

DIOCESE OF MIDDLESBROUGH

Inspection of Religious Education Collective Worship and The Catholic Life of the School

School: All Saints Catholic Secondary School,
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Headteacher: Mr William Scriven

Chair: Mr Peter Cannings

Date: 14th – 15th April 2008

Inspector: Fr Joseph A. Quigley
Dr John Lally

Introduction

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

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

Key inspection grades

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

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Factual information about the school

All Saints Roman Catholic School is a larger than average Catholic secondary school in the Diocese of Middlesbrough. The school is located in York servicing the City parishes and surrounding villages. The school operates on two sites nearly a mile apart with the playing fields a further two miles away.

All Saints opened in September 1985 as an 11-18 Catholic Voluntary Aided School and has become both a specialist Language and Performing Arts college in recent years. The school serves a relatively affluent area as shown by the much lower than average percentage of students who receive a free school meal. However, the school does serve some estates of significant social and economic deprivation. The school is committed to developing a comprehensive ethos and makes a significant contribution to partnerships within the LA and other schools. The pupil intake is approximately 80% baptised Catholic. Most students are of white British heritage and very few students speak English as an additional language. The latter is in line with ethnic composition of the area.

The logistical difficulties of a split-site are added to by the main building on each side being listed. As a consequence the site is not DDA compliant. Very few students have statements of special educational needs and the percentage of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. However, the school is the preferred local authority school for hearing impaired students.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

All Saints is a Catholic school with many outstanding features. Even though the school is situated on two sites with older pupils in Key Stage 4 and the Sixth Form separate from Years 7 to 9, the school effectively maintains a common ethos with shared expectations evident by the behaviour and conduct of pupils. While the logistical difficulties are significant, students in conversation indicated that they appreciated the separate settings and the space it gave them to grow in maturity and responsibility.

The leadership of the head teacher and senior team is outstanding and they provide very clear direction for the Catholic life of the school. In this they are well supported and challenged where appropriate by governors. Standards in public examinations in religious education are outstanding and pupils make excellent progress in all years except Years 7 and 8. The moral development of the pupils is outstanding and spiritual development is good. Students are able to engage in moral reasoning orally, in written work and in action. Equivalent space now needs to be offered in terms of students' spiritual development, religious artefacts in individual classrooms and through the proposed revision in the timetable to allow more time for collective worship.

Teachers and pupils are committed to creating learning communities founded on "trust, cooperation, reconciliation, forgiveness, compassion and respect for others and the world". The values are animated by an evident sense of service to others and commitment where all feel human, valued and secure. This is true at all ages and a mark of pupils' moral maturity. The school is self-reflective and knows what it has achieved and what other areas now need to be addressed, especially in respect of the school prayer life.

Improvement since the last inspection

Improvement since the last inspection has been outstanding with all the key issues addressed. The leadership and management of the RE department have been strengthened, curriculum provision meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference, and chaplaincy has been developed further with greater involvement in the school of local clergy. The liturgical aspect of assemblies remains to be developed as there is currently too little time available for daily collective worship to be very effective. However, timetable adjustments are being made in the coming year to provide more time for assemblies.

Capacity to improve

The school's capacity to improve at all levels is outstanding; the ethos of reflection evident within the leadership team is apparent in discussions with students and in religious education departmental paperwork. Strong strategic planning, clear prioritisation, and high and improving examination results in religious education all indicate the capacity to improve further. The capacity of the RE department to improve is very good: the leadership of the department is outstanding and the quality of teaching and learning are excellent. At present monitoring focuses too much on process rather than outcomes.

