



ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. JOHN FISHER CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

WIGAN

Inspection Date Wednesday 20 October 2010

Inspectors Dcn. Paul Mannings Mrs. Barbara Melia

Unique Reference Number 106535

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School Catholic voluntary-aided, mixed
comprehensive

Age range of pupils 11-16

Number on roll 953

Chair of Governors Mr. D. Mallin

Head teacher Mr. R. J. Ward

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Date of last inspection 28 November 2007

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.

Information about the school

St. John Fisher is a Catholic voluntary-aided, mixed comprehensive, situated in the Wigan Authority. There are 953 pupils on roll with 79% drawn from six feeder parishes in the pastoral area and the remainder from schools across the borough. Baptized Catholics account for 64% of the roll, with 25% from other Christian denominations, 2% from other faith or religious traditions and 8% with no religious affiliation. There are 59 full and 9 part time teachers of whom 55% are Catholic. The Religious Education department has five full and one part time teacher, all of whom are qualified in the subject.

Key for inspection grades

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

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Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school.

Inspection Judgements

Overall effectiveness:

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main Findings:-

St. John Fisher is a good Catholic high school with a number of outstanding features. The school continues to serve its pupils and staff well. There is much to celebrate as leadership, management and Religious Education staff demonstrates good capacity for sustained improvement.

Outcomes are good with outstanding features for individuals and for groups of pupils. Both achievement and attainment reflects good knowledge and understanding of Religious Education. Pupils are keen to learn because they highly value Religious Education. Consequently their application and behaviour are outstanding. They are keen to support the Catholic Life of the school by involvement in a range of activities. They appreciate the relevance of Collective Worship and are keen to have more active involvement in form group prayer and worship.

There is good provision for Catholic Education. This is evident through good to outstanding levels of teaching that supports purposeful learning. Assessment for Learning is good and expressed through a wide range of end of task strategies. There is a need to focus more clearly on the marking and annotation of pupils work. Differentiation overall is outstanding. The content of the curriculum is good and continues to develop further through innovative strategies in Key Stage 3 and an effective GCSE specification in Key Stage 4. The quality of Collective Worship is good. There is, however, the need to more effectively monitor its overall provision in form groups and to facilitate in-service training for staff focused on participation by pupils.

Leaders and managers are good in developing the Catholic Life of the school. The Mission Statement is known, owned and undergoing review. The appointment of a new school chaplain is a priority. Religious Education is at the core of the curriculum. Its leadership and management are good with outstanding features. The subject is well monitored with identified strategies for improvement. The governing body provides good challenge and support for both the Catholic dimension of the school and for Religious Education. There is good promotion of community cohesion. The common good is at the heart of all the school seeks to achieve.

Consequently good capacity for sustained improvement is shown through continued development. The one area for action identified in the last inspection has been addressed to a good level. Leadership and departmental staff use the S48 Self-Evaluation document, together with school and departmental development plans to move continued progress. There is realistic and challenging monitoring of many areas of pupils' progress. Outstanding levels of

enthusiasm and motivation demonstrated by departmental staff contributes incisively to continued improvement.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- Continue to improve the provision for Collective Worship in form groups by:
 - Establishing a coordinator to provide a range of initiatives to encourage greater participation by pupils;
 - Effective coordination to ensure consistent daily provision;
 - Monitoring the quality of provision to identify good practice and areas for development;
 - In-service training to address any weaknesses,
 - Annual training for new form teachers.

- Strengthen further the process of Assessment for Learning through a review of the current departmental system for the marking and annotation of pupils written work by:
 - Including evidence in pupils files of all formative activities;
 - Ensuring the evidence includes teacher and pupil commentaries on any practical activities undertaken;
 - Building up the filed evidence to become effective tools for revision by pupils,
 - Considering whether ring files would be a more suitable option in Key Stage 3 to assist in presentation and avoid loss of work.

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils

Pupils' achievement in Religious Education is good with outstanding features. This is evident from aspirational targets set for all pupils, which results in a good standard of attainment overall. Current data indicates 67% of pupils in Key Stage 3 either reaching or exceeding their targets. In Key Stage 4 attainment has remained at or above the national average. The 2008 cohort gained 77.7% A*-C (the highest in the history of the school), with 61% in 2009 and 67% for 2010. Consequently standards for Key Stage 4 are mostly above average. Across Key Stages 3 and 4 end-of-task assessments show the majority of pupils attaining good knowledge and understanding in Religious Education with no variation between genders. This will be further improved through greater focus on formative assessment.

The quality of pupils' learning and their progress in Religious Education are good. Observations in class and conversations with groups of pupils indicate good levels of religious literacy. Their responses show levels of knowledge and understanding appropriate to their age. Learning activities encourage them to think ethically and theologically. They are keenly aware of how Religious Education links to commitment in everyday life activities. Their progress in class is directly linked to individual starting points and capabilities through outstanding levels of differentiation that are inclusive of all levels of ability. Any that move off task are effectively re-engaged. In some classes there is greater scope for less formal teaching and earlier involvement in challenging activities. They are well practised in individual and collaborative learning. This is

conducive to pupils seeking to improve their own knowledge and skills. This in turn is enriched by their outstanding levels of behaviour and enjoyment of Religious Education.

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is good. They are keen to take on responsibilities for the wellbeing of their school and for the wider community. In class they are encouraged to be reflective and understanding, which has led to their understanding of the importance of religious belief and spiritual values both for themselves in school life and in several of the parish communities. Pupils are articulate in their expression of religious belief, how it informs their values and indeed influences their involvement in social interaction and projects for the good of others. Pupils demonstrate an awareness of right and wrong. This is evident in their general approach to school life through an innate sense of purpose to move on and celebrate what is good in their lives.

Pupils show a good level of response to and participation in the school's Collective Worship. They are keen to be involved in year group gatherings and would welcome more participation in form time worship. During prayer and worship there is a good level of engagement through reflective silence and a confident participation in community prayer. Pupils involved in leading year group gatherings do so with commitment. Some would benefit from greater practise in voice production. Pupils feel that Collective Worship provides good opportunities for them to reflect on wide ranging issues. Their good knowledge of the Liturgical Year is linked to understanding of how it applies to their lives. They value it as an opportunity to gather their thoughts, to reflect on the needs of others and on occasions to simply be still. They are confident that the content and structure of prayer and worship respects the needs of the community and is not imposed in a manner that may be contrary to the beliefs of some.

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils	
How well pupils achieve in Religious Education	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pupils' standards of attainment in Religious Education 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality of pupils' learning and their progress in Religious Education 	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	2
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	2

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education

The quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education is good. Teaching is good with outstanding features. This ensures the majority of pupils maintain interest and enthusiasm for their learning. In a minority of classes there needs to be more challenge to promote exceptional progress for the higher ability and stimulating pace and progress for all pupils. End of task assessments enable effective planning of content that meets individual targets for pupils. The strong subject knowledge of teachers is tangibly expressed through good to outstandingly organised content that is creatively expressed and well supported by technology. This in turn encourages pupils' motivation, behaviour and keenness to achieve.

The effectiveness of assessment in Religious Education is good. Assessment for Learning remains well embedded in most teaching and learning. It is expressed formatively through differentiation, discussion, question and answer, together with systems for celebrating pupils' achievements. Regular end of task assessments, together with pupil self- assessment encourages pupils' to establish clearly defined progression routes. The department is currently enriching this process through the production of formative milestone assessments. There is however a need to focus more on marking and annotation of pupils formative work. Currently their files contain mainly key assessment activities. They should be developed to include evidence of all tasks whether written or practical, together with comments about progress. This will help pupils consolidate knowledge and understanding and support their revision process.

