

Archdiocese of Cardiff



Inspection Report

St Mary's Roman Catholic High School Lugwardine

Inspection dates	3 - 4 March 2014
Reporting Inspector	A Fowler
Accompanying Inspector	P Pavlovic
Type of school	Secondary
Age range of pupils	11-16
Number on roll	742
Local Authority	Herefordshire
Chair of Governors	Pat Burbidge
School Address	Lugwardine, Hereford, Herefordshire, HR1 4DR
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Parishes served	St Francis Xavier, Hereford Our Lady Queen of Martyrs, Hereford St Michael and all Angels, Belmont Abbey St Joseph's, Bromyard St Thomas of Hereford, Weobley The Most Holy Trinity, Ledbury St Ethelbert, Leominster St Frances of Rome, Ross-on-Wye
Date of previous inspection	2 - 3 October 2007
Headteacher	Clive Lambert

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archdiocese of Cardiff and Inspection of denominational education under Section 50 of the Education Act 2005

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on prospects for improvement.

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector leading practice or practise that is both consistent and highly effective.
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The table below shows the terms that Archdiocesan inspectors use and a broad idea of their meaning. It is for guidance only.

Proportion	Description
With very few exceptions	Nearly all
90% or more	Most
70% or more	Many
60% or more	A majority
Close to 50%	Half/around half
Below 40%	A minority
Below 20%	Few
Less than 10%	Very few

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Archdiocesan website: www.rcadc.org

Context

The school is smaller than most secondary schools though pupil numbers have risen since the last inspection. The proportions of children with special needs, those on school action plus, children on the pupil premium register and pupils with disabilities are all below average. Approximately 60% of the pupils are baptised Catholics. Within the last three years there have been two major buildings projects including the provision of a new chapel which enhances the opportunities for prayer and worship. In September 2010 the school established a link with St Joseph's Primary School in Ross-on-Wye and the headteacher leads and manages both schools. In April 2012 the two schools became a federation under one governing body. The principles of '*Self Determination Theory*' were introduced into learning by the school leadership in order to increase motivation and autonomy of learning within the student body. The school has made clear connections between this approach and the Catholic ethos, helping all departments appreciate the distinctive nature of the school. The school has involved parents in this process by, amongst other things, creating a website, (www.learningandthinking.co.uk) and holding meetings to explain the theory. The school became a National Support School and the head a National Leader of Education in March 2013. From October 2013 as part of the work involved in being a National Support School the school took on the role of supporting a Church of England academy. The school enjoys considerable support from both parents and pupils and continues to meet high academic targets.

Summary

How effective is the school in providing Catholic education?	Excellent
The school provides an excellent Catholic education because: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• governors and school leaders have a clear and developing vision for the Catholic life of the school.• through its work the Religious Education department is able to challenge students to make connections between faith and life as well as ensure excellent results.• chaplaincy provision ensures prayer is embedded in the life of the school and creates a variety of opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own faith development.• pastoral systems within the school ensure pupils feel valued, included, and safe and identify with the school vision.	
What are the school's prospects for improvement?	Excellent
The school has excellent prospects to continue to develop because: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the Students are supportive and motivated.• parents are supportive of the school and the numbers of students on roll has increased.• the leadership team is committed to developing the distinctiveness of the school and able to model the school's core values.• recent initiatives from the school's leadership have focused specifically on spirituality• the Religious Education department is constantly seeking ways to challenge students and improve their work.	

Recommendations and Required Actions
What does the school need to do to improve further? <p>R1: Develop structured approaches to evaluating the distinctive nature of the school.</p> <p>R2: Further develop students' opportunities and skills in planning and leading prayer and worship.</p> <p>R3: Ensure systems within the Religious Education department for reviewing work are more formal</p> <p>R4: Ensure that Parents are fully aware of the schools Sex and Relationship education programme.</p>

What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

Progress in addressing the recommendations will be monitored by the Archdiocese.

Main Findings

KQ1. How good are outcomes?

Excellent

All students observed and interviewed were not only enthusiastic about their Religious Education lessons but were thoroughly engaged in the process of learning. They were clear about the value of Religious Education and spoke of the difference they thought it made to their ability to have an informed view on current moral or political issues. They were able to speak knowledgeably and articulately about specifically religious concepts and relate previous learning to current concepts. As an example students were aware of the controversy in some circles between faith and science and spoke of how work with Dr Andrew Pinsent (from the Ian Ramsey centre at Oxford) had helped them gain a new perspective on views often expressed in the media by secular scientists. All students interviewed or observed understood the need to take responsibility for their own learning and were able to speak with confidence about the steps needed to improve their learning. The staff foster a culture of self- and peer-evaluation and through the skills they bring to bear in the classroom are able to encourage pupils to develop higher order skills and ask relevant questions about their work. The school as a whole has a focus on developing virtue and this was reflected in the content of the Religious Education lessons, encouraging students to view their behaviour and examine motives and drivers of their actions through the lens of Catholic teaching. This ensures that religious education is making a positive contribution to the moral and spiritual development of students.

