

DIOCESE OF HALLAM SCHOOLS'
DEPARTMENT



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL
AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

NOTRE DAME HIGH SCHOOL

FULWOOD ROAD, SHEFFIELD S10 3BT

School URN	107159
Name of Chairman of Governors	Rev. Fr. Peter J. Cullen
Name of Headteacher	Mr Jim M. Conway
Date of Inspection	2 nd – 3 rd November 2005
Section 48 Inspector	Mr D. Corey

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

Introduction

The Inspection of Notre Dame 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.

Information about the school

Type of School	Secondary, Voluntary Aided, Co-educational, Comprehensive
Age profile of Students	11 – 19 years
Number on roll	1289
Number of Students on Special Educational Needs Register	162
Number of Students with a Statement of Special Educational Needs	14
Number of Catholics on roll	1020 (79%)
Number of Other Christian Denominations	256 (20%)
Number of other Faiths	2
School address	Fulwood Road Sheffield S10 3BT
Telephone Number	0114 2302536
Fax Number	0114 2308833
Email	school@notredame-high.co.uk
Website	www.notredame-high.co.uk

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

How effective and efficient is the provision of Catholic education in meeting the needs of learners?

The provision of Catholic education at Notre Dame High School is outstanding. The school offers a rich range of innovative and imaginative religious experiences, the quality of which is such that it continually inspires students to reflect, consider and act upon gospel values. The school community is calm and caring, creating an environment which is conducive to the spiritual and moral development of all its members.

Although there is currently a considerable number of staff and students actively involved in religious activities, the school rightly recognises in its self-evaluation that it will endeavour to ensure that these experiences have an impact on all members of the community.

Religious education in the school is very effective in developing student skills in the study of religious concepts and also makes an immense contribution to their spiritual and moral development. The standard of achievement of students who have benefited from a full seven years of religious education at Notre Dame is truly outstanding, as evidenced in their A2 results (A-levels) and witnessed in a lesson during inspection.

The effectiveness of any steps taken to promote improvement since the last inspection

The most significant issues identified for improvement in the last inspection report have been addressed with openness, and successful outcomes achieved.

This was particularly evident in the quality of assemblies and other liturgical activities which now are the subject of continuous and rigorous review and evaluation. A well structured and themed rota for assemblies has been set in place and evaluation is gathered from participants after liturgies and acts of collective worship. The programme of retreats for all Key Stages has been extended and the intensity of student involvement is a great credit to the staff who put so much time, effort, and professional skill into the planning and facilitating of these enriching occasions. In religious education there is now greater focus on learning objectives, an enhancement of resources and the establishment of a more robust assessment process. Clear policies for spiritual and moral development have also been established after due consultation among governors and staff. Perhaps most significant is the appointment of a chaplaincy coordinator whose enthusiastic vision and support from the rest of the chaplaincy team combine to provide high quality spiritual experiences which have a tangible impact on the Catholic life of the school.

The school acknowledges that further links with parishes would benefit students in their religious development. The religious education department has planned to improve consultation with feeder primary schools to assist the measurement of religious awareness on entry at year seven.

The capacity to further deepen the quality of Catholic education

The governors, headteacher, senior and middle management have an inspirational impact on the school. Through a culture of open, honest and thorough evaluation of all aspects of the life of the school, they have demonstrated their capacity to enhance even further the quality of Catholic education.

Whilst claiming a soundly justified success in many areas of the Catholic life of the school, the leadership and management acknowledge the need to continue to apply its practice of rigorous self-evaluation, so that the best possible impact is achieved on the whole school community.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

How effective are leadership and management in the development of the Catholic life of the school?

The effectiveness of leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The governors' commitment to promoting the Catholic life is primarily shown in the designation of the Chair of Governors as the governor with responsibility for "ethos". In this role, he is a member of the Liturgical Planning Group, which meets to review and plan the liturgical events at regular termly intervals throughout the year. The membership of this group, which includes the headteacher and other senior staff, as well those with direct responsibility for liturgical events, reflects the high regard which the school places on all matters of a religious nature.

The Mission Statement is known, referred to and lived at every possible occasion during the school day. The school's assertion that the mission statement is "the engine house" of all that they do, was borne out by witnessed examples during the inspection. The school's review systems are pursued with relentless commitment in search of the best strategies to promote gospel values. The views of parents and the wider community are sought in the process of proposing relevant initiatives. The headteacher and senior management team support and encourage staff involved with the Catholic life activities, not just as responsible professionals, but in a manner which is genuinely warm and personally felt. The school has built up a strong chaplaincy team, under the direction of the chaplaincy coordinator, to include staff and students, the latter being active in "peer" support for younger students. One example of an effective initiative in this area, is the school's arrangement with Sheffield University students, to act as peer mentors and Christian role models for Notre Dame students. The

appointment of an assistant headteacher with responsibility for "Ethos, Teaching and Learning and Community", is further evidence of the governors' commitment to the Catholic life of the school.

The school improvement plan includes the declaration to continue and extend these practices. A specific commitment to explore possible ways of developing school links with parishes for the wider benefit of the students is recommended.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL: COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

How good is the quality of Collective Worship?

The quality of collective worship at Notre Dame High School is outstanding. There are frequent and routine practices within the school's timetable and Liturgical Calendar for students to reflect and pray on a daily basis. These are occasions when traditional Catholic prayers are said with enthusiasm and reverence. Staff and student participation in the planning and presentation of these events is a regular practice in the school. Students engage willingly, eagerly and with confidence. The school also offers to all students other experiences of a spiritual and moral nature which are organised in such a way as to be acutely inspirational. These acts of collective worship occur during the year, group retreats, alternative curriculum days, and in a particularly moving way through two specific occasions: the annual "Battlefields" visit offered by the history department and the Shoah ceremony which reflects on the holocaust. These examples are indicative of the rich range and depth of awareness and commitment to worship and spiritual development across the school curriculum. These events raise awareness and build confidence in students allowing them to reflect on issues, assimilate them and live them out in their personal, school and wider lives as evidenced by their reverent and often emotive responses.

