



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST EDMUND'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL WOLVERHAMPTON

Inspection dates	24 th -25 th January 2013
Reporting Inspector	Janet Mellor
Assistant Inspector	Bernie Morton

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11-18 years
Number on roll	845
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mrs Margaret Gallagher
School address	Compton Park Compton Road West Wolverhampton WV3 9DU
Telephone number	01902 558888
E-mail address	enquiries@stedmunds.lppplus.net
Date of previous inspection	September 2009
DFE number	336 4605
Unique Reference Number	104400

Head Teacher	Ms Deirdre Finucane
---------------------	----------------------------

DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



Evidence

The inspection was carried out by two Diocesan Inspectors. The focus of the inspection was on the effectiveness and use of the school's self evaluation of Catholic life and religious education (RE). In order to validate the school's self evaluation of teaching and learning, the inspectors observed 9 part or whole RE lessons, completed a work scrutiny, and held discussions with pupils from a range of years in order to evaluate the impact both of teaching on their learning over time and of the provision for spiritual and moral development on their lives. Inspectors held meetings with governors, senior staff and other staff, with the lay chaplain and the priest chaplain. They attended 2 year group assemblies and tutor group prayers. They looked at a range of evidence related to the school's self evaluation together with RAISEonline, improvement planning, the RE curriculum and lesson planning. Alongside the validation of school self evaluation, the inspectors gathered evidence in order to focus on spiritual, moral and vocational development. This included observation of lessons in other curriculum areas, evidence of which will be shared with other diocesan schools.

Information about the school

St Edmund's is a smaller than average 11-18 comprehensive school, but which is growing in number owing to an increased PAN and a bigger sixth form. It is always well oversubscribed. About 60% of the pupils and 27% of the staff are baptised Catholics. There are 134 pupils in the Sixth Form. The profile of year groups varies considerably. Overall there are about equal numbers of boys and girls, though the Year 11 of 2011-12 had a significantly higher proportion of boys and middle ability pupils. The numbers of pupils with special needs and/or disabilities is rising but there is a greater percentage of pupils with higher levels of achievement in prior learning in the current Year 7 than the previous five year groups. The proportion of ethnic minority pupils is almost 50%. A growing proportion of pupils, currently around 20%, have English as a second language. Pupils come from increasingly deprived backgrounds and this is above the average national level.

Main Finding

In its self-evaluation the school judges that overall both its Catholic life and religious education are good, with the exception of attainment at GCSE which the school regards as satisfactory. In many aspects of the school's work there are also examples of outstanding practice. The leadership team and governors are highly committed to ensuring that the school's Catholic ethos under the motto of St Edmund Campion 'To Love and Serve the Lord' underpins every aspect of school life. The staff and the pupils work together very successfully in support of an inclusive and caring environment, in which religious education is very much enjoyed as a challenging and satisfying area of study, because of the high standards and commitment of teachers to their planning, resources and evaluation of provision. This is a lively Catholic learning community where pupils have a great respect the faith of others and are educated to have enquiring minds and a sense of responsibility for the created world and for their own faith development. Extensive planning is underway for the move to a new building in September 2013 and for the transformation to a multi-academy company with local Catholic primary schools. The school works with a nearby Anglican school to deliver Advanced Level religious studies.

School Self Evaluation

Self-evaluation is an increasingly firm tool in driving the school forward. In various ways the school is able to plan for improvement based on an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the quality of Catholic life, collective worship, pupils' spiritual, moral, and vocational development and the quality and outcomes in religious education. It rightly recognises that the next step is to draw these together more coherently. The range of talent within the staff is wisely and successfully employed in specific responsibilities linked to development planning. Governors share fully in this process of analysis and subsequent decision-making. The thoughtful evaluative approach of the headteacher towards the robust development of Catholic life in the school is crucial, as is the highly reflective work of the curriculum leader in religious education. His appointment to the leadership team with responsibility for spiritual, moral, social, cultural and vocational development is in response to recognition of the need to enhance the whole-school initiative. Mechanisms for progress in this area, beginning with a whole-school audit, are thorough and involve a staged approach. There is evaluation of each stage with the result that the next stage is accurately focussed.

At the last inspection the improvement of pupils' participation in collective worship was identified as a target. Good progress has been made in this area, and the school has clear strategies for further development of prayer life and provision for chaplaincy work. The other target of establishing greater consistency in planning and challenge in religious education has been met through detailed faculty planning, monitoring of teaching and pupil progress, and the sharing of resources.

