

THE DIOCESE OF SHREWSBURY



Ellesmere Port Catholic High School

URN: 111451

DCSF No: 896 4611

21st & 22nd March 2012

Report on the
Inspection of Denominational Education
(The report was carried out under S48 of the Education Act 2005)

Lead Inspector: Mrs Pat Barker
Link Inspector: Mrs Michelle Garvey

DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL

Ellesmere Port Catholic High School is a mixed 11-18 comprehensive school of average size, serving four parishes and their Primary Schools as well as the local community and beyond. Students come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds but below average FSM, and enjoys a good reputation in the local area. 72% of students are baptised Catholics and the school is well supported by the local parishes. Good links are developing further with the work of the chaplain. The school has specialist status in Humanities, with RE, English and History as the leading subjects.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

GRADE 2

Ellesmere Port Catholic High School is a good Catholic school which seeks to provide a first rate education for its students in a safe and secure environment. The school enables its students to put their faith into action and thereby Christian values are made concrete. It seeks to help them to develop as informed and reflective young people with an understanding of their place in God's plan. Students are encouraged to have empathy with others less fortunate than themselves and respect for those who hold different beliefs to their own. This is seen very clearly in the partnership with Noonkodin school in Tanzania.

IMPROVEMENT SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION

- Since the last Inspection, RE Staff make very effective use of extended questioning to enhance learning and enable pupils to develop their thinking skills.
- The Humanities specialism is used to good effect in the school developing excellent links within both the local and wider community.

CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINED IMPROVEMENT

GRADE 1

There is the capacity for sustained development which is evident from the detailed and thorough Self-Evaluation document provided for the Inspection. The line managers for the RE Department and Chaplain, work closely together with the departments to monitor, evaluate and support them. There is ownership of the school's motto - 'truth and wisdom' and a desire to be true to the mission statement which encourages 'fulness of life' and faith in action.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Include 'Catholic Life of the school', as an area for development in the school's Improvement Plan, thus enabling all departments to have ownership of what is implicit in all that the school does.
- Develop further opportunities for student leadership in Collective Worship.
- Continue to develop strategies that will encourage uptake of 'A' Level Religious Studies and improve outcomes.

OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

GRADE 1

At Key Stage 3 the standards of attainment are outstanding and consistently so. The gap between the performance of girls and boys has narrowed although the Inspectors noted that at KS3 level 7 girls continue to outperform boys.

At Key Stage 4, all students are entered for the GCSE Full Course and RE results are amongst the highest in the school and are above the national average.

Key Stage 5 is a developing area in the RE department, and as such current data is not helpful in determining achievement in this area. The estimated results for the current Year 12 are promising and the uptake in the subject for the next academic year is very encouraging.

QUALITY OF LEARNING AND PROGRESS IN RE

GRADE 2

Most students make at least good progress and many make outstanding progress. Students are keen to do well. They are diligent in lessons and work at a good pace with interest and enthusiasm. They are aware of their prior attainment and current targets. Scrutiny of work samples and interviews with students indicate awareness of progress and engagement with and enjoyment of RE. Tracking and monitoring, teacher feedback and support, reports to parents and parents' evenings are all part of the programme for implementing challenge and aiding progress for learners at Ellesmere Port Catholic High School.

PUPIL CONTRIBUTION/BENEFIT FROM CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

GRADE 2

Students are reflective and inquiring. They understand that religious beliefs and values are important to people and they show respect and care for others. This is evidenced in many ways, but especially through the Multi - Faith mornings that provide multi-sensory experiences to the students in Year 7. In year 8 Students benefit from multi-cultural workshops run by Liverpool Community Spirit. Such experiences help students to live out the school's mission to encourage tolerance, understanding and trust which is also the mission of the Church. In conversation with students across the Key Stages, it was clear that they understand that the nature and purpose of a Catholic school is to help them to develop and support them in the practice of their faith. They are given opportunities for spiritual development on Faith days that are held in school or on retreats. Students have an understanding of the key celebrations in the liturgical calendar. They recognise opportunities for spiritual and moral growth occur in other curriculum areas such as English Literature where there is as one student put it - "much religio-centric content". Others recognise the moral messages they engage with in Drama and English lessons in particular.

Students are particularly appreciative of the work of the Chaplain who they describe as a real asset to the school, "approachable", and "easy to talk to". Staff also recognise the great work done by the Chaplain who makes himself present to all. "He is often the first person students see as they enter school and the last person they see as they leave." The chaplain is not only a visible presence around the school but also in the parish communities, being involved in the Youth groups and/or Confirmation programmes. He is also the face of the newly introduced online SHARP system. The impact that the chaplain has on the Catholic life of the school is impressive.

PROVISION

QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

TEACHING AND LEARNING

GRADE 2

Nearly all teaching observed was effective in engaging pupils and making sure progress was made. Most of the lessons had outstanding features, and all teachers demonstrated their excellent subject knowledge. During the lessons we observed, a variety of effective teaching methodologies were employed. Pupils were engaged, focused and enjoying their learning. In particular the GCSE lessