



ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

ASTLEY

Wednesday 25 February 2009

Inspectors Rev. P. Mannings Mr. A. Traynor

URN 106538

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Catholic voluntary-aided, mixed Comprehensive
Age range of pupils	11-18
Number on roll	1,620
Chair of Governors	Mr. J. Farrimond
School address	Manchester Road, Astley, Tyldesley, M29 7EE.
Telephone number	01942 884144
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Date of last inspection	27-28 June 2006
Headteacher	Mr. D. W. Burnett

Introduction

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

The report of the inspection is produced for the Archbishop of Liverpool (Code of Canon Law 804 and 806) and for the governors of the school.

The inspectors are members of the Christian Education Department and their associates approved by the Archbishop of Liverpool for this purpose.

Description of the school

St. Mary's is a Catholic, voluntary-aided, mixed, comprehensive school in the Wigan Authority. The school has specialist Mathematics and Computing College Status. There are 1,620 learners on roll of whom 84% are baptised Catholics. They are drawn from eight associated primaries in the two pastoral areas as well as other schools in this wide catchment area. There are 13% from other Christian denominations with 3% from other World Faith Traditions. Eighteen learners have statements of special educational needs, with a further 136 supported by School Action and 105 by School Action Plus. The school has 111 teachers of whom 48% are Catholic. The Religious Education department has seven core and one part-time member.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

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Overall effectiveness of the school

St. Mary's is a good Catholic school with significant outstanding features. It is well on target to becoming outstanding overall. The Catholic life is outstanding and reflects a tradition of faith informed values. St. Mary's lives its Mission Statement by working as a team to share 'God's love' through work, celebration, achievement, respect and unity. Achievement and standards in Religious Education are good and so too is the quality of teaching, learning and the curriculum. Leadership and management of Religious Education are good. Collective Worship is good. All these areas judged as good also demonstrate outstanding features. The promotion of community cohesion is outstanding. Parents, carers and learners show outstanding support for the school.

Grade: 2

Improvement since the last inspection

There has been outstanding improvement. Independent learning is well embedded into the curriculum in all key stages. A highly successful whole school review of the Mission Statement took place shortly after the inspection and conscientiously included all stakeholders.

Grade: 1

Capacity to improve

Capacity for continued improvement is outstanding. There is a detailed Religious Education Self-Evaluation document supported by the Subject Action Plan, which targets responsibility and success criteria. Whilst in some areas graded progress has been over-estimated the content is regularly monitored both formally and through strategic review by subject leader and staff. The school development plan indicates criteria for the continued development of the shared vision of the nature and purpose of its Catholic life.

Grade: 1

What the school should do to improve further

- Consistent departmental marking and diagnostic annotation of learners' work.

Achievement and Standards

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are good with outstanding features. Their continued rise in Key Stage 3 will be aided by a consistent implementation of the marking scheme to compliment the existing good tracking of progress. This will in turn continue to raise the level of progress by learners. By the end of Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form achievement and

standards are outstanding. GCSE results have remained consistently above the national average with 78% of last cohort achieving A*-C. In the Sixth Form the small group entered for AS/A2 achieved 100% A-C. This too reflects previous rates of success. Learners show outstanding enjoyment of Religious Education. This together with outstanding behaviour in class makes a significant contribution to the raising of achievement and standards. The content of Religious Education enables learners to make a highly informed and practical contribution to the school community through knowledge, skills and understanding linked to life in contemporary society.

Grade: 2

Quality of Provision for Religious Education

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good with outstanding features. Lessons are well planned and organised. Teaching is confident and creative. There is a good range of group and independent learning strategies. A particular strength is the overall level of questioning that motivates thoughtful learners' responses. There is constructive praise and feedback, which in turn produces a 'non put-down environment' that is conducive to learning. Summative assessment is good with a planned re-structure and strong links to levels of attainment. The department has identified the need to ensure a consistent approach to marking and annotation of learners' work. From the sample scrutinised the majority of learners take pride in their work. There are opportunities to record work in a variety of ways though emphasis is on the written word. They show a good understanding of subject specific vocabulary and concepts. The use of level/grade stamps which show learners' current progress matched against individual targets is very useful and should be used by all departmental staff. More emphasis should be placed on diagnostic marking which clearly inform learners about continued progress. Teachers should apply consistent standards regarding presentation of learners' work. Attention to these areas will contribute significantly to the existing good levels of differentiation and the continued raising of achievement and standards. Regular reporting and meetings ensures a good level of parent and carer involvement in their children's learning and development.

