

INSPECTION REPORT

**LORETO ROMAN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL
Nell Lane Chorlton-cum-Hardy Manchester M21 7SW**

Inspection date April 2010
 Reporting Inspector Mr. W. Ryan
 Inspection carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School Catholic Secondary
 URN 105574
 Age range of pupils 11-16
 Number on roll 493
 Appropriate authority The governing body
 Chair of Governors Dr. M. Connor
 Headteacher Mr. L. Dillon
 Head of Religious Education Mrs. L. Littlewood
 Date of previous inspection January 2007

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades 1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3 = Satisfactory 4 = Inadequate
Overall effectiveness of the school	1	
Leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school	1	
The quality of Collective Worship	1	
Achievement and standards in Religious Education	2	
The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education	2	
The quality of the Religious Education curriculum	1	
Leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education	1	
<i>The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements</i>		

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Loreto is an 11-16 voluntary aided Roman Catholic co-educational comprehensive school and is a Specialist College for English and Humanities. It provides education for the pupils living in the contributory parishes of St. John (Chorlton-cum-Hardy), St. Kentigern (Fallowfield) and Our Lady (Whalley Range). Contextual information on socio-economic data indicates significant levels of deprivation in the school environment. The indicative admission number is 150 and there are currently 493 learners on roll of whom 243 are baptised Roman Catholics. 43% of learners are eligible for free school meals. There are 114 learners identified as having special educational needs and of these 9 have a statutory statement of special educational need. The number of Catholic teachers in the school is 22 and this represents 60% of the total staff.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

Loreto is an outstanding Catholic school. Remodelling its mission on the Loreto strands of sincerity, truth, joy, justice and freedom has inspired and encouraged all stakeholders to enrich the community through developing its Catholic ethos. "Every child is sacred" is a mantra repeated in school literature and policies. Governors, under the leadership of a dynamic, dedicated and caring chair fulfil with skill and enthusiasm their challenge to maintain the quality and momentum of improvement in the school. His vision for the school is enthusiastically shared and realised by an excellent leadership team, led, motivated and encouraged by a highly committed headteacher. Prayer and worship are outstanding and students benefit from an extensive range of spiritual experiences that can only enrich their lives. The school chaplaincy makes a daily contribution to the spiritual support the school offers, while the chaplain and minister are in daily contact with the community. Social cohesion is high on the agenda and relationships here are harmonious. In keeping with the principle of joy members of the community are encouraged to "be optimistic, hopeful, courageous, open, welcoming, good humoured and self-accepting". Pupils behave well showing respect for each other, members of staff and the wider community. Achievement in Religious Education continues to improve thanks to excellent leadership and a well qualified and dedicated department employing sound assessment procedures. The department's influence is felt not only in the delivery of curriculum Religious Education but also through the leading role it plays in supporting the spiritual life of the community.

Improvement since the last inspection

Following the school's re-launch in 2007 a number of significant changes have taken place, most notably the appointments of a new chair of governors and headteacher. A chaplaincy team has been introduced to develop the school's Catholic ethos. As part of this process the vision and values of the Loreto Order have been adopted and the school is now affiliated to the world community of Loreto schools. The Religious Education department plays a major role in promoting and developing the school's ethos. Achievement and standards have improved dramatically.