What the school should do to improve further

To improve further the school should:

- analyse and evaluate the findings of monitoring within the RE department and relate the outcomes of evaluation to departmental improvement planning more closely;
- review the scope and depth of the curriculum in religious education offered to students in Year 7 and 8 especially doctrine and scripture;
- implement proposed changes to collective worship and monitor pupils' response to those changes.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The effectiveness of leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school

The effectiveness of leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The reflective systems instituted by the head teacher are a major agent of change and improvement ensuring a collective “Catholic” ethos across both sites. Students in their discussions identify on both sites that the school has a clear vision and that they are participants in the school’s mission. The quality of relationships in the school between staff and pupils is excellent. Both pupils and staff recognise their responsibility to each other and act with politeness and respect. Using the school’s mission statement as a stimulus, students working with the head teacher designed a “rainbow statement” under which pupils recognise in the words of Isaiah, that they are held in the palm of [God’s] hand and knowing this have the confidence to flourish and live life to the full and respect each other. On occasions where the latter does not happen, students challenge each other.

The head teacher and senior team are known by students and eminently approachable. Given the nature of the school when tutors and heads of department can be on the other site for long periods of the school day and at registration the presence of leaders within the community for both teachers and students is important for the stability and well being of all.

The governing body provides good leadership with a wealth of experience and depth of insight. It has sought reassurance for coverage of the religious education curriculum at Key Stage 4 and takes seriously its ministry of oversight. While the governing body is aware of the strengths of the school’s Catholic character, it does not systematically evaluate this aspect of school life.

Improvement in the Catholic character of the school since the last inspection has been good. This is due, in no small part, to the reflective leadership of the head teacher and senior team and its undoubted capacity to undertake self-evaluation in various aspects of school life. The head teacher is aware of the need to work more strategically with the outcomes of this evaluation and to ensure it impacts on the Catholic life of the whole school, in the classroom, the curriculum it offers and beyond.

Collective Worship

The provision for Collective Worship is good. The school is aware that the constraints of the timetable result in collective worship feeling rushed and formulaic. The school has worked hard to address the key issue from the last inspection of developing the liturgical aspects of assemblies and now collective worship for year groups comprises elements of liturgical song, scripture, reflection and formal prayers such as the ‘Our Father’. It is intended that reorganisation of the timetable will allow space for greater creativity and consistency, not only in larger group assemblies but in form assemblies.

The extensive liturgical programme provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils of all ages to take part in and lead whole school, year group and class worship. Eucharistic celebrations are the high point of the school worship and are celebrated in school, local parishes and at York Minster. Parents and parishioners are encouraged to attend and participate in these celebrations. Pupils also participate in smaller group worship during quiet days and residential retreats.

Though there is no priest chaplain identified for the school, chaplaincy provision within the school is good. The lay chaplain and chaplaincy youth worker function well with a team drawn from across the school and involving those of other Christian denominations. The chaplain works well with the RE department, but avoids the danger of being merely an offshoot of that department. She has a presence in the school which is visible when needed, but is also appropriately invisible in carrying out duties with individuals who need support. She recognises that her role extends to all members of the school community. She is able to identify a range of activities which fulfil her role embracing liturgies and the school's provision of residential retreats. The youth worker is employed by the local youth team known as YoYo and has been recently appointed to the school. She is developing her role well and has clear ideas on how to develop it further. The lack of a priest chaplain limits the capacity of the school to provide for the pupils' liturgical experience, but the school does all that it can to make this good.

The school is making an outstanding contribution to the promotion of community cohesion. The school is recognized by the LA as having an exemplary track record on inclusion, with outstanding care for the individual. Leaders and managers work with others beyond the school to ensure that many wide and varied opportunities are provided by the school for pupils to enter in to dialogue and collaborate with people from different backgrounds. The school actively uses its links with the local community, other schools and religious communities for the benefits of the pupils. The school facilities are provided free of charge for any diocesan activities and events organised by the local authority for groups of SEN or disabled children. Pupils regularly volunteer their time and talents and seek to deepen their commitment to Christian values in action by supporting local and international charities. Through participation in local and religious community activities pupils demonstrate concern for the weak and vulnerable. Within the school, pupils feel safe, cared for, happy and treated as individuals. They demonstrate care, concern, respect and hospitality towards each other. The religious education syllabus, quiet days, residential retreats, PSHCE collapsed curriculum days and Chaplaincy activities make a full and varied contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development. Pupils are encouraged to challenge each others' beliefs and values and as a result demonstrate respect and mutual understanding for all faiths. The school is an adult education centre and is available to the local community during evenings, weekends and during term time holidays. A number of opportunities are provided for parents from all backgrounds to be involved in the life of the school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards in Religious Education