Grade: 2

Curriculum

The curriculum is good with outstanding features. In Key Stage 3 the allocation is 8%, which is the closest contribution the school can make to the required 10% within the constraints of a twenty five period week. In year 10 there is 12% with 8% in Year 11, thus providing 10% overall in Key Stage 4. In the Sixth Form the general course receives the required 5% with 20% for AS/A2. In Key Stage 3 *ICONS* is well embedded. The programme of study judged as outstanding in the last inspection is now ready for upgrading taking into account the need to match the content more closely to the assessment

process and to the provision of GCSE from the summer term in Year 9. In Key Stage 4 the GCSE specification is now available for all students and the outstanding programme of study is highly successful and entirely suited to their needs. In the Sixth Form the overall provision is outstanding. The department has pioneered much new material for the general course now nationally accredited. The AS/A2 in Philosophy and Ethics has been revised and its popularity much increased, hence a significant rise in the predicted number of candidates for September 2009. Consequently the curriculum makes a good response to national and diocesan requirements. It provides an outstanding contribution to learners' spiritual and moral development.

Grade: 2

Leadership and Management

Religious Education

Leadership and management of Religious Education are good with outstanding features. Senior leadership regards Religious Education as vital to the core of the Catholic life of the school. This is evident from their efforts to appoint new staff as a result of recent movement and to maintain and develop the successes of the department through effective performance management. The subject leader has been in place since September 2008 and has made a good impact on maintaining progress. The department remains highly organised in terms of leadership and support of staff. Their response has been to provide a strong level of commitment both to learners and in their contribution to continued professional development particularly through diocesan in-service. Seven of the eight staff has qualifications in Religious Education, with one currently undertaking relevant professional studies. There is much to recommend this team as potential leaders of the future. There is exemplary commitment to equality of opportunity, evident from the pursuit of excellence in the curriculum and the desire to develop formative assessment to further enhance differentiation and to maintain the availability of accredited courses for all learners. Consumable resources are outstanding and so too is their deployment. This is particularly evident from the provision and use of information communication technology. However, several of the classrooms are in need of refurbishment to provide both provision for larger groups and the creation of a stimulating work environment that is evident in other rooms. There is a generous financial capitation allowance for the department. The governors are to be commended for their commitment to Religious Education through funding, staffing and by their thorough knowledge of the workings of the department.

Grade: 2

Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding. The Mission Statement is the result of a thorough process of review undertaken in September 2006. It is supported by practical aims and

objectives that are owned and lived by the community. The quality of Catholic life is effectively monitored by the governors through annual reports from all departments and not least by their comprehensive practical involvement in school. There is one full-time and one part-time lay chaplain. Both provide a major impact through their practical promotion of the moral and spiritual development of the whole community.

Grade: 1

Collective Worship

The provision for and quality of Collective Worship is good with outstanding features. Its provision is supported by a co-ordinating team through the remit of a practical policy. Consequently year group prayer and worship takes place once each week with daily provision for form groups. There is a full range of Eucharistic services and celebrations throughout the Liturgical Year. There are retreat and away-day experiences for most year groups. The team has provided excellent prayer and worship resources for use by staff. On the day of inspection there was an inspirational service for the distribution of ashes that demonstrated every aspect of effective Collective Worship. A system has been developed for monitoring the quality of worship and this should be promoted throughout all for groups to identify both good practice and the need for in-service. Learners respond very positively to Collective Worship. It is making an outstanding contribution to their spiritual and moral development.

Grade: 2

Community Cohesion

Promotion of community cohesion is outstanding. The inclusion of all is central to the shared vision of leadership at all levels, which promotes difference, values diversity and ensures equal opportunities. This is particularly evident in Collective Worship. The Religious Education curriculum champions personal integrity, mutual understanding and respect for all faiths. A Community Cohesion Policy action plan targets development. This has led to the development and support of wide ranging fundraising and social outreach projects. The local community is integral to school life. Parents, carers and learners are fully supportive of the excellent pastoral care. The Nurture Centre funded by the school epitomises its commitment to community care in helping children to succeed.

Grade: 1