

Diocese of Hallam



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL, CHESTERFIELD

School URN	138470
Name of Chair of Governors	Professor Micheline Beaulieu
Name of Headteacher	Mr Sean McClafferty
Date of inspection	22nd November, 2012
Section 48 Inspectors	Mr James Michael Conway Mrs Deidre Cleary

“ An enthusiasm for the things of God”

Introduction

The Inspection of St Mary's Catholic High School has been carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Diocese of Hallam Framework and Schedule for Section 48 Inspections as approved by the Bishop of Hallam.

The process of inspection in the Diocese of Hallam has been developed as an activity of the Church to support schools in further deepening the quality of Catholic education provided.

Description of the School

St Mary's Catholic High School is a large Catholic Voluntary Academy in the Diocese of Hallam serving primarily the Catholic community of north-east Derbyshire.

The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average. The number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or who have English as an additional language is low compared to national averages. The proportion of pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs, supported at School Action, is below average. The percentage of pupils supported at School Action Plus or who have Statements is low.

Information about the school

Type of School	Catholic Voluntary Academy
Age profile of students	11-18
Number on roll	1285
Number of students on Special Needs and Disabilities Register	144
Number of students with a Statement of Special Educational Needs	14
Number of Catholics on roll	1035
Number of Other Christian Denominations	148
Number of other Faiths	5
School Address	Newbold Road, Upper Newbold, Chesterfield, S41 8AG.
Telephone Number	01246 201191
Fax Number	01246 279205
Email	smcclafferty@stmaryschesterfield.org.uk

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

How effective the school is in providing Catholic education	1
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St Mary's provides an Outstanding Catholic education. The school has improved since the last Section 48 Inspection and has addressed most of the issues highlighted in that inspection. There are strengths in many areas but in particular in terms of the religious literacy of the pupils, the quality of learning and teaching in the Religious Education Department and the quality of the Core Religious Education Programme in the Sixth Form.

The Headteacher has led a review of the Mission of the school and has ensured Mission and Ethos are central to all developments. In this, he has been very well supported by a strong senior team.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement	1
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The school's capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding as it has in place effective systems of evaluation, planning and review and there is an evident determination to ensure continuous improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Governors must ensure Canonical responsibilities are met by increasing the percentage time allocated to Religious Education in Year 7 and Year 8 to 10% of the curriculum in line with directions from the Bishops' Conference.
- Ensure self-recording of progress by students is more consistent across the Department.
- Review formative marking policies to ensure pupils are required to respond to the questions and comments of staff and there is evidence to demonstrate they have.

PUPILS

How good outcomes are for pupils taking particular account of variations between different groups	1
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Outcomes for pupils are outstanding. Pupils achieve very well, enjoy Religious Education, understand the importance of the subject and are able to explain their views. At all Key Stages achievement and progress are outstanding and in line with other core subjects. At GCSE year on year pupil achievement exceeds the national average and in 2012 the Department attained the highest number of A*s in the school. The Department has correctly identified that middle to low ability boys are being out performed by girls which is a national issue in Religious Education. Staff have identified strategies that they hope will enable them to close the gap. They are also taking steps to increase the number of A* grades at A level to meet the national average. In lesson observations and work scrutiny, high levels of religious literacy were evident. Pupils can think spiritually, ethically and theologically which is the key learning outcome for Religious Education.

Pupils play a full and active part in the Catholic life of the school. The Sixth Form Chaplaincy Team help prepare for Mass in school and plan and run retreat experiences, assemblies and Masses for other year groups. They have a strong sense of the religious

character of the school and can articulate how much they value this. One pupil said, "Sixth Form RE is really good, especially in sharing opinions and views". With respect to the ethos of the school, another pupil said, "There is real care in this school. Staff don't wash their hands of you when you are in trouble. They make a real effort to build you back up".

Collective Worship is varied, well planned and age appropriate and follows the liturgical year of the Church.

PROVISION:

How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic education	1
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St Mary's High School is outstanding in promoting Catholic education. In the lessons observed teaching and learning was never less than good and was mainly outstanding. The best lessons were characterised by high levels of activity on the part of pupils, variety in learning activities, fast pace, pupils absorbed in their tasks, high level probing questioning of pupils and an emphasis on assessment of learning. Behaviour was excellent in lessons and pupils were active, independent learners displaying high levels of co-operation towards staff and their peers.

