



ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL AND SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

ASTLEY

Inspection Date Wednesday and Thursday, 4 and 5 June 2014

Inspectors Deacon Paul Mannings,
Mrs Elizabeth Dolan, Mrs. Barbara Melia

Unique Reference Number 106538

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Acts 2005 and 2011

Type of School Catholic voluntary-aided, mixed comprehensive

Age range of pupils 11-18

Number on roll 1,601

Chair of Governors Mr. Jack Farrimond

Headteacher Mr. Andrew Dawson

Acting Headteacher Mrs. Denise Brahms

School address Manchester Road
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Date of last inspection Wednesday 25 February 2009

Introduction

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Acts 2005 and 2011

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 this school

- St. Mary's Catholic High School is a voluntary-aided, 11-18, mixed comprehensive.
- The school is situated in the Archdiocese of Liverpool and within the Wigan Authority.
- There are 1,601 pupils on roll of whom 73.5% are baptised Catholics, with 22.2% from other Christian denominations and 4.3% from other world faith or religious traditions.
- Pupils drawn from associated Catholic primary schools in the pastoral area account for 67% of the roll.
- The school has 112 teaching staff, 45% of whom are Catholic.
- The Religious Education and Social Studies Faculty has twelve members. Of these, ten teach Religious Education; seven are full-time and the remaining three are part-time in addition to other subjects and/or responsibilities. All ten are qualified in Religious Education.
- The Headteacher has also been appointed as interim head of another diocesan high school, since 22 April 2014.
- The Acting Headteacher, a deputy head at this school, has been in post since 22 April 2014.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires Improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

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Overall effectiveness:

St. Mary's provides outstanding Catholic Education.

Inspection Judgements

The extent to which the pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school.

- The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding.
- Pupils readily articulate how their current Mission Statement is tangibly expressed in the life of the school. They are enthusiastic in stating how they 'Imagine' a developing future, 'Believe' in themselves and ultimately 'Achieve' personal and community improvement.
- They provide clear insights into the progress of the Mission Statement Review since its inception in January 2014. They appreciate being integral to the review process. They speak of God's community as the core ideal for all they do for themselves, each other and the wider world. They feel encouraged to celebrate all achievements. Neither is there any complacency. Pupils provide practical examples of how Catholic life is lived out in the routine of school life and in the contributions made by all toward the common good. Examples include wide-ranging local, national and international projects.
- Pupils are encouraged to believe in themselves and each other in the pursuit of personal and unselfish best.
- Pupils cite their curriculum as an expression of Catholic life. They are clear about how and why Religious Education is at the core.
- Gospel values, in their view, are evident in the whole dimension of teaching and learning. Pupils are aware of the same values being practised by the entire staff community, which in turn serves as an example for them to follow.
- Pupils compliment the pastoral system as a Gospel expression of commitment to their welfare.

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

- Pupils show good levels of achievement and attainment in Religious Education.
- Outstanding elements include most pupils' continued progress over time at the end of Key Stages 3, and the continued raising of progress at the end of Key Stages 4 and 5.
- By the end of Year 9 most pupils make progress that is commensurate with their starting points, age and stage. In the last three years numbers attaining Level 5+ indicate respectively 88.5%, 98% and 94.4%. Significant progress is evident over the same period for Level 6+ namely from 36% in 2011-12, to 52.3% in 2012-13 and currently 72.4%. Numbers working within Level 7 over the same period range from 1.5%, to 5.9%, to currently 12.1%.
- This has in part provided the scaffolding for increased performance at GCSE. Whereas percentages remain within the 70% and upward range for A*-C, performance now relates to a move toward whole cohort entry. There was a dip in

2013 to 71% (from 79% in the previous two years). Placed in context the same was evident across all subjects and less so for Religious Education.

- In Key Stage 5 performance for AS and A2 indicate grades that are consistently within the top 40% nationally as measured through ALPS.
- Attainment and achievement in class is enhanced by the increased focus on raising the quality of teaching and learning. It will be further enriched by overhauling the current system for marking and annotation.
- Outstanding pupil behaviour and their commitment to Religious Education make a significant contribution to progress.
- Individual pupil targets are aspirational and motivate the majority to succeed.