The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs is good. In Key Stages 3 and 4 all except Year 9 (who receive 8.5%, an improvement since the last inspection) receive the 10% curriculum entitlement required by the Bishops of England and Wales. In Key Stage 3 Icons is delivered through well planned strategies. In Key Stage 4 all pupils are entered for a GCSE specification well suited to their needs. In both key stages the content continues to be developed and enriched by the expertise of the staff. It makes a good contribution to spiritual and moral development through opportunities for pupils to reflect and apply the content to their own lives. This is evident in learning that is often stimulating, memorable and conducive in encouraging pupils' contribution both in class and through extra curricular activities.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is good. This is expressed through weekly year group gatherings and daily form group prayer. There is a monthly celebration of the Eucharist attended voluntarily. Parents and carers are invited to attend various acts of worship throughout the year. There is a good range of inclusive themes and resources linked to the Liturgical Year as well as to other world faiths and religions. The school should continue to review its provision. The process should include monitoring to ensure maximum participation in quality Collective Worship by all form groups. It should also identify good practice that can be shared together with any needs for further training of staff.

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education	
The quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education	2
The effectiveness of assessment in Religious Education	2
The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	2

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic Life of the school

Leaders and managers are good in their promotion, monitoring and evaluation of the provision for Catholic Life of the school and in their planning and implementation of improvement to outcomes for pupils. Their commitment to

the mission of the Church is currently illustrated by the beginnings of the process for reviewing the Mission Statement, which involves all stakeholders and will culminate in a Mission Week. This process should also encompass continued development of Collective Worship. Since the last inspection monitoring of the content of the Mission Statement has included evidence from departmental reports. Certainly pupils are able to articulate the content and understand how it can be applied to their lives within and beyond school. Consequently they have a high regard for the Catholic Life of the school and are clear about how it can continue to develop. Leaders and managers should also continue without delay to secure the appointment of a new school chaplain to compliment the efforts of the chaplaincy team. The relocation of the new Prayer Room should also be implemented as soon as possible. Its restoration is eagerly awaited by a number of pupils.

Leaders and managers provide good monitoring and evaluation of their provision for Religious Education, together with planning and implementation for improvement to outcomes for pupils. This is expressed through an efficient process for performance management. Leadership of the Religious Education department is good with outstanding features. The subject leader continues to provide high standards of managerial organisation direction and opportunities for continued professional development. Areas of strength are well recognised and celebrated, specifically the outstanding commitment and expertise of the departmental staff and their good leadership of pupils in teaching and learning. Monitoring activities include a detailed self-evaluation document that is now in the process of meeting the requirements of the new specification, which will be reflected in the grading provided for each area. This document informs both the structured departmental development plan and school improvement plan. All of the analysis provides a sound basis for realistic and strategic improvement.

The governing body provides a good level of effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so areas needing development are addressed decisively and responsibilities met. Their skills and in many instances long-standing involvement, together with overall commitment, serves the school well. They are fully involved in directing the Catholic Life of the school, specifically through their involvement in the Mission Statement review. Senior leadership should now keep governors fully informed concerning progress in the provision for Collective Worship. It is recommended a *Mission and Purpose* item is inserted into the agenda for every full governors meeting. This will ensure all are conversant with monitoring and progress. Their promotion of Religious Education means it is well served in terms of finance for staffing and resources. They are aware of the departmental strengths and fully support the process for continued development.

Leaders and managers provide good promotion of community cohesion. The current process for re-evaluating the Mission Statement emphasises the common sense of belonging and working toward the common good. The focus will be on the continuing development of links with the local and wider community, not least through the school's specialist status for Performing Arts. Leaders and managers respect for difference is expressed through systems for pastoral care. It is especially evident in the continued welcome of pupils from other parts of Europe. Equal opportunities are promoted through facilitation of continued professional development and by inclusive teaching and learning, access to accredited courses and the support of strategic differentiation. Pupils

and staff continue to increase their levels of community involvement through fundraising and social interaction. Pupils express a pride in belonging to the school and a sense of mutual cooperation. Collective Worship themes are inclusive in their celebration of religious diversity, together with coverage of wide-ranging social issues. Religious Education continues to promote, knowledge, understanding and celebration of other world faiths and religions. The department is actively involved in justice and peace activities, together with the annual trip to Holland that focuses on both the Holocaust and the commemoration of those who have died in warfare. The backgrounds of all pupils are used effectively in lessons to promote citizenship through the Gospel values of love, respect, reconciliation and the call to live life to the full.

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic Life of the School	
How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	2
How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	2
The extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so areas needing development are addressed decisively and responsibilities met	2
How effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion	2