The needs of pupils, their performance and outcomes in religious education are analysed thoroughly and this information is used in the raising achievement plan. Although the school is data-rich and well served by supportive colleagues, religious education does not yet set percentage based targets for improvement as was evident in another curriculum area, nor are planned interventions presented in a way that fully reflects the over-arching work for improvement which is apparent. Analysis of the fall in achievement at GCSE in 2012 lacked the rigour which has since been applied in order to understand more fully the outcomes. Evidence has been secured enabling a more accurate basis for the judgement that outcomes at GCSE are satisfactory. The need for a wider and more realistic base for estimating current performance and final grades has become clear, so that remedial action can be taken where pupils are underachieving. The faculty is now fully engaged in the school's recently introduced progress tracker from the start of Year 7 to GCSE entry, which requires and enables timely intervention on a faculty or wider level, and accommodates the varying profile of year groups, recognised as characteristic of the school.

In all other aspects of the self-evaluation documentation judgements are reliable, including where in the detail the school has identified excellent practice. Monitoring of teaching involves observation, feedback and target setting and there are opportunities for coaching and mentoring from identified lead practitioners, including a senior member of the religious education faculty. This is well documented, rigorous and effective, and has led to a culture of striving to be the best. Teachers also evaluate their own performance well and use evaluations of lessons in planning. Despite the instability caused by the long-term absence of two permanent members of the RE staff, bold decisions about the curriculum and assessment have been made which are based on the analysis of outcomes. In line with the whole-school policy, pupils' work from Year 7 is assessed with grades which indicate their progress towards GCSE and they are trained and assessed in skills for the GCSE examination. The opinions of the pupils are regularly consulted and inspectors confirm the judgements of the self-evaluation that they too are fully engaged in the process and rate religious education a most enjoyable and challenging subject. The response in the Sixth

Form is equally positive and the school has been able to adapt curriculum provision following evaluation of student progress and their requests for additional examination courses. The school works effectively with teachers in its partner Anglican school to analyse performance and plan for improvement in progress and attainment. Pupils at all stages take very seriously their commitment to contribute to evaluation and forward planning, including the Head Boy and Head Girl as associate governors of the school.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

Outcomes from religious education at GCSE have fluctuated since the last inspection and in 2012 were well below diocesan and national averages. Instability in staffing, difficulties with the syllabus and the profile of the year group have been given as the reasons for the dip in results last year. Decisions have now been made to work towards an alternative syllabus, and assessment styles from Year 7 ensure training in key skills for GCSE. The newly framed focus on tracking progress has been carefully introduced so that pupils understand how they are checked for movement from prior achievement at National Curriculum levels to projected GCSE grades. They enjoy this challenge, make good progress and are proud to be able to explain its benefits. At Advanced Level outcomes have risen and a pass grade for all who entered the examination is now a consistent feature. Students respond well to the challenges of debate about ethics and questions of life and death. Teachers work with the head of sixth form to further improve attendance at lessons. The school's policy of offering AS level Philosophy and Ethics as Sixth Form core religious education is proving very motivating and a group of pupils continue to study to A2 level alongside their option subjects with successful outcomes in the examination.

At St Edmund's pupils feel well cared for, respected and valued. It is a well-ordered community and pupils behave very well both in lessons and as they move around the school. There is excellent provision for the care of pupils' academic and pastoral needs, including the outstanding St Clare's Success Centre where pupils are nurtured in a specialised environment with the provision of excellent staffing and facilities. A pupil commented, 'The school never gives up on anyone'. Its link to the Catholic ethos of caring for those in need is clearly articulated, and lies at the heart of the school's mission. This was affirmed in the celebration of Mass in the centre for the staff and pupils who work there. The school has introduced new ways of delivering personal development programmes including consideration of vocation linked to the school motto. Students in the Sixth Form are fully aware of the requirements for their chosen career paths and see them as ways of serving others. Through various fund-raising activities, including for an orphanage in India, and through the performances of the school choir, pupils and students are involved in the local parishes and in community and international projects. These activities combine with their work in religious education to help them develop a mature sense of personal and global responsibility, and an acute awareness of the complex questions of the meaning of life.

Collective worship benefits from the work of the chaplaincy team though this does not yet involve pupils at the planning stage. The lay chaplain makes a highly significant contribution to the resources for tutor time prayers, extended prayer time, assemblies and Masses, despite the considerable limitations of her working time at the school. The priest chaplain has recently moved from the area and the school awaits a new appointment. He was well known throughout the school and his work to secure the development of its Catholic life was outstanding. There are excellent links with his parish in which the school is located. In particular his skill at facilitating the Sixth Form 'Brains Trust' was highly popular and effective. Mass is celebrated regularly in the school and pupils and staff state that the

¹ As the quality of the school self evaluation has been affirmed, the judgements in this section of the report conform largely to those of the school.

response is enthusiastic and prayerful. The year group assemblies are times of respectful quiet reflection.