Capacity to improve

The school's self-evaluation is excellent. Governors, leadership and managers are actively engaged in rigorously monitoring and evaluating initiatives while supporting progress and achievement. The school is well placed to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to develop the work of the school chaplaincy and encourage students to be actively involved in planning and presenting liturgies.
- Maintain the drive to match boys' achievement in Religious Education to that of girls.
- Support the work of the head of Religious Education through the appointment of a second in department as the school grows.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are judged to be outstanding by the school and the inspector. Loreto benefits from the contribution of an experienced and enthusiastic governing body under the leadership of a dynamic, caring and dedicated chair. The school mission, which recognises the sacredness of each child, is the motivation that drives the governing body to seek excellence in all aspects of school life. Governors play a major role in monitoring and evaluating initiatives and progress while their diverse skills, in some measure due to their Loreto connection, are invaluable and are practical assets to the school. Documentation reflects the importance all stakeholders attribute to the school's Catholic foundation. The headteacher provides charismatic and inspired leadership. He is supported by a senior leadership team which shares his conviction on the value of Catholic education. He leads a community where Christian principles and the importance of each individual are paramount. Since his appointment the school has made remarkable progress and continues to grow in size and influence as new challenges arise and are met. In-service training on aspects of Catholic education and on delivery of the school's Mission and aims is good and reflects their importance to the Governors and teaching staff alike. Learners benefit, not only from markedly improved achievement but also from pastoral care which encourages learning and ensures that they feel valued and part of a caring community. Transition arrangements are excellent and links with partner primary schools and parishes are developing and under constant review. The pupils extend the school's links with the wider community through the Loreto partnership and support for local and world-wide charities.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Provision for collective worship is judged by the school to be outstanding. Evidence gathered during the inspection supports this judgement. Prayer and worship are part of the everyday experience for learners and staff at Loreto. Assemblies take place in the school's excellent Chapel. These are planned and led by members of the senior leadership team and are supported by members of the Religious Education department and the chaplaincy. Increased involvement of the chaplaincy team in preparing and presenting assemblies and liturgies, together with the involvement of students, would enhance these events. Learners are attentive and pray with respect. Form tutors lead prayers at form time for those not involved in assemblies. Major liturgies following the Church Year are planned by the chaplaincy team. Materials for form time are provided by the Religious Education department and chaplaincy team at important seasons of the year – Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and for all Holy Days. The school chaplain and minister have a significant impact in developing the spiritual life of the community. It is a testimony to their work that all the learners feel they benefit from the school's Catholic ethos and its contribution to community cohesion. No learners have requested to be withdrawn from Religious Education lessons or liturgies. The school chaplain is dedicated to providing an inclusive faith experience for the community while the minister works assiduously to develop the faith through her work with groups of learners and leadership of the chaplaincy team. The school benefits from the use of a chapel adjacent to the Religious Education Department and available for its use. A planned and varied programme of religious events enables learners to take part in pilgrimages, visits and retreats. The school's Rosary marathon involving all members of the community is a noteworthy example. The Head of Religious Education plays a major role in planning and leading this programme.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are considered by the school to be good. The inspector agrees. Progress made since the school's re-launch is excellent. A number of factors have contributed to this. Overall achievement school wide at Key stage 3 has improved, while the Religious Education department, along with other curricular areas, has benefited from the school's literacy focus. The diocesan syllabus has been developed to better suit the needs of the learners while the syllabus at Key Stage 4 interests and challenges the pupils and has resulted in greatly improved achievement. Over the last three years the percentage of learners entered in public examinations achieving higher grades has almost doubled. The school should continue its drive to improve boys' achievement in Religious Education. Use of the short course for some students in Religious Education meets the needs of more of the learners. Lessons are well planned and evaluated. Departmental meetings enable good communication. Classroom observations within the department and by the senior leadership team support improving standards. Learners work well and the mutual respect shown by, and for, teachers leads to very good working relationships in the classroom. Lessons learnt in the classroom are put into practice notably through the generosity of the community in recognising the needs of others and in giving generously to the school's many good causes.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The inspector agrees that the quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is good. Although many teachers of Religious Education also work in other faculties their commitment to the subject is exemplary and all lessons observed during inspection very were at least good in terms of content and delivery. Members of the department are well qualified and offer a variety of strengths which enable them to engage the learners effectively. Lessons are well planned and are delivered at a pace suited to the ability of the students, employing a variety of teaching strategies which engage the learners and meet some success. All members of the department are comfortable in the use of information technology to enhance teaching while resources employed in lessons are well prepared and conducive to good learning. Regular assessment takes place informing pupils, parents and teachers of progress and enabling appropriate setting of targets. Learners are aware of their progress. They know the level at which they are working and what is required to make further progress. Good marking supports good learning and exercise books are marked appropriately with identified progress targets. Encouragement and praise are used to good effect and play a major part in motivating the pupils. They, for their part, respond well. They work hard and show respect for their teachers and other adults. Behaviour in all lessons observed was excellent. Parents are well informed not only about student progress but also through the school newsletter of matters of interest to the community as a whole.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The inspector considers the Religious Education curriculum to be outstanding. Learners at Key Stage 3 follow a scheme of work which is based on the Salford Diocese guidelines which is adapted to meet their needs. Well prepared resources support delivery of the work and suitable assessment takes place to evaluate progress. Pupils respond well to the content and find it relevant to their lives. The guidelines incorporate a study of other world religions and opportunities are used in lessons to promote understanding and respect for other faiths and cultures. Key Stage 4 learners follow a course of Religious Studies which is suited to their needs based on Catholic Christianity and the Christian life. The introduction of the short course for some students in Religious Studies has also proved beneficial. The pupils have responded well resulting in improved achievement and motivation. The introduction of topics such as racial harmony has further increased the relevance of the subject. The curriculum is further enriched by the work of the school minister and the work she does with the chaplaincy team with various groups of learners and from the varied programme of extra-curricular religious events designed to engage the pupils. The Religious Education department play a significant part in related areas of school life such as charity work. The Religious Education department is allocated 10% of curriculum time in each key stage.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The school and the inspector agree that leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education is outstanding. The head of department leads a diverse department with skill and vision. Improvements since the school's re-launch, including the Loreto connection, the appointment of a minister and the work of the chaplain, have significantly improved provision and achievement. Members of the department work co-operatively and are engaged in raising achievement further. The Religious Education department is well organised with support from the senior leadership team. Self evaluation procedures are in place and the head of department keeps the link governor informed and involved. Lessons are observed and teaching is evaluated at both middle and senior management levels. The curriculum is kept under constant review and communication between members of the department is good. As the school grows so will the need for the appointment of second in the department to support and enhance the work of its head. The Religious Education base is well equipped with information technology facilities. Members of the department have the use of the chapel which is adjacent. It is an excellent and well used facility. Funding for Religious Education is good while financial support for the chaplaincy is outstanding.