The school has developed a rigorous system to continue to monitor and evaluate Collective Worship with a view to devising techniques which will reach out and touch the lives of the whole school community.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

How well do learners achieve in Religious Education?

Whilst overall achievement and standards are outstanding the school has identified and addressed elements of this area which are less than outstanding.

At Key Stage Three students achieve extremely well and progress in the religious education skills of knowledge, understanding and evaluation in a manner consistent with their ability. The religious education department has recently devised and set in place a more thorough assessment procedure to measure achievement. This is already proving more effective, particularly in year seven.

At Key Stage Four the school has identified and targeted a small group of middle to lower ability students who have failed to achieve their expected level at GCSE. The department has been focussed in analysing this relative weakness and in setting up procedures to reduce the barriers to development for this group. Consequently the GCSE results of 2005 have seen a significant improvement.

At Key Stage Five, students who study Theology to A Level perform exceptionally well. This is a strength of the department. Their outstanding results in the top grades at A2 (A-levels) are achieved not only by virtue of their own ability but also as a consequence of the excellent teaching skills of the religious education department staff.

In the Sixth Form all students follow a core course in "Philosophy and Ethics". Evidence gained during inspection showed that the majority enjoy this experience, participate with interest, and many accept the opportunity to enter modules of their work for accreditation at AS level. This course is influential in raising interest among sixth formers in current affairs which in turn has led to many activities of a campaigning nature, like "Make Poverty History". Throughout the school the religious education department is highly instrumental in motivating students who make a considerable contribution to the school and broader community in the shape of charity events and campaigns.

At all Key Stages students enjoy religious education and respond very well to the range of tasks, teaching styles and resources presented to them in lessons. The department has already included in its development plan the need to embed its new assessment procedures at Key Stage Three and to monitor closely the identified group at Key Stage Four.

QUALITY OF PROVISION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

How effective are teaching and learning in Religious Education?

Teaching and learning throughout all Key Stages at Notre Dame are outstanding. The department has introduced principles that ensure lessons are consistently and thoroughly prepared to match the ability and interests of the students. Lessons were generally shown to be presented with the best professional practice, stimulating and challenging students at an appropriate pace. The impact of recent Assessment for Learning plans, although not fully embedded, are beginning to show results at Key Stage Three. Assessment is effectively used to support and encourage students. Differentiation is evident in the way students are supported individually both by teachers and very capable and knowledgeable learning support assistants. Systems are in place to consult and inform parents regarding the progress of their children. Evidence from parents during the inspection corroborated the school's excellent practice in this regard, highlighting the regular use of the Student Journal.

The department has planned to enhance the already good range of teaching styles and to share the excellent teaching evident in some lessons across the department.

How well does the Religious Education curriculum meet the needs and interests of the learners?

The religious education curriculum is outstanding in meeting the needs and interests of learners. Schemes of work at Key Stage Three have been reviewed and now offer an exciting and well structured course for all students at this age. Although the course is not a designated Catholic course the department have appropriately amended and amplified it to meet the requirements of the Catholic Curriculum Directory. The allocation of time for religious education at Key Stage Three is marginally below the expectation of the Bishops' Conference, however this does not have a significant effect on achievement. The scheme of work at Key Stage Four is also appropriate and challenging for the modern teenager. In both phases the school has rightfully included a strong component on multi-faith issues to meet the needs of young people living in a multi-faith society. Indeed, the school has created a 'Faith Garden' and a highly visual display in its City Learning Centre to promote respect for, and appreciation of, other faiths.

The Religious Education Department's contribution to Personal Social and Health Education is both direct, in addressing many similar issues, especially at Key Stage Four, and indirect, in sharing relevant expertise with staff responsible for the Personal Social and Health Education programme. The Sixth Form Curriculum, when discussed with a group of students, was judged to be stimulating and interesting.

The department will continue to use the school's review systems to evaluate the appropriateness of the curriculum across all phases.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners in Religious Education?

The effectiveness of leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners in religious education at Notre Dame is outstanding. The Head of Religious Education and the assistant head responsible for 'Ethos, Teaching and Learning, and Community' have demonstrated strong leadership skills in carrying out thorough analytical reviews of departmental issues and consulting widely. They have introduced recent strategies on 'Assessment for Learning', target-setting, and others, to promote improved standards. They are both adept teachers and act as excellent role models within the department and across the school. The governors, headteacher, and senior management team regard the Religious Education Department as central to both the academic and Catholic life of the school. They are closely involved with its monitoring and self-

evaluation annually, as well as with the more rigorous two year cycle which is applied to all departments. Full support and any necessary funding are provided to see initiatives through to fulfilment.

The leadership of the school endeavours to recruit and appoint the best possible teachers and will continue to seek to staff the Religious Education Department with specialists to maintain the excellent current standards.

Summary of Inspection Judgements:	
Overall Effectiveness	Outstanding
The Catholic Life of the School	
How effective are leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school?	Outstanding
How good is the quality of Collective Worship?	Outstanding
Religious Education	
How well do learners achieve in Religious Education?	Outstanding
How effective are teaching and learning in Religious Education?	Outstanding
How well does the RE curriculum meet the needs and interests of learners?	Outstanding
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners in Religious Education?	Outstanding

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