Standards in public examinations in religious education are outstanding. At GCSE there has been a steady increase in the performance of the pupils over three years and standards are now well above the national average with all pupils being entered for the examination. In 2007 girls outperformed boys, but the achievement of boys was greater than that of the girls, having improved more while they were in the school. Standards at AS and A2 levels are also excellent with a high proportion of the students achieving higher grades A-B and the very large majority of the others achieving C grades. The high performance in public examinations reflects the quality of the learning of the students through Key Stage 4 and the sixth form and the quality of the teaching that contributes to it.

At the end of Key Stage 3, standards are high but they are variable within the key stage. The level of challenge in Year 7 is too low and some of the pupils do not make sufficient progress, though there may be a difference between those coming from Catholic primary schools and others. In Year 8 the quantity of written work rises significantly, but the demands made of the pupils remain modest. This changes markedly in Year 9, when there is a sharp increase in the expectations of the teachers and the demands of the tasks which they set with a consequent rise in the quality of the work produced. That the pupils are able to achieve high standards within Year 9 indicates both that secure foundations have been established earlier, but also that achievement might be higher yet with greater expectations in Years 7 and 8.

Quality of provision for Religious Education

Teaching and learning in religious education are good with outstanding features. The strengths of the teaching are in the encouragement of independent learning, especially in 6th form, the range of learning styles taken into account with a comparable range of teaching strategies including a focus on assisting the pupils to learn about the process of learning. Teachers give pupils good opportunities to develop their own thinking and opinions in the context of Church teaching. Lessons are well structured and well timed so that they ensure that pupils develop a progressive understanding of the content and concepts of the lesson. Appropriate skills are fostered enabling the pupils to become effective learners. Relationships with the pupils are generally excellent as are the management of pupils and resources. Teachers have a secure knowledge both of the religious education and of the pedagogy of the subject. ICT is used very well as means of engaging pupils in their learning. Where lessons are satisfactory rather than good or better, learning objectives do not clarify for the pupils what they should have learned by the end of the lesson. At times there is some tendency to talk a little too much and this would be healed by breaking down the lessons into smaller parts with short activities to consolidate the learning and by giving more opportunity for pupils to develop their thinking in response to questions.

Assessment for learning is in development and there is evidence of effective practice in some classrooms. Teachers successfully match work to ability either by task or, more frequently, by appropriate support. Marking is always constructive with good use of rewards and, in the best practice, pupils are given very good guidance on how to improve. This very good practice in marking is not wholly consistent amongst teachers. The response of the pupils to the provision is excellent: they enjoy their lessons, engaging strongly with the subject, and their positive attitudes increase as they go through the school. Their view is that their high regard for the subject and their good learning derives from the quality of the teaching and the fact that the teachers always have time to help them.

Meeting the needs of learners

The effectiveness of the curriculum in religious education in meeting the needs of pupils is good overall, but excellent in Key Stage 4 and the Sixth Form. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is in the process of revision and it is halfway through a three-year plan. There are areas that are dealt with well, but others that are under-represented in the current plans. The curriculum is strong in relation to Revelation and Life in Christ, but Celebration is not as well covered, though more is planned for the period after the inspection up to the end of the school year. The depth and scope of the Key Stage 3 curriculum in respect of doctrine and scripture is limited, though this improves significantly from Year 9. There were understandable doubts within the leadership of the school about the appropriateness of a Key Stage 4 curriculum which dealt with philosophy and ethics rather than the conventional Catholic Christianity course for GCSE. However, the curriculum planning and the teaching ensure that the expectations of the Curriculum Directory for the age group are met very well. The effectiveness of the curriculum in religious education is clearly reflected in the learning of the pupils. They have good knowledge and understanding of the faith, are confident as learners and understand different ways of learning. That they are provided with opportunities to engage in developing skills of independent learning fits them well for work in the Sixth Form and good practice there leads on well towards their future learning.

