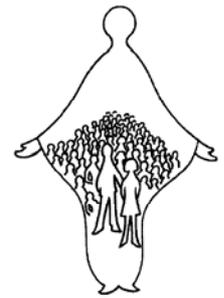


**SALFORD DIOCESE
INSPECTION REPORT**

**ST. CUTHBERT'S
ROMAN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL
Shaw Road Rochdale OL16 4RX**



Inspection date May 2007

Reporting Inspector Anthony Pearson

Inspection carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Catholic Secondary
URN	105845
Age range of pupils	11-18
Number on roll	1411
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of Governors	Rev. Fr. Martin Collins
Headteacher	Mr. John V. Wood
Head of Religious Education	Mrs. Anna Beisty
Date of previous inspection	November 2003

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

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Cuthbert's, Rochdale is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11 to 18 within the Rochdale Local Authority. The school serves 7 designated primary schools from the parishes of Holy Family, St Gabriel, St John, St Patrick, St Mary, St Vincent, Sacred Heart and Our Lady and St Anselm. With 1411 pupils on roll, including 130 students in the sixth form, it is above average in size. 1411 pupils are baptised Catholics. The school's indicative admission number is 270 and it is regularly oversubscribed. The number of pupils identified as having special educational needs is 287 which is broadly average. 26 of these have a statutory statement of special educational need which is also broadly average. 21% of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals which is above average. The pupil population is of almost entirely white British heritage and represents the full range of socio-economic backgrounds. 67 (75%) of the school's 89.3 full-time equivalent teachers are Catholics.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St Cuthbert's is a good Catholic school where a commitment to the pursuit of Gospel values, "especially justice and peace" as proclaimed in its Mission Statement, are evident in its daily life as is the commitment of all members of the school community towards its realisation. The headteacher articulates this vision effectively and is well supported by senior managers and committed governors. Together they ensure that the Catholic life of the school is supported by appropriate staff training and generous allocation of financial resources. Partnerships between school, home and parish are strong. There is a clear commitment to the maintenance of the key role of school chaplaincy in contributing to the effectiveness of the school's Catholic life. Collective worship is good with the Mass playing a central role the school's liturgical celebrations. Prayer is made relevant to pupils' lives and involves them well. Pupils are well equipped to take on even more responsibility in relation to the school's liturgical life. Sixth form students achieve well in A level Christian Theology and their general Religious Education course. Performance in Religious Studies at GCSE is improving and is better than in most other subjects although in 2006 girls did not achieve as well as boys. Pupils' experiences in Religious Education lessons make a very good contribution to their spiritual and moral development and prepare them well for their future lives in a multicultural society. Teaching and learning are good, underpinned by the quality of classroom relationships. Assessment procedures are good but are not yet applied consistently. The Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs well. It is enhanced by a strong programme of day and residential retreats, the liturgical life of the school and opportunities provided by the use of the school chapel. Leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education are good. Working relationships are positive, subject performance is effectively monitored and the department makes a valuable contribution to teacher training.

Improvement since the last inspection

Following the last Section 23 inspection in 2003 issues relating to resources and accommodation for learning have been effectively resolved. Standards are improving and pupils achieve well.

