



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST AUGUSTINE'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL REDDITCH

Inspection dates	4 th -5 th March 2014
Reporting Inspector	John Lally
Assisting Inspector	Toni Ellis

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	14-19 years
Number on roll	846
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mr Michael Dean
School address	Stonepits Lane Hunt End Redditch Worcs B97 5LX
Telephone number	01527 550400
E-mail address	saints@st-augustines.worcs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	May 2009
DFE School number	885/5400
Unique Reference Number	116997

Headteacher	Mr A F Quinn
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DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



Introduction

The inspection was carried out by 2 Diocesan Inspectors. The focus of the inspection was on the effectiveness and use of the school's self evaluation of religious education (RE) and Catholic life. To validate the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation of teaching and learning, the inspectors observed 8 RE lessons, including 4 joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. In addition the inspectors completed a work scrutiny and held a discussion with students to evaluate the impact of teaching on their learning. They held meetings with staff, the chair of governors and another governor, the school chaplain, the acting lay chaplain and the chaplaincy team. They observed form and year group worship and a school Mass for Ash Wednesday. They looked at a range of evidence related to the school's self-evaluation such as RAISEonline, the development plan, the school's analysis of lesson observations, and teachers' planning.

Information about the school

St Augustine's is a 14-19 comprehensive school with 846 students, 49% of whom are baptised Catholics. There are 223 in the sixth form. Most students are White British with the remainder being from other White or Asian backgrounds. The proportion of students supported through school action is below average, and the proportions supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are broadly average. A below average proportion of students at the school are known to be eligible for free school meals. 30% of the staff are Catholic with a high proportion of other staff with a religious affiliation. At the time of the inspection there was no head of religious education, oversight of the department resting with the deputy headteacher. A new appointment of a head of RE and Catholic life has been made for Whitsun 2014. The school will shortly become part of the Our Lady of Lourdes Multi-Academy Company in association with 2 first schools and a middle school serving Redditch and Bromsgrove.

Main Finding

In its self-evaluation the school judges itself to be good in both its Catholic life and in the provision of and outcomes from religious education. These judgements by the senior leaders are accurate and are based on a growing, though not yet complete, evidential base. The school recognises the strengths of the well-established Catholic ethos of the school, which it might easily have judged to be outstanding, particularly in relation to the commitment and participation of the students. Governors, too, provide a very strong core of support for the maintenance of the Catholicity of St Augustine's. While in its Catholic life there is a wealth of good practice and many opportunities offered to the students, the evaluation tends too much to the descriptive of what happens with less attention to the quality and outcomes from Catholic life. Senior leadership monitoring and evaluation of religious education is good and its strengths and development needs are known. Departmental self review is less secure relying too much on fairly narrow analysis of examination data at GCSE, despite the extent of data which the school has available. Performance and evaluation of theology in the sixth form are outstanding as they were at the last inspection.

School Self Evaluation

After a period of change in which there was a significant turnover of staff and which saw the departure of the school chaplain, lay chaplain and head of religious education, St Augustine's is now entering a period of greater stability for the Catholic life and RE. During this time, while self evaluation has not been neglected, attention has been appropriately focused on securing the provision for the students and monitoring the quality of the teaching of RE. There are procedures in place for monitoring aspects of the Catholic life of the school such as surveys of students and parents and heads of year have the responsibility for monitoring the provision of collective worship in tutor time and in assemblies. Overall, however, judgements of the school's Catholic life and ethos tend to be descriptive rather than analytical and evaluative and not clearly rooted in a shared understanding of the school's mission as a Catholic school. Understanding of the mission is developing but requires a review of both the nature of the mission and how it relates to school

evaluation and planning. The basis for review is secure in that the school knows the detail and extent of the provision for aspects of the Catholic life of the school. Revisiting the mission would enable a clarification of the focus and procedures for evaluating the quality and impact of the Catholic life as well as planning for its further development. For example, though there is monitoring of collective worship, it is unclear what the criteria are for judging its quality and impact. While students have opportunities to contribute to form prayer, the extent of their participation and opportunities to plan, organise and lead worship is limited. Student leadership is a strength of other aspects of the school's Catholic life: they have many opportunities for initiative and organisation for example in charitable activities. The school knows this well and seeks in the school improvement plan to build upon this.