Leadership and Management of Religious Education

The RE department is very well led. The head of department took over in a situation where there had previously been management which focused on day to day matters rather than providing clear leadership. She identified the particular needs to review the curriculum and provide a sense of direction for the staff. The plans to change the Key Stage 3 curriculum and secure greater coherence in provision across the department are now well on course. The head of RE is being well supported by other members of the department, but the tasks are made more complex by the leadership and management responsibilities held by other staff outside the department and the split site of the school. In these circumstances, the absence of a second in department to manage either lower or upper school is significant. Nonetheless, the management of the department is effective. The departmental development plan is being implemented successfully and good monitoring procedures have been put in place to review standards and the quality of teaching and learning. At present evaluation focuses more on the process than upon the outcomes of the monitoring while evaluation and improvement planning are running in parallel rather than being mutually supportive. However, the groundwork has been laid for development in this respect. Overall, in the context of the short time in which the head of department has been in post, the complexities of the situation which she inherited, and the impact of what has been done so far, leadership and management of religious education are excellent.

Inspection Judgements Form

Area	Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 is good, grade 3 is satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	Judgement
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Overall effectiveness

A1	Over effectiveness of the provision of Catholic education	1
A1.1	Distinctive nature of the Catholic life of the school	2
A1.2	Effectiveness of the home/school/parish partnership	1
A1.3	Improvement since the last inspection	1
A1.4	Capacity to improve further	1

The Catholic Life of the School

B1	Effectiveness of leadership and management in developing the Catholic Life of the school	1
B1.1	Governing body	2
B1.2	Leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction	1
B1.3	Quality of the leadership of the Headteacher and senior staff in developing the Catholic life	1
B1.4	Contribution to spiritual and moral development	2
B1.5	Effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation	2

B2	Quality of Collective Worship	2
B2.1	Frequency and quality of provision	2
B2.2	Learners' response	2
B2.3	Chaplaincy	2
B2.4	Contribution to spiritual and moral development	2

Religious Education

C1	Achievement and standards in Religious Education	1
C1.1	Learners' success in achieving targets, trends over time and variations between groups of learners	1
C1.2	Standards of work	1
C1.3	Progress	1
C1.4	Enjoyment	1
C1.5	Behaviour and strategies in use	1
C1.6	Contribution to spiritual and moral development	1
C1.7	Learners' contribution to the school community	1

C2	Quality of provision for Religious Education - teaching and learning	2
C2.1	Match to learners' needs and curriculum requirements	2
C2.2	Suitability and rigour of assessment in planning, monitoring and informing learners' progress	2
C2.3	Additional learning needs	2
C2.4	Involvement of parents and carers	1

C3	Quality of provision for Religious Education - curriculum	2
C3.1	Match to aspirations and potential	2
C3.2	Match to external requirements and response to local circumstances	2
C3.3	Contribution to spiritual and moral development	2

C4	Quality of provision for Religious Education – leadership and management	1
C4.1	Effectiveness of leadership and support of staff	1

C4.2	Effectiveness of monitoring of performance – quality assurance and self-assessment	2
C4.3	Equality of opportunity	1
C4.4	Adequacy and suitability of staff	2
C4.5	Adequacy and suitability of resources and accommodation	1
C4.6	Deployment of resources	1
C4.7	Effectiveness of Governors' responsibilities	2