

DIOCESE OF HALLAM SCHOOLS' DEPARTMENT



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL
AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL
Chesterfield

School URN	112998
Name of Chairman of Governors	Fr. D. McGuire
Name of Head Teacher	Mr. T. Moore
Date of Inspection	6 November 2007
Section 48 Inspector	Ms. Rita Price

“... an enthusiasm for the things of God.”

INSPECTION REPORT

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 is an 11 – 18 Catholic comprehensive school and specialist language college serving families in the Diocese of Hallam. The school is popular and oversubscribed. It has 1269 pupils on roll including around 270 in the sixth form. The school's motto is taken from the Vatican Council, 'Gaudium et Spes' (Joy and Hope) and links education with the Church in the modern world. The school's mission statement has seven key principles all of which are rooted in Catholic belief and practice. St Mary's Catholic High School is closely linked with Burkina Faso, an extremely poor country in the North West of Africa where Saint Mary's is sponsoring a new school.

Saint Mary's enjoys attractive buildings and is situated close to the Peak National Park an area of outstanding natural beauty. The school draws pupils from a wide and socially mixed area. The school expects and achieves the highest standards, in behaviour and attitude, attendance and punctuality, achievement and in the quality of the learning environment. Staff and pupils work very hard and so the school describes itself as 'energetic' and 'a very happy, safe and successful school'. It attributes this to everyone and states, 'We are very proud of our school, its pupils and its staff'

Overall Effectiveness

The Inspection judges Saint Mary's to be an outstanding Catholic School. The ethos closely reflects the school's mission and concern for high standards in everything. This is a calm but strong community, optimistic, hard working and with very good behaviour. The governing body has worked hard to promote the school's mission, to resource the school well and to provide the best staff and the best learning environment. The head teacher provides outstanding Catholic leadership and is supported well by committed senior staff and leaders across the school. Pupils are able to flourish in Saint Mary's School. They are generous and keen to share within and beyond the school, and in remarkable ways. They receive many opportunities for their own spiritual and moral development. There is good provision for prayer and worship and teachers and pupils have clear responsibilities for its delivery. The school gains from having a lay chaplain and chaplaincy team. Religious education is well staffed, well resourced and very well led. Standards in religious education are outstanding and religious education is rightly, a leading department within the school

Improvements since last inspection

The school has maintained and increased the strengths identified during the previous inspection. Student progress and attainment at Key Stage 4 and at post 16 have continued to rise. The school has published information on religious education, clarified the role of the lay chaplain in terms of pastoral provision; introduced Mass for Year groups and included the Sunday Gospel in the Collective Act of Worship. Curriculum time for religious education has increased but needs still to be kept under review at Key Stage 3.

School's capacity for deepening the quality of education provided.

The school's capacity for improvement is outstanding. The school is confident in being able to move its self evaluation forward. The school will shortly appoint a new head and while this heralds a significant change for the school, there is confidence in the school's standards being well embedded and supported. Standards in religious education are outstanding and the department has priorities to continue this development. The school is committed to review and extending the range and experience of prayer in collective worship and is able to review and prioritise for future development. .

In order to sustain and further the work of the Catholic school, governors should seek to:

1. Move the Catholic school self evaluation forward by:-
 - involving and engaging (appropriately), governors, staff, pupils and parents and others,
 - over time, going deeper into each question to seek and name areas for development
 - evaluating the impact of what is done in the light of the school's mission.
2. Review the findings on prayer and worship to help identify the key initiatives, the steps forward and the leaders responsible.
3. Determine the most effective priorities for development in teaching and learning. Include the aim to centralise learning resources and also common lesson plans and consideration of new learning initiatives.

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

The school believes that leadership at all levels is positive and proactive in supporting the Christian ideals of the school. Governors are keen to come into school and to support the work of staff and pupils. Morale is high in the school and there is very good support for staff. Pastoral care and guidance systems support pupils well. Leaders, particularly senior staff and key post holders, are active in taking a lead on the Catholic life of the school. The head with senior leaders lead and support the religious ethos. They lead and take part in prayer and in school residential retreats. The lay chaplain is well-supported by the head and senior leaders and is able to influence decisions and developments. Leadership in religious education is outstanding. Standards reached in religious education are very high and there is very good support for the department and its work.

Religious leadership is strong and encouraged across the school and particularly among the pupils.

The school is very well regarded in the locality and there are very good links with parents, parishes and the Catholic community. The school takes trouble to obtain feedback. The school has worked hard to have no permanent exclusions in 10 years. The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities including fund raising. Pupils make a significant contribution to the local and wider community.

