learners through updated Pupil Premium strategies, targeted SEND interventions, and robust attendance tracking systems. These initiatives are supported by comprehensive staff training, parental engagement, and consistent monitoring through quality assurance processes. The emphasis on CPD and curriculum adaptation, is creating a positive impact on pupil progress, particularly for those with SEND or PP needs. Moving forward, the introduction of further strategies, including enhanced transition support and continuous tracking of attendance, will contribute to improved outcomes for these groups.

5. Ensuring High Standards in Teaching and Learning

The school has made substantial progress in strengthening assessment practices, improving feedback consistency, and enhancing the professional development of staff. These initiatives are designed to improve pupil progress, particularly for disadvantaged and SEND pupils. Below is a summary of the key developments in these areas.

- Middle leaders and teaching staff are becoming more confident in the use of formative assessment strategies to promote progress. There is a growing awareness of the minimum expectations regarding marking and feedback, with a focus on closing gaps between DIRT (Dedicated Improvement and Reflection Time) tasks and end-of-unit assessments.
- DIRT Tasks: Pupils are becoming more aware of the need to focus on knowledge retrieval to answer questions. While formative assessment with DIRT activities is being implemented across departments. Quality in a couple of departments can be improved further.

- Work Scrutiny: Continues to be a focus in line management meetings, with ongoing monitoring and improvements seen.
- Improved standardizing of assessments for fairness and consistency.
- The assessment cycle, based on lessons rather than weeks, has been standardised, with the first piece of feedback expected after 6-8 lessons. Regular work scrutiny has been conducted by Heads of Department and SLT to ensure consistency in assessment and feedback practices.
- Assessment Practice: Pupils are regularly assessed in a consistent manner, with DIRT tasks becoming embedded across departments.
- Work Scrutiny: QA has been carried out, focusing on PP and SEND pupils, and recognising the different ability levels in each area. Strengths and areas for development have been identified.
- Middle leaders play a key role in promoting assessment and feedback within their departments. Learning walks and work scrutiny are conducted by middle leaders and SLT to ensure compliance with standards, punctuality, and quick start to learning.
- Leadership Development: Middle leaders are becoming more responsible for the quality of assessment and feedback within their departments, collaborating with SLT to support consistency.
- The school initiated voluntary CPD sessions from January to July, known as "High Impact Teaching Strategies" (HITS), which are aimed at developing teaching staff's pedagogy and practice. Sessions have focused on strategies such as modelling, questioning, and memory retrieval techniques. HITS sessions were made compulsory from September 2024 and factored into teachers directed time.
- All teachers attended Trust INSET on SEND, curriculum design, and behaviour management, reinforcing strategies to create a positive classroom environment.
- A robust QA calendar has been introduced, with regular lesson drop-ins and work scrutiny conducted by line managers and SLT. These provide an overview of the strengths and weaknesses in each curriculum area.
- KS4 Snapshots: These have focused on pace and memory retrieval, and feedback has been given to middle leaders to cascade within their departments.
- Assessment Grids have been completed by Middle Leaders since September 2024 to better standardisation, moderation and consistency of data reported on attainment and progress.
- Pupil and Parent Voice: Surveys have shown growing levels of satisfaction.

- Pupil Voice: A survey conducted with a sample of pupils (including SEND and PP) revealed that 80% of pupils are completing DIRT activities each half term. The survey was conducted with 30 pupils at the start of May.

In a recent whole school survey (November 2024) involving all pupils:

97% of pupils say they think carefully about their work

88% of pupils say they are asking their teacher if they get stuck in their work

95% of pupils say that their work is usually the right level of difficulty for them

92% of pupils say that they can concentrate well in class to do their work

96% of pupils say they know how to solve problems in their school work

94% of pupils say they are able to complete homework

96% of pupils say their teacher explains things well so that they understand

97% of pupils say their teachers tell them how to improve their work

99% of pupils say that their teachers expect them to work hard

82% of pupils say they like to discuss their learning and ideas

96% of pupils know how to be a good learner

86% of pupils find most of their school work interesting

94% of pupils know where to get help if they are stuck with their work

90% of pupils say they know the meaning of lots of words

99% of pupils know that working hard in school will help them in the future

87% of pupils say they try their best in lessons, with 12% saying 'sometimes'

48% of pupils say they enjoy challenging work, with 37% saying 'sometimes'

82% of pupils say they are confident readers

Summary

The school has made considerable progress in standardising assessment and feedback practices, with middle leaders taking increased responsibility for the quality of teaching within their departments. Ongoing CPD initiatives are supporting staff in developing their pedagogy, and the QA processes are providing valuable insights into strengths and areas for development. Pupil and parent feedback is generally positive overall, and the focus on DIRT tasks and formative assessment is contributing to improved outcomes, though more work is needed to ensure complete consistency across all subject areas. Pupil and parent feedback indicates frustration with the Chemistry teacher situation, which the school fully understands and continues to try and rectify (detailed at the start of this letter).