In Key Stage 3 (KS3), lessons are based on ICONS but supplemented by additional work and students complete assessments based on NBRIA levels of attainment. Standards from these assessments are excellent. All groups of pupil achieve well. Written feedback ensures that pupils understand the level at which they are working and have clear ideas of how to improve. On a few occasions the general work in the books does not reach the standards of the assessments or the level of oral work within the group however staff are already aware of this and are moving towards the new KS3 syllabus which should provide more consistency. At GCSE the majority of students are studying for the full course and are well motivated and keen to succeed. Excellent work by the staff ensures that students are able to articulate and understand a Catholic ethical viewpoint even if the syllabus specifications do not require this. As a result they are confident in their views and able to make critical evaluations of current issues.

Students are extremely proud of their school and its ethos; they are able to explain why it is distinctive. They clearly understand that faith affects the way you live your life. This has a clear impact on the high standard of behaviour

and the care and respect they show to each other and to the adults in the school. In discussions students said that the school was a real community where people cared about each other and there no bullying within the school. If they ever had a problem then all students understood the mechanisms for getting help. Year 11 pupils act as prefects and house captains taking responsibility for organising events and supporting younger students. Within each form there is a class prefect who takes responsibility for different activities. The school has a system known as SMART L where there are designated older students identified by badges who are there to support younger students with their concerns. The older students receive training delivered by the school counsellor in order to develop their skills. These school initiatives help ensure the students have opportunities to take responsibility and empathise with others. Slightly less clear is the effectiveness of the Student Council and the school may need to review this. At present the school collects students' views in an informal way but this area needs to be developed. Through initiatives from the Science department students are encouraged to develop an awareness of issues around sustainability and care for creation. At present, for example, they are undertaking a project to cut down electricity usage within the school and the gardening club focuses on developing eco-friendly ways of raising crops. The impact of these schemes is to focus students' attention on issues around development and the need to respond to environmental concerns.

All students interviewed valued and participated in a large number of initiatives run by the Religious Education department and the school chaplain. This includes pilgrimages, retreats, (both day and residential), World Youth Day, Flame and specific events to celebrate the Year of Faith. These events introduce students to the wider faith community, helping them understand and reflect on traditional practices within the church and providing opportunities to develop their own spirituality. Within form groups they are given the opportunity to lead and plan prayer and worship and individual form groups lead prayer for their year group. The work the school has begun in this area, of students leading prayer, needs to be strengthened and students given more opportunities to further develop their skills. The enthusiastic and hardworking chaplain has made a significant contribution to the opportunities available to students and is also working with the deanery to offer students more opportunities to connect with the parishes. This should make an impact on their awareness of the work of the local churches. The prayer life of the school is making a significant contribution to students' spiritual and moral development. The students demonstrate their concern for others through their charity work for both international and local charities.

KQ2. How good is provision?**Excellent**

The school has three full-time specialist Religious Education teachers and three part time teachers. The Religious Education staff are passionate about faith and learning and this makes an impact on the students' learning. Students are aware that faith matters and changes lives. The subject knowledge of staff is excellent and they are constantly striving to make work relevant to students' lives. The recently introduced topic of the Theology of the Body is an example of this and parents too have had the opportunity to understand more about this.

Teaching within the department was never less than good with outstanding elements. Lessons were lively and interactive, with an emphasis on a wide variety of techniques to promote active learning and student involvement. Students are encouraged not to be passive observers but active participants in their own studies. The department uses paired and group work to good effect. Resources, including technology, are used well to maximise learning. In the lessons observed students were involved in evaluating how well they achieve and they can speak confidently about the quality of their work and how it can be improved. Resources for staff to use are stored on a shared area and all staff contribute to this. Differentiation within lessons is mainly by outcome and staff need to give further thought to how this might be strengthened. Within Key Stage 3 Icons is used as the base syllabus. The staff adapt this to suit the needs of their students. At times the activities provided by the Icons programme are not sufficiently challenging or targeted at appropriate levels. Although the year 10 syllabus (Luke's Gospel and ethics) is not directly fulfilling the requirements of the curriculum directory the dedication and subject knowledge of the staff in extending the remit of the course ensures that what is delivered in the classroom does fulfil the requirements of the directory.

The department uses both formal and informal strategies for giving academic guidance to students, which ensures they are able to talk about their own learning. Within the lessons observed there were frequent demonstrations of good practice as students were encouraged to peer- or self-assess their work and knowledge. The school has developed a computer-based data portfolio, which enables assessment data across the school to be stored and every pupil tracked. This information is used to promote improvement and to sustain standards. Although the RE department receives only 8% of curriculum time in Key Stage Three it does receive 12% of Curriculum time in Key Stage Four ensuring that overall Bishops' Conference requirements are met.