The school's senior leaders and governors are highly effective in their roles. The governing body focuses on the Catholicity of the school in regular meetings. Governors have a range of talents and experience in promoting the school's Catholic ethos. The head teacher is especially skilled in developing the attributes of colleagues, making strategic decisions and viewing the school in a wide context. She has a thoughtful, firm and positive approach to leading the school into academy status with a group of Catholic primary schools, alongside the move to a new building.

Religious education is a very popular curriculum subject and the high standards of teaching are recognised by pupils. Teaching is consistently good and often better. Lessons are well planned and teachers are skilled at leading pupils through their work with varied approaches, very good resources and attention to those with special needs. Their subject knowledge is excellent and they have high expectations, for example in their use of specialised vocabulary and requests for detailed replies to questions. Work is marked carefully and with an indication of how to improve. Pupils make very good progress in lessons because they are well supported in their learning and they are committed to their work, but opportunities for independent learning and research, particularly for the most able pupils, are limited.

The curriculum is also a key factor in enabling good progress. In Year 7 the varied backgrounds and primary school experience of pupils are channelled into lessons where their attention is held and there is a clear focus on developing thinking skills. They are engaged throughout because the curriculum has high expectations and they are introduced to philosophical and ethical debate from the beginning of their time at the school. The curriculum is fully in line with the requirements of the Church and responds in a most appropriate manner to the experience of the pupils in their multi-ethnic environment by including work on other religions. Just as Catholic pupils view this as important and interesting, so pupils from other religions are keen to learn about the Catholic faith. Emphasis on the study of the Bible continues into the Sixth Form, and pupils are familiar with Sacred Scripture. Spiritual and moral development is a feature of lessons in many subjects other than religious education, for example drama, geography, history, and technology, and this is well co-ordinated and supported by the school's leadership team.

Recommendations

- Use a wider base for making realistic judgements of pupils' current performance so that interventions to advance achievement may be made at an early stage
- Set statistical targets in association with specific strategies for improvement so that success can be measured accurately
- Develop opportunities for independent learning and research in all key stages



Diocesan Education Service,
Don Bosco House,
Coventry Road,
Coleshill,
B46 3EA

March 2013

Dear Parents and Carers

Section 48 (Diocesan) Inspection of St Edmund's Catholic School, Wolverhampton, January 2013

I am writing this letter to share with you the findings of the diocesan inspection of your children's school. Diocesan inspection now explores in detail the school's own view of itself as expressed in its self-evaluation. For this reason, much of the report is more technical than used to be the case. You are still entitled to have a copy of the full report should you want one and it will be available on the school website or by request from the school office.

The school is a good Catholic school and its popularity is fully justified. Your children are being educated in an environment which is well ordered and where everyone is valued as a child of God. Pupils are very well cared for and their individual contribution to the life of the school is greatly respected. Whatever the needs and problems which the children encounter, whether it be in their personal or academic lives, the school seeks to respond in support and help. It does not give up on anyone.

Leadership of the school is a key strength and there is a firm determination to provide the best. Teachers analyse carefully what is being provided and achieved, and they are able to plan well for the future and implement change. The Catholic ethos of the school under the motto of St Edmund Campion 'to love and serve the Lord' is at the heart of all that is undertaken.

Pupils are given wide opportunities for their spiritual and moral development through the work of the chaplains and the religious education faculty, as well as other areas of the curriculum. There are many initiatives which enable pupils to grow in their sense of responsibility for their own lives and for local, national and international progress. Pupils learn a sense of planning for their futures in terms of how they can serve others and make a difference in the world. They have many opportunities during the week for quiet reflection and prayer, and they participate enthusiastically and respectfully.

Pupils say that they enjoy being at the school and especially their lessons in religious education. They have very good teachers, who support them in their learning and provide interesting and varied lessons where they make rapid progress. They are clear about how they can improve work and enjoy the challenge of debating some of life's most complex questions. There is an openness to discussion with overriding respect for other people's views and faith perspectives. Pupils feel included whatever their background.

We have made three recommendations in order to help the school in its progress and to ensure that examination results in religious education are always on target. We consider that pupils need to be given more opportunities for independent learning and research in religious education. We recommend that teachers take advantage of the range of data that is available in school to support all pupils at an early stage where their work is falling behind. We also have reflected on the planning for improvement and recommend that targets be set which are clearly measurable.

It has been a great pleasure to inspect the school. There was a warm welcome and teachers and pupils have worked well with us to enable us to reach our conclusions. We wish the school well in its transformation to academy status and in its move to the new building.

Yours sincerely

Janet Mellor
Diocesan Inspector