How well pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship

- Pupils response to and participation in Collective Worship is outstanding.
- They value prayer in all its forms. Pupils refer to the abundance of opportunities for personal thought and reflection. They feel this provides time to gain personal perspectives and enhance their spiritual development.
- Community prayer is seen as integral to becoming aware of the needs of others.
- Pupils are confident to share their own beliefs and world views. Equally as important is their demonstrated practice of listening to and respecting the viewpoints of others.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about the frequent occasions to gain knowledge and understanding of other world faiths and traditions. This enables them to put their own Catholic Christian Faith into perspective by appreciating the Gospel message to embrace all people.
- Older pupils acknowledge the greatly improved opportunities over time to encourage their own active involvement and participation, using their own skills and creativity. To this end they value the adaptability of weekly themes and resources.
- Pupils regard Collective Worship as a practical expression of Catholic life. Prayer is relevant to their needs. Prayer is a way of giving thanks for what they have. It is inclusive of key world issues which in their view are given a good airing and prayed for.
- Collective Worship enriches pupils' awareness of the Liturgical Year. They relate well to the importance of the Church's seasons and how these enhance their own spiritual journeys and understanding of Catholic Tradition.
- Pupils respect the example given by staff during prayer and worship. They feel it is a team act of prayer and mutual support.

The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education

- The quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education is good.
- On the day of inspection there were many outstanding elements. These included high levels of planning, which met the individual needs of all pupils. There were creative, imaginative and inspiring learning strategies. Timely teacher intervention kept pupils focused.
- Lessons that were good aspired to the above criteria. Teachers showed good subject knowledge. There were high expectations. Differentiation met the needs of most pupils.
- The few areas requiring improvement included too much teacher input. Some pupils required more highly differentiated task sheets. There was one instance of low level disruption.

- The process for marking and assessment is in place. Level trackers and information sheets benefit pupil progress. Assessments are well linked to schemes of work.
- Marking and annotation should ensure more pupils are informed about their current progress and how to improve further. This is an area for development.
- Most pupils are challenged in their learning. The pace of learning is appropriate for the majority. Peer support is evident.
- Pupils are encouraged to apply prior learning to new levels of knowledge and understanding.
- All learning includes structured opportunities for pupils' evaluation and reflection.
- Learning outcomes are well focused, clearly established at the start of lessons and monitored throughout.
- Exciting plenary activities engage pupils and celebrate new learning.
- Teaching and learning has been further enriched by the school's process for monitoring and the sharing of good practice.

The extent to which the Religious Education Curriculum promotes pupils learning

- The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils learning is outstanding.
- The time allocation is 8% in Key Stage 3 and the required 10% in Key Stage 4. The 8% provision is acceptable in light of timetable restraints but should not be reduced. There is the required 5% for the Key Stage 5 general Religious Education course and 20% for Advanced Level.
- In Key Stage 3 the programme and schemes have been systematically developed. The process of Research, Revelation and Response is well embedded. The content enables progression from the Come and See programme in Key Stage 2. It is also well focused on pupils drawn from state sector schools. It provides a strong foundation for Key Stage 4.
- In Key Stage 4 all pupils now have access to GCSE. The specification is well suited to their needs and enables progression.
- In Key Stage 5 the uptake for Advanced Level Philosophy and Ethics has increased in recent years. The specification is well established and developed.
- In Key Stage 5 General Religious Education is undertaken by all students. The course is externally accredited. The content is robust.
- In all Key Stages the curriculum is well rooted in Scripture and Tradition.
- Catholic Social Teaching is implicit.
- There is comprehensive inclusion of other world faiths and religions.
- The content is for the most part differentiated to engage and challenge pupils.
- The required Bishops Levels of Attainment for Religious Education are clearly linked to assessment tasks.
- Consequently the school is fulfilling the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools and Colleges in England and Wales – 2012.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

- The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is outstanding.
- This is the result of incisive team co-ordination and sharing of effective practice.
- There is consistent provision for staff and pupils in house, form and year groups. Once each week reflection takes place before the school day.
- Members of staff gather regularly for prayer.