The Chaplain provides a variety of opportunities for prayer, plans and leads day retreat days and organises a variety of residential retreats. She has organised trips to World Youth Day in Madrid and to Flame. Her significant contribution to the Catholic life of the school and her support of both students and staff is very much appreciated by all within the school community. Pupils are offered excellent opportunities to improve spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. The school's beautiful chapel in which the Blessed Sacrament is reserved creates a prayerful and reflective space. Although students work with the chaplain in an informal way, it may be worth considering further developing this so that student involvement in chaplaincy is further encouraged and celebrated.

Prayer and acts of collective worship are central to the life of the school and a key part of every celebration and meeting. Before each staff briefing a member of staff leads prayer. The school has had INSET on how to plan and lead acts of worship which was well received. The themes of all acts of worship are appropriate to the liturgical life of the Church and relevant to the lives of the pupils. However the school does need to make certain it keeps the distinction between prayer and ‘inspiring thoughts’. Voluntary Mass is celebrated every week.

KQ3. How good are leadership and management?	Good
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Governors are supportive of the headteacher, enjoy constructive relationships with staff and appreciate their efforts and achievements. They are committed and dedicated in their approach to their duties. They believe the development of the Catholic Life of the school to be of utmost importance and the Safeguarding committee oversees the development of spirituality amongst the students and staff. There is a new link governor for Religious Education in place. The governing body has recently approved a change to the GCSE Religious Education syllabus and oversees the development of the relationship programme. They receive regular reports from the headteacher on the progress of students within Religious Education. Governors fulfil all Bishops’ Conference requirements. At present their mechanisms for evaluating the impact of strategies to support Catholic life are informal and this needs further development.

The headteacher has a clear vision of Catholic Education and models for others within the community the values he encourages people to put into place. The school has adopted a learning strategy called Self Determination Theory to increase students’ autonomy in learning through considering motivation and resilience amongst pupils. Central to its implementation has been a clear desire to link this to the school’s strong Catholic ethos. Highlighting the need to be explicit over Gospel values, the school is connecting the development of virtue (the embedding of those values we profess in our decision making process) with the strategies for developing motivation and resilience. This ensures that the development of spirituality within the life of the school is given a high profile. Heads of departments are encouraged and questioned as to how they make this explicit within their subject. One of the joint heads of Religious Education has also provided inset for heads of departments about how to embed distinctiveness effectively within their subject areas. The effect of these strategies and the evaluation of the Catholic life of the school as a whole is carried out in an informal way and there needs now to be some thought given as to how this might be carried out in a more systematic and structured way.

The Religious Education department has a shared leadership with one person being responsible for Key Stage 3 and another for Key Stage 4. They work well together, share a common vision and are keen to drive Religious Education forward. Meetings are held on a regular basis though much support for staff is given in an informal way. Systems are in place for tracking and monitoring student progress. Assessments are robust and contribute to student progress.

Relationships between staff and students are always positive and contribute to the excellent work taking place in lessons. Lesson observations are carried out but should include all staff even those who teach little RE. At present the work in students' books is monitored in an informal way and there needs to be a more robust system in place for carrying this out and some thought needs to be given to the effectiveness of marking as a tool for improving learning. The department has already identified for itself and prioritised some areas for development including the effective use of homework.

Leaders and managers promote inclusion of all as a central goal. They create a sense of shared vision. There is a strong sense of belonging to the school family. Relationships between pupils are positive, as are relationships between students and teachers. The school works well with other groups. The head is a national leader and the school has recently begun supporting a Church of England school facing difficulties. St Joseph's primary school in Ross-on-Wye is now federated with St Mary's and the school has been supporting St Joseph's to make progress with their pupils. St Mary's has been a venue for joint inset with other local Catholic headteachers and organised events to celebrate 150 years of Catholic Education in Herefordshire. Students from the school have taken part in international and national Catholic events for young people. The school community supports various local and national charities including CAFOD and the local hospice. The students respond with generosity. Recently speakers on *The Theology of the Body* and *Faith and Science* have spoken not only to the school community but also to the local parishes, helping to strengthen links. The school has a close relationship with Belmont Abbey and members of the community support chaplaincy work within the school. A link with a school in Tanzania helps raise awareness of international issues as does the work done through Religious Education about other faiths, religions and cultures. The school, recognising the primary role of parents in the education of their children as well as the fact that many of the children do not come from Catholic families, tries to devise strategies to support all parents.

Appendix 1

Responses to parent questionnaires

There were 36 responses. All the responses were positive about the school. 5 parents identified the need to be more informed about the school's Sex and Relationship Education policy.

Parents stated that they chose the school for its Catholic ethos and its strong academic and pastoral programmes. They believed what was distinctive about the school was, amongst other aspects, its strong focus on respect for all and treating people as individuals.

Appendix 2

Evidence Base

- The school's self-evaluation reports and other documentation
- Meetings with the headteacher, heads of Religious Education, chaplain, other members of the Religious Education department and staff from other departments.
- Meetings with governors
- Lesson observations
- Scrutiny of planning and assessment
- Scrutiny of pupils' work
- Attendance at year assemblies and classroom based acts of worship
- Discussions with pupils
- Parent questionnaire returns