School's contribution to the promotion of Community Cohesion

There is a strong sense of community at St Mary's which is recognised and valued by students and staff. There are good relationships at all levels. Pupils work and generally socialise together very well. There are opportunities for senior students to act as mentors and to lead acts of worship. The pupil voice is heard and responded to through the school council where students see themselves as working together for the good of the school. Vulnerable pupils are well cared and pupils notice that the school is inclusive and fair to everyone. The school's contribution to community cohesion is

Saint Mary's Catholic High School, Chesterfield

exceptionally good. The school's initiative in providing a school and resources for another school in a poor country is evidence of the drive and commitment to helping good causes, and there are many examples of pupils volunteering and supporting charities and community work.

Collective Worship

The provision for prayer and worship is good with some very good initiatives. Daily prayer is well embedded in the school day. Staff members are clear about their responsibilities for class-based acts of worship and have access to resources and support. The school is very well supported by the priests who ensure that the Eucharist is central to the life of the school. Mass is offered weekly and at key points in the school and Church's year. The school knows the value and importance of well prepared liturgies in the school. There is increasing use of evaluation to help the way forward. The Chapel is well maintained and there are good opportunities provided for class use and individual visits. The Mass during inspection at lunchtime was well attended and very fitting. However the service took too long and this is a difficulty to be addressed.

The school has helped the students to take active roles in the work of chaplaincy and in leading prayer. Students' respond very well and are developing leadership in this area. Staff and pupils attend residential retreats. The lay chaplain and chaplaincy team are well supported. The lay chaplain leads with real commitment and interest. The opportunities for prayer, worship and retreats make a very good contribution to the students' spiritual and moral development.

Pupils participate well in collective worship, leading and joining in prayers, reading the scriptures and providing music and singing. The daily act of worship is well led and organised within a formal and respectful setting. Good attention is paid throughout and there is a clear emphasis on the Word of God in scripture. The school needs to consider what to do to develop this further, for example with a theme and focus, new prayers, the reading of the day, wider involvement, a link with the bulletin etc, and to draw on good practice. The inspection agrees with the school's own judgement that provision overall is good and in some areas very good.

Religious Education

How Well Learners' Achieve.

Standards in religious education are high across the school. Attainment in religious studies is outstanding at Key Stage 4 and the school enters the full cohort for GCSE. In 2007, 84% of pupils gained A*-C, which is well above national norms and 10% above the school's own targets (from Fisher Family Trust data). Of these pupils, 36% gained A* and A grades. Results at AS are also very good and 47 students were entered and passed. Of these, 91% gained the higher grades A-C. In Year 13, 36% of students who entered religious studies A2, gained A-C grades. Students in the sixth form also take part in a programme of general religious education.

At Key Stage 3 standards reached in class and in written work are very good. The school has taken care to assess pupils and to award them levels. There is evidence of pupils quickly grasping religious concepts and using language in written and oral work for example, on 'The Creed, and on Apostolic succession'. Pupils make very good progress. Pupils are attentive to challenge and they ask and answer questions well. The department has wisely focussed on assessment. This is helping pupils know how to improve and to reach new levels. This needs now to link closely with the strands in the new levels of attainment to deepen learning and widen religious literacy.

Pupils show increasing awareness of spiritual and moral matters and show high regard for one another and for the staff. The standard of behaviour and general courtesy in class and around the school is excellent.

Effectiveness of Teaching and Learning

Lessons observed during the inspection were good and mainly outstanding. Significant features were in the well ordered lessons, clarity of tasks, the high standard of classroom dialogue and the very good progress made by pupils. Teachers and pupils relate well and expectations are high across the school. Teachers show confidence in their subject knowledge and use questions and paired tasks well to interest the pupils in their learning. Teachers support the pupils well and generally explain and clarify appropriately. There is careful attention paid to the examination requirements at Key Stage 4. Occasional lapses in grammar and capital letters deserve attention.

Lessons have a clear focus but teachers ably broaden discussion to interest the learners. There is good use made of the learning resources with more potential use for the interactive whiteboard and more response to different learning styles. Teacher assessment is very good and encourages peer and self assessment. Marking of work is good overall with some excellent practice. Comments made by the teachers are supportive and encouraging, but they also give good guidance on how to improve. As a consequence of the very good teaching, effective learning takes place within the lessons.

In the sixth form A2 and AS courses, the effectiveness of teaching and learning is outstanding. The students showed real interest in the subject with well planned, stimulating lessons and good depth of subject knowledge shown by the teacher. A variety of activities were observed which engaged pupils in collaborative learning. Good questioning enabled good analysis and deepened learning.

The Quality of Provision for Religious Education.

The curriculum fulfils the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and the Curriculum Directory. There is sufficient time given to religious education at Key Stage 4 and at post 16 but this is slightly below at Key Stage 3. The curriculum is understood by all the teachers and attention is paid to the key learning outcome of religious literacy. It is organized around the life and teachings of Jesus and the Church and the celebrations and way of life of Catholics who follow that teaching. The curriculum enables the pupils to make very good progress and to reach their high standards in public examinations. Provision of courses in the sixth form is outstanding addressing the needs of students opting for A Level and coverage of the general sixth form religious education. The curriculum makes a very good contribution to the spiritual and moral development of pupils. The department is wisely moving to centralize learning resources and is also making increasing use of technology. There is the opportunity to focus on common lesson plans. This would help all teachers to work more closely and to innovate more easily the new learning strategies.