- Themes and resources carefully unfold the Liturgical Year. Not only are they adaptable but staff and pupils are motivated to creatively re-shape the content to their own needs. This both emphasises the collective nature of prayer and worship and reinforces scope for active participation and leadership.
- Staff and pupils prepare a comprehensive range of liturgies including Mass and other services.
- The content of Collective Worship is designed to celebrate Catholic life. Church social teaching is skilfully reinforced. It is delivered to challenge the community through prayer and by action.
- Other world faiths and religions are celebrated with skill, care and without any sense of comparison.
- Provision contributes to spiritual and moral development.
- There is ample provision for the local community to be frequently included. There are a range of guest speakers.
- Collective Worship is efficiently and regularly monitored.
- Much thought has gone into the training of pupils to read in public or to contribute in any way that emphasises individual talents.
- There is a comprehensive programme of in-service for staff.
- There has been a wholesale focus on providing staff and pupils with understanding of the difference between a secular assembly and an act of worship that is truly collective.
- Consequently provision of Collective Worship is at the core of each working day.

How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.

- Leaders, governors and managers are outstanding in promoting and developing the Catholic life of the school and show good understanding of and commitment to the Mission of the Church.
- Currently this is best expressed in the long term Mission Review that commenced in January 2014 and concludes at the end of September 2014.
- Governors and senior leadership is insistent that Catholic life is driven by all staff, pupils, parents and the community. Commitment is evident through the numerous strands of progress already made in making mission a reality for the school. Success is evident from questionnaire feedback and from consultation with staff and pupils.
- Governors and senior leadership are committed to maintaining this development. The same levels of commitment now need to be embraced consistently across middle leadership.
- Catholic life is monitored through development of all areas of the Section 48 Self Evaluation document.
- Monitoring takes place within the process of Involving More People at Church Today (IMPACT Group). Using Years 7-9 as starting points the school seeks to share Catholic life with the pastoral area and beyond.
- The school is at the directional core of Wigan and West Catholic Schools Direct. This too, rigorously monitors the impact of Catholic life by training, support and sharing of best practice between members. The sought after success criteria is best summed up in its tagline, 'Having Faith in Our Children's Future.'
- The same tag line appropriately applies to the school's Nurture Centre. This in itself is an expression of the Gospel driven pastoral care of all pupils, whatever their needs.

- Chaplaincy maintains its outstanding impact. The school has a full time lay chaplain. The role is further supported by an additional chaplain, a religious brother, who is in attendance three days each week. Working together with governors, leadership school chaplaincy helpers, committed local clergy and parishes, the school is charged continually in its drive to be the pulsing heartbeat of Catholic life in action.

How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Religious Education of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.

- Leaders, governors and managers provide outstanding monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education. Together they plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.
- This is evident from the stringent challenges expressed in the Section 48 Self Evaluation document. The inspection process has re-graded several areas from good to outstanding.
- Governors and senior leadership is clear in its commitment to Religious Education as the core subject in this Catholic school. It is expressed by thorough line management, generous staffing and budgeting.
- There is outstanding leadership and management of the department. This is the result of much development in recent years.
- Members of the department are also commended for their outstanding role in shaping Religious Education through their own Catholic commitment and professionalism. Each key stage is managed with detailed precision. Documentation is in place. There are identifiable stands for development. Pupils are well supported and their progress is tracked.
- The department is realistic and descriptive about areas still to be addressed, namely the pursuit of overall outstanding achievement, teaching and learning.
- Continued professional development is regularly undertaken and includes participation in diocesan training.
- Using evidence gained from consultation with pupils, the wider staff community and parents, Religious Education ranks high for quality. Due to the efforts of staff it is regarded as an academic discipline leading to public accreditation. Pupils appreciate the dedication of staff expressed in promoting their Catholic development.

What the school needs to do to improve further:

- Marking and annotation of pupils work should ensure they are clearly informed about current progress and how to improve further, by:
 - Setting targets that are more constructive, showing pupils how to move to higher levels of attainment;
 - Enabling pupils to formulate their own clear and concise targets;
 - Marking and annotation that contains sharper comments;
 - Using the comments to enable dialogue with pupils;
 - Allowing time for all pupils to reflect on written comments and targets;
 - Time set aside for corrections;

- Providing time for completion of tasks.

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education	1
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OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils	
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	1
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	2
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	1

PROVISION

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education	
The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education	2
The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning	1
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	1

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How effective leaders, governors and managers are in developing the Catholic Life of the School	
How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
How well leaders, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	1

<i>Key to judgements: Grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 requires improvement and grade 4 inadequate</i>
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