6. Quality of Education: Curriculum Development and Middle Leadership Initiatives

The school has implemented several strategies to strengthen the curriculum across all subjects, with a particular focus on ensuring consistency, developing Middle Leaders, and addressing the diverse needs of pupils, including those with SEND. Below is a summary of the key developments.

- Middle Leaders are becoming more confident in articulating the curriculum intent, implementation, and impact for their departments. This process is ongoing, with support and input being provided to ensure consistency across all subject areas. This is also quality assured externally by the Trust.
- Development of Curriculum Intents: New and existing Middle Leaders have been guided in revising their departmental curriculum intents. Training has been provided, including the use of the book *Huh: Curriculum Conversations between Subject and Senior Leaders* to foster curriculum discussions.
- CPD and Curriculum Conversations: Middle Leaders have attended CPD sessions to articulate their curriculum plans and have engaged in curriculum conversations with their Line Managers. These discussions ensure that Middle

Leaders can explain the development of their subject's curriculum and where they stand in its implementation.

- Curriculum Communication: Middle Leaders have been tasked with updating the school website to clearly present their subject's curriculum, including its intent, implementation, and impact, ensuring transparency and accessibility for parents and pupils. This new content will be loaded to the website soon.
- Subject curriculums have been designed and sequenced to build knowledge over time, with a clear focus on literacy, numeracy, and cross-curricular links.
- Planning and Mapping: Departments have been working on skills and knowledge mapping and developing schemes of work. These "live" documents are reviewed regularly and quality assured by senior leaders to ensure they are robust.
- Sequencing Rationale: Middle Leaders have received CPD on curriculum sequencing, and department audits have been conducted to ensure that curriculums are logically structured to build upon prior knowledge.
- Curriculum Progression Grids: These grids are being created and quality assured for each subject, with the information set to be published on the school website to provide clarity on how pupils progress through the curriculum.
- The school is working to ensure that subject curriculums embed British Values, SMSC (Social, Moral, Spiritual, Cultural education), and Catholic Social Teaching.
- Training and CPD has been delivered to support this, including collaboration with the Diocese.
- Liturgical prayers were delivered to pupils on CST principles, with subject teachers making these links explicit in lessons. Personal Development lessons have also focused on British Values, including democracy, with pupils engaging in school council elections.
- Some departments are starting to make clearer links between Catholic Social Teaching and their subject matter. This provides a solid baseline for further development in integrating these principles across the curriculum.

Retrieval of Knowledge

Retrieval practices are being integrated into subject curriculums to help pupils retain and apply prior knowledge.

- Snapshot Reviews: KS4 and KS3 snapshots are underway, focusing on the pace of lessons and how effectively knowledge is retrieved. These snapshots are part of the ongoing quality assurance process.
- No opt out (targeted questions) is common practice to allow a wider set of questions to be asked, whilst targeting pupils by ability.

Supporting All Pupils, Including the Most Able

Subject curriculums are designed to support the needs of all pupils, including those with SEND and higher ability pupils. Adaptive teaching is crucial to serve the needs of all.

- Trust INSET on SEND: All teachers attended a Trust INSET on curriculum design and classroom practice for SEND pupils. Middle Leaders are incorporating this training into their curriculum plans to ensure that pupils with SEND can access the full curriculum.
- Work Scrutiny and Curriculum Conversations: Work scrutiny has included a range of pupils (SEND, PP, lower, middle, and higher ability), and curriculum conversations have focused on how departments ensure that all pupils can access the curriculum.
- Renewed focus on reading ages and literacy across the school, including a revamp of the library and the appointment of a HLTA to lead in this initiative. Staff CPD delivered to support strategies across the classroom, whilst focusing on the STM Reads agenda.

Curriculum Timeline and Development

The school has set a clear timeline for curriculum development, which includes ongoing support for Middle Leaders and a structured process for curriculum conversations.

- SLT Support: Senior leaders have provided drop-in support for Middle Leaders as they develop their Departmental Improvement Plans (DIPs) and curriculum progression grids.
- Curriculum Conversations: Middle Leaders have practised articulating their curriculum plans with their Line Managers, focusing on key questions such as how the curriculum was developed, how it goes beyond the National Curriculum, and how SEND pupils are supported.
- Curriculum Vision: The overall curriculum vision has been drafted, aligning with the school's ASPIRE mission, this has been published on the website.