Leadership and Management in Religious Education

Leadership and management of religious education are outstanding. The department has been well supported by governors, who receive regular reports, and by the school's leadership. There are four specialist rooms. Commitment from the head of department has enabled the growth of a strong and well qualified team. The head of department shares a strong sense of mission with very good experience and sets an agenda and example to other teachers. Monitoring and evaluation of the provision in the department is very good and there is good attention to performance management. The subject is managed very well. The inclusion of all learners is central and pupils of all abilities are taught well. The quality of leadership in religious education is also reflected in the pupils' very positive attitudes to the subject and in their staff. Team work is strong and purposeful.

Summary of Inspection Findings

The overall effectiveness of the school as a Catholic School is Outstanding
Leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding.
The provision for Collective Worship is good with some outstanding features.
The school's contribution towards Community Cohesion is outstanding.
Achievements and standards in Religious Education are outstanding.
Provision for Religious Education is outstanding.
The Religious Education curriculum in meeting learners' needs and interests is outstanding.
Leadership and management of Religious Education are outstanding.

Key for inspection grades: - Grade 1: Outstanding; Grade 2: Good; Grade 3: Satisfactory; Grade 4: Inadequate. (Grade 0: means point not included in this Inspection)

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective and efficient is the provision of Catholic education in meeting the needs of learners and why?	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the overall effectiveness of the provision for the Catholic life of the school/college and of curriculum religious education and its main strengths and areas for development 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the effectiveness of steps taken to promote improvement since the last inspection 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the capacity to make further improvements 	1

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

How effective are leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school?	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> how well the governing body fulfils its role in relation to the school's Catholic foundation 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> how effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality care and education 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the quality of the leadership of the head teacher and senior staff in leading and developing the Catholic life of the school 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> how effectively leadership at all levels in the school promotes learners' spiritual and moral development 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the impact of the involvement of the chaplaincy team on the work of the school 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> how effectively the Catholic life of the school is monitored and evaluated 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> how effectively leadership at all levels promotes the school's contribution to social cohesion 	1
How good is the quality of Collective Worship?	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the frequency and quality of the provision for prayer, Collective Worship and liturgical life of the school 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> learners' response to the school's provision 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> how well Collective Worship contributes to the spiritual and moral development of the learner 	1

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

How well do learners achieve in religious education?	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> learners' success in achieving challenging targets including qualifications and learning goals, with trends over time and any significant variations between groups of learners 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the standards of learners' work 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> learners' progress relative to their prior attainment and potential, with any 	1

<i>significant variations between groups of learners</i>	
• <i>the extent to which learners enjoy their work</i>	1
• <i>the behaviour of learners</i>	1
• <i>learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</i>	1
• <i>the extent to which learners' contribute to the school and broader community</i>	1
How effective are teaching and learning in religious education?	1
• <i>how well teaching is used to meet learners' needs and curriculum requirements</i>	1
• <i>the suitability and rigour of assessment in planning, monitoring and informing learners' progress</i>	1
• <i>the identification of, and provision for, additional learning needs</i>	1
• <i>the involvement of parents and carers in their children's learning and development</i>	1
How well does the religious education curriculum meet the needs and interests of learners?	1
• <i>the extent to which the religious education curriculum matches learners' aspirations and potential, building on prior attainment and experience</i>	1
• <i>how far the religious education curriculum meets external requirements and is responsive to local circumstances</i>	1
• <i>the extent to which learners are gaining a knowledge and developing an understanding of the teachings, beliefs, values and way of life of other world faiths</i>	2
• <i>the suitability of family life and sex education, education in personal relationships and citizenship education</i>	0
• <i>the extent to which the curriculum in religious education contributes to the spiritual and moral development of the learners</i>	1
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners in Religious Education?	1
• <i>how effectively subject leaders in religious education lead and support their staff</i>	1
• <i>how effectively performance in religious education is monitored and improved through quality assurance and self-assessment</i>	1
• <i>how well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve their potential</i>	1
• <i>the adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are well taught</i>	1
• <i>the adequacy and suitability of learning resources and accommodation</i>	1
• <i>how effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve high standards</i>	1
• <i>the effectiveness with which governors discharge their responsibilities</i>	1

Data about the school

Type of School	Secondary Comprehensive and Voluntary Aided
Age profile of Students	11- 18
Number on roll	1277
Number of Students on Special Educational Needs Register	112
Number of Students with a Statement of Special Educational Needs	19
Number of Catholics on roll	1106
Number of Other Christian Denominations	149
Number of other Faiths	14
School address	Newbold Road, Upper Newbold, Chesterfield, Derbyshire. S41 8AG
Telephone Number	01246 201191
Fax Number	01246 279205
Email	
Website	