Capacity to improve

The school's self-evaluation is accurate and some effective strategies for further improvement, particularly in curriculum Religious Education, are leading to improved standards and achievement. However, although accurate in its judgements and therefore indicating a satisfactory capacity to improve further, self-review lacks the level of detail and robustness required to lead to more rapid improvement. The diocesan procedures for self evaluation could be used more effectively.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use diocesan procedures for self-evaluation more effectively in order to better inform strategic planning.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for school liturgy.
- Continue to improve standards at GCSE and, in particular, raise the achievement of girls.
- Ensure greater consistency in the use of agreed assessment procedures and use marking more effectively to explain to pupils what they need to do to improve their work.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The school judges that the leadership and management of its Catholic life are good and inspection evidence supports this judgement. Governors provide loyal support for the school, are well informed and are prepared to challenge its performance when necessary. Priest governors are generous with their time. Governors have provided good financial support over recent years, for example to support refurbishment of the chapel. The headteacher's strong vision is recognised by all members of the school community and is reflected in the school's Mission Statement which is firmly founded on Gospel values of justice and peace. There is a strong commitment to staff in-service training in support of this aspect of school life and a good proportion of teachers, including some who are not Catholics have taken advantage of the opportunity provided to obtain the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies. Very good arrangements for transition ensure that links with contributory primary schools are effective which, together with the active involvement of many teachers and pupils in their own parishes, ensures that partnership between school and the local Catholic community is strong. The school recognises the important contribution made over a long period of time made by its recently retired chaplain and has made suitable arrangements to keep the role active whilst seeking a more permanent replacement. The school's Christian Action Task group also makes a good contribution to the Catholic life of the school through its work. The school has a considerable commitment to charitable activity. Pupils and students work hard to raise substantial sums on behalf of charities such as Cafod and others in the local area and further afield. Pupils willingly accept responsibility in deciding which good causes should benefit from their efforts.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The school's judgement that the provision for, and quality of, collective worship is good is accurate. Policies and procedures for daily collective worship are translated effectively into practice although the school itself recognises that within this generally good picture there is some variation in quality, particularly with regard to daily form prayer. However, as well as making good use of the well-devised bank of formal prayers for daily use contained in their planners, pupils generally respond well to the opportunities provided in from time and year assemblies for them to devise more informal prayer suitable for their own intentions. They respond appropriately to these opportunities which help them to appreciate the relevance of prayer in their daily lives. Strongly supported by the school's priest governors, who are generous with their time, the school places the Mass at the heart of its worship. The weekly voluntary mass is well attended and important occasions during the school year are also marked with the celebration of Mass. All pupils have the opportunity to be involved in preparing for the weekly liturgy on a rotational basis with their form. However the school would benefit from providing further opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for school liturgy. Sixth form students take a greater degree of responsibility in preparing their own liturgies.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Inspection evidence endorses the school's view that standards and achievement in Religious Education are good. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils reach expected standards. They can explain the impact which belief has on the lives of members of faith communities and justify their opinions with relevant supporting information, for example by explaining the teaching contained within the parable of the prodigal son. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress particularly when benefiting from the support provided by classroom assistants. In Key Stage 4 results have improved significantly over the last few years and GCSE results in 2006 were close to the national average. Pupil performance in Religious Studies is better than in other core subjects. Across the full A*-G range results are broadly average. Significantly boys' attainment in the school was higher than that of girls in 2006 and average in comparison with boys' performance nationally. The school is encouraged to continue its work of improving standards at GCSE and, in particular, raise the achievement of girls. All sixth form students follow an approved course in Religious Education which they believe helps prepare them for their lives as responsible adults. Inspection evidence indicates that they reach expected standards. Students following the A level course in Christian Theology meet challenging targets to reach overall above average standards. The subject is becoming an increasingly popular choice at A level. Throughout the school pupils are generally well behaved in lessons and readily join in learning activities which, for the most part, are interesting and challenging. Written work is well presented indicating a good sense of engagement in the learning process. Overall Religious Education makes a very good contribution to the learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The inspection evidence supports the schools own view that teaching and learning in Religious Education are good. Key to the good learning which takes place are the good relationships which exist between teachers and pupils. This leads to a pleasant learning environment in classrooms where pupils have the confidence to express ideas and offer their opinions. They are thus prepared to become fully involved in learning activities which are also generally well matched to their capabilities although the level of challenge in some otherwise satisfactory lessons is inconsistent. The lowest attainers are provided with an appropriate level of challenge by tasks which are adapted to match their learning needs. Well briefed classroom assistants also provide them with good additional support. There is a developing expertise in the use of digital technology to support learning. Pupils know their targets and the criteria which describe different attainment levels. Marking is regular and teachers' written comments acknowledge the efforts made by pupils to do well. However the way in which the marking shows pupils how to improve their work is better in classes working towards external examinations than in written work seen in Years 7 to 9. Additionally, in Years 7 to 9, there is some inconsistency in the way in which teachers use and apply the department's agreed system for describing the standards reached by pupils in Religious Education. The school should develop greater consistency in the use of agreed assessment procedures and use marking more effectively to explain to pupils what they need to do to improve their work.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The quality of the Religious Education curriculum is good. Programmes of study throughout the school meet the requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales. The curriculum makes a strong contribution the spiritual and moral development of pupils and students. For example, the chapel is regularly used to enable pupils to reflect on their classroom learning experiences. Programmes of study provide a wealth of opportunity to apply Catholic teaching to a range of relevant social and moral issues as well as an understanding and appreciation of Catholic belief and practice. The curriculum is enhanced by a very good range of much appreciated day and residential retreat experiences. A significant strength of the curriculum throughout the school lies in the way in which it helps prepare pupils for their lives as responsible adult Catholics in a local and national society characterised by cultural diversity. This is reflected in school in the learners' willingness to take on responsibilities and work for the benefit of other members of the school community for example as members of the school council or as peer mentors.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The school judges that leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education are good. Inspection evidence confirms this view and recognises that some features are outstanding. The head of department's very strong vision for, and commitment to, the subject is shared by a well-qualified team of teachers who work well together in clearly defined roles. There is a good balance between the experienced and more recently qualified teachers and the school and department are justifiably highly regarded for the contribution made towards the training of teachers of Religious Education. The head of department has a very clear appreciation of the strengths of the department and is prepared to take robust action where necessary in order to bring about improvement. The department's own procedures for monitoring its performance are effective and complement whole school procedures, for example, for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. Religious Education is very well supported financially in comparison with other core subjects indicating both the priority which the school has for the subject and the regard in which it is held by the school's senior managers and its governors. Resources are well deployed. In Years 7 to 9 new programmes of study have been well developed in order to ensure that the learning needs of pupils are met.