Improvement planning focuses on the enrichment and sustaining of the Catholicity of the school and includes a target to enhance the faith and moral life of the school. How these are to be achieved is not specified and success criteria refer to how the school will know about outcomes from surveys and an audit. Those will assist in clarifying what is successful and what needs to be done, but specific tasks which will enhance the Catholic life are necessary. These might be in relation to prayer, liturgy, or, perhaps more pointedly in the light of the target, to develop the contribution of all curriculum subjects to the Catholic mission.

Governors are highly committed to the school and to its Catholicity. Some of them have been long time servants of the school and know its strengths and needs very well. The governing body is both very supportive of the leadership of the school and challenging to ensure that it is effectively led in its Catholic character as in all other respects. They know the school and its traditions well and are leading it forward in close association with the headteacher into the new relationships involved in forming the multi-academy company.

Evaluation of religious education is variable in quality. Lesson observations by the senior leadership team are insightful and thorough. They are well able to identify the qualities both of the teaching and the learning and progress of the students. The observation form that is used is generic and based on Ofsted criteria. It could be more effective if it was modified for internal departmental use, incorporating more knowledge, skills, and concepts of the subject. Departmental self evaluation is limited. It does not analyse the impact of what the department offers other than that exam results improved in 2013 and that the pupils enjoy RE. There is no detailed analysis of why results were as they were in relation to students' prior achievement, comparison with achievement in other subjects, or the impact of teaching. There is no analysis or evaluation of the quality of learning, no consideration of progress of students in the current Years 9-11, and no indication of how RE impacts on students' spiritual, moral and vocational development. The school systems for gathering data are good and provide a basis for far more effective analysis of attainment and progress. The consequence of the lack of detailed evaluation is that the links between evaluation and improvement planning in religious education are not evident. Planning focuses on lower level targets rather than key targets such as the overall intention to raise achievement to outstanding based on identified needs of both teaching and learning coupled with clearly ordered success criteria. School planning for the future of the department, on the other hand, is clear and appropriate and measures are being put in place to secure that future.

Judgements that assessment is good are accurate in the sense that it is carried out regularly and is supportive of students. The extent to which guidance is given on how to improve is variable between teachers. There is little about students' learning, progress and understanding but rather more about examination technique which dominates both the tasks set and the guidance given. The best practice, which would justify the evaluation that assessment is good, expects students to complete unfinished work and to feed back to the teacher on her comments. In that same class the writing expected of the students is more sophisticated and not bound by examination formulae.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

Outcomes for pupils are outstanding at Advanced Level and have been so for many years. A high proportion of students achieved higher grades A*-B in Theology in 2013 and the subject performed above most others. Consistently with this achievement, teaching and learning in the sixth form are outstanding. This extends to the general RE course for all students where outcomes were strong in the last school year. Results in religious education at GCSE were above the diocesan average but with a smaller proportion of students entered for the examination. The proportion scoring A*/A grades was very high. A higher than usual number of students in 2013 were entered for the ASDAN/CoPE course, but failures in leadership of that course, coupled with staff changes, resulted in none of the students achieving GCSE equivalent pass grades. Appropriate adjustments have been made to the curriculum as well as the proportion of students entered during the current school year. Students make good progress in their learning and achievement in RE and are keen to acknowledge that they enjoy the subject because of the quality of discussion of issues during lessons. They value the opportunities to both express their own views but also listen to those of others.

Student involvement and contribution to aspects of the Catholic life of the school are very good and at times outstanding. They understand that the Catholic ethos of St Augustine's provides them with experience and context which other dissimilar schools could not offer. They contribute well to school and partnership liturgies, respond positively to collective worship and days of retreat and reflection, and welcome learning from the diversity of faiths in the school. Their involvement in charitable undertakings is outstanding both in respect of their understanding of reasons for their participation and also in the initiative which they display in devising ways of raising funds for those charities which they have chosen to support.