Assessment and academic guidance in Religious Education is very strong and the Department is a lead Department within the school in this area. Consistency in marking, feedback and tracking progress has been correctly identified by the Department as an area for development. Marking is regular and provides guidance for improvement. However, it is unclear to what extent pupils are held to account and use advice given to improve. Feedback more closely related to success criteria would help pupils identify their next steps and allow for more self and peer assessment.

Religious Education courses at Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 are well matched to the learning needs of the pupils. The Core Sixth Form programme is particularly well planned and delivered and the lessons seen were exemplary. Pupils were very positive about their Core Religious Education lessons and commented on how valuable and appropriate they found them.

The school meets the requirement of the Bishops' Conference in terms of Religious Education provision in all year groups except Year 7 and Year 8. In the last Section 48 Report (2007), Governors were asked to keep the curriculum allocation to Religious Education in Key Stage 3 under review as the proportion was below the 10% required. Since then, Governors have increased provision to 10% of the curriculum in Year 9 but not with regard to the curriculum in Year 7 and Year 8.

The Collective Worship programme is very impressive. The class-based worship observed was relevant to the children's lives, topical and prayerful. The assembly was outstanding. Pupils joined in with singing and prayer and were respectful and supportive towards the two Muslim pupils from a Sheffield school who gave a presentation on their Faith.

The Chapel is clearly a priority for the school and is an atmospheric and holy place within the school, easily accessible to children and staff.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the school	1
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School leaders have been very effective in developing the Catholic life of the school which is outstanding. Pupils and staff have a very well developed sense of the Catholic nature of the school and the calm and respectful atmosphere is evident to all. School leaders have developed robust and thorough monitoring and evaluation systems focussed on improving learning and teaching in Religious Education.

Arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the Catholic life of the school are less formal although every development plan is centred on Mission and Ethos. Following his appointment in 2008, the Headteacher led work on the development of a new Mission Statement for the school. This has been instrumental in ensuring that governors, pupils and staff are focussed on the religious and spiritual life of the school.

The governing body of St Mary's High School is active and involved and, therefore, know the school. They are enquiring, authoritative and aspirational in their approach. Because of their involvement in the school they are confident in their assertion that the Catholic ethos is both tangible and visible.

Senior staff within the school have worked hard to build effective partnerships with parishes, primary schools, other groups and organisations. The inter-faith work of the school is particularly impressive and it is commendable that the pupils are now able to benefit from the more diverse ethnicity of a nearby community like Sheffield because of the links created by school leaders. In addition, the very impressive charity work of children and staff helps ensure the school is outward looking with regular reminders of challenges and issues in other parts of the world.

The Religious Education Department is very well led by the Head of Department and enjoys high status in school. The staff work closely together on lesson planning, centralising resources and introducing new initiatives which was an area for development identified at the last inspection. As a result, the experience of pupils in lessons and their outcomes are outstanding. Self evaluation is embedded in the Department with robust systems in place to set targets, track progress and monitor the quality of Teaching and Learning. This ensures that the Department is continually moving forward and raising standards.

The School Chaplain has a very clear, aspirational vision for the ethos of the school which is described as, 'a spider's web that permeates all aspects of school life'. Great care and attention is given to all individuals within the school – "Where one is we all are". This spiritual vision for the Catholic life of the School demonstrates the desire to meet the spiritual needs of all members of the community along their journey of faith.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Key for inspection grades:

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

Overall effectiveness	1
The school's capacity for sustained improvement	1
How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups	1
<input type="checkbox"/> how well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	1
<input type="checkbox"/> the quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
<input type="checkbox"/> the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
<input type="checkbox"/> pupils' attainment in Religious Education	1
<input type="checkbox"/> the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school	1
<input type="checkbox"/> how well pupils respond to and participate in the school's collective worship	1
How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic Education	1
<input type="checkbox"/> the quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education	1
<input type="checkbox"/> the effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in Religious Education	1
<input type="checkbox"/> the extent to which the Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs	1
<input type="checkbox"/> the quality of collective worship provided by the school	1
How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the school	1
<input type="checkbox"/> how well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
<input type="checkbox"/> how well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
<input type="checkbox"/> the extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory and canonical responsibilities are met	2
<input type="checkbox"/> how well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and well-being	1
<input type="checkbox"/> how effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion.	1

Further copies of this report are obtainable from St Mary's Catholic High School or from the Diocese of Hallam Schools' Department, The Hallam Pastoral Centre, St Charles Street, Sheffield S9 3WU Tel: 0114 2566440.