Summary

The school has made substantial progress in developing and articulating its curriculum through the leadership of Middle Leaders. Key developments include clear sequencing of knowledge, integration of British Values and Catholic Social Teaching, and improved support for SEND and higher ability pupils. Middle Leaders are now more confident in articulating their curriculum intent, implementation, and impact, and the school's curriculum is increasingly visible and accessible to all stakeholders. Moving forward,

ongoing CPD and curriculum conversations will ensure that the curriculum continues to evolve and meets the diverse needs of all learners.

7. Enhancing Communication

The school has made progress in improving communication, updating the website, and engaging with parents and the community. These efforts have focused on making key information more accessible and promoting transparency in the school's structures, safeguarding procedures, and overall governance.

Website Updates and Content Development

The first and second phase of the website update has been completed, with several key sections now live or redeveloped, providing comprehensive information to parents, pupils, staff and external agencies. Further work is planned, including subject pages under 'curriculum' in the coming weeks.

Communication

- **Parental Survey Results:** Surveys are conducted at every parents' evening and school event to ensure that the opinions of parents and carers are captured to help drive improvement.
- **Communication Charter:** The school has introduced a Communication Charter to outline response times for parental queries, with an emphasis on ensuring that the right staff are contacted to address concerns efficiently.
- **Middle Leader and Pastoral Communication:** Middle leaders have been key drivers in changes related to marking, assessment, rewards (ASPIRE system), and PSHE. Regular meetings between pastoral staff and the Assistant Headteacher (AHT) have clarified roles and improved job satisfaction.
- **Social Media and Local Press Engagement:** The school has actively promoted pupil achievements and cultural events on social media (Facebook), receiving praise for its communication efforts. Regular updates highlight pupil accomplishments and important school initiatives.

Parental feedback continues to be a central component of school improvement planning:

- **Planner and VLE Consultation:** Parents and staff were consulted on the future of the school planner and the VLE system. Due to compatibility issues with Arbor, planners will remain in use for the 2024-25 academic year, with a further review

scheduled for the next year. It is hoped that the VLE will return following our external partner's redevelopment to be compatible with Arbor. We also have the Arbor App launching in Advent 2 (before Christmas 2024).

- Parent consultation on uniform changes to girls' skirts was conducted.
- Parents Evening Feedback: Feedback collection has been streamlined using Microsoft Forms, providing real-time data on parental satisfaction. This process will continue for future parents' evenings to gather actionable insights.

Pupil Voice and Pastoral Improvements

- Pupil Voice Surveys: The school has engaged pupils through pupil voice surveys to gather feedback on Catholic Life, Collective Worship, and school behaviour. These surveys help identify areas for improvement and ensure that pupil perspectives inform school policies.
- A whole school survey was conducted in November 2024, which shows huge impact and progress since January 2024, all acknowledged by the majority of our pupils.
- Pastoral Staff Satisfaction: Regular pastoral meetings with SLT and clear job roles have improved pastoral staff satisfaction. Communication within the team and with the Trust has been strengthened, ensuring better support for pupils.
- Middle Leader Input: Middle leaders have been involved in driving changes related to the school's reward system, marking, and assessment policies, as well as staff CPD. They have also contributed to the assessment and reporting calendar for the 2024-25 academic year.
- School Rewards Policy: The updated rewards policy was launched after Easter, aligning with the school's Catholic values and mission statement. The policy will focus on promoting positive behaviour and recognition of pupil achievements.
- The majority of all school policies have been revised to better align with the overall school vision and mission.

Impact

- Website Updates: The updated sections of the website provide clearer communication with parents, making essential information about the school's structures, governance, and safeguarding processes more accessible. It also serves as a valuable resource for parents seeking support for their children's well-being.

- **Improved Staff Communication:** Clear line management structures and regular meetings have enhanced communication within the pastoral team, leading to greater job satisfaction and clearer roles.
- **Use of Pupil and Parent Voice:** Feedback from parents and pupils has been instrumental in shaping school improvement initiatives, with further feedback scheduled to support ongoing development.
- **Positive Community Engagement:** The school's active presence on social media and in local press has helped highlight pupil success and foster a positive relationship with the local community. Public engagement has been high, reflecting strong community support for the school.
- **Aligning the Reward System with School Values:** The new rewards policy aligns with the school's mission to promote Catholic values and ensure that both parents and pupils understand the school's common purpose.

Summary

The school has made significant progress in improving communication with parents, updating the website, and promoting positive pupil engagement. Middle leaders and pastoral staff have played an essential role in these developments, with clear communication structures helping to enhance job satisfaction and role clarity. Parental and pupil feedback continues to drive school improvement, with efforts to better align policies and practices with the school's mission and values. Looking forward, the continued focus on communication, collaboration with middle leaders, and parental engagement will strengthen the school's community and support its overall goals.