Teaching in RE in Years 9-11 is good with some that is outstanding. In the sixth form it is outstanding. A key strength in teaching is the involvement of students in their own learning, with significant time given for discussion and reflection. Attitudes to learning and behaviour in lessons are excellent. The school's high expectations in these areas are fully met in religious education lessons. Teacher questioning is good with open questions stimulating discussion and an occasional "no hands" policy encouraging wider responses. This could be extended further. In a small number of classes marking of work is restricted to formal assessments and day to day work in class books is not assessed. This practice is being looked at with a view to change.

Spiritual and moral development of the students is very good. While not yet co-ordinated across all subjects in what may be called a Catholic curriculum, there is a consistency of outlook and behaviour across the school which underpins that development. Apart from the offering in RE where spiritual and moral matters are at the heart of provision, the school's work on sex and relationship education and the homelessness awareness campaign provides practical experience for spiritual and moral development.

Curriculum provision in RE is in process of change. The GCSE course is in its second year and consideration is being given to how this relates to what is offered in Year 9. Planning at present looks in two different directions: to the development of independent learning skills in Year 9 or to the introduction of GCSE style tasks in that year. As the examination demands somewhat formulaic tasks and thought processes, the department should focus its attention on developing independent learning. The examination also requires little attention to scripture and the lack of biblical work in the department is a weakness. Closer links are also being built with RE in the Catholic middle school partner. The department development plan refers to introducing GCSE style of writing into the middle school, but that would constitute an unwelcome narrowing of the curriculum in the context of current examination expectations.

St Augustine's is a good Catholic school with outstanding features, most notably its sixth form. The quality of the school's provision over some years is most accurately reflected in the outlook,

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

behaviour and commitment of its students. That they value the school highly is eloquent testimony to its success as a Catholic school.

Recommendations

Review the mission of the school as the basis for evaluating the quality and impact of the school's Catholic life and ethos and for informing future planning.

Establish and employ clear criteria for the monitoring and evaluation of religious education to cover:

- a) attainment
- b) student progress and learning
- c) the effectiveness of the curriculum in developing the knowledge, concepts and skills of the subject, including consistent use of the Bible
- d) the quality of teaching.



March 2014

Diocesan Education Service,
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Dear Parents and Carers

Section 48 (Diocesan) Inspection of St Augustine's Catholic High School Redditch, March 2014

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.

St Augustine's is a good Catholic school with outstanding features. Amongst these the sixth form is most notable with a strong Catholic character and leadership and outstanding performance in Advanced Level Theology and General RE. As a Catholic school it is increasingly effectively led by the senior leadership team informed by a long-standing and effective governing body. The school has a strong Catholic ethos which embraces all in the community of whatever faith. Leaders are committed to the Catholic Christian mission of the school and enjoy the full support in this of the staff and students. There is a need to review the mission of the school to take account of recent changes in the school and to inform future developments.

GCSE outcomes in religious education in 2013 were good but overall performance at the end of Year 11 was limited by poor results in the CoPE course. Students in Years 9-11 enjoy RE and the opportunities it provides to explore controversial issues through discussion. They welcome the chance to express their own views and to hear those of others. Teaching is good overall with some that is outstanding and this encourages good learning and enjoyment.

Students appreciate the school's Catholic ethos and consider that it provides them with a community which is special. They enjoy excellent relationships and their involvement and contribution to aspects of the Catholic life of the school are very good and at times outstanding. They contribute well to school and partnership liturgies, respond positively to collective worship and days of retreat and reflection, and welcome learning from the diversity of faiths in the school. Their involvement in charitable undertakings is outstanding both in respect of their understanding of reasons for their participation and also in the initiative which they display in devising ways of raising funds for those charities which they have chosen to support.

We have recommended that the school should review its mission as a foundation for monitoring and evaluating its Catholic life and planning for its further development and that the RE department should develop its procedures for evaluating teaching and students' learning and achievement.

Our thanks are due to all of the staff and the students for the generous way in which we were received in the school. The students are a credit to you and to the school.

Yours sincerely

John Lally (Dr)
Diocesan Inspector



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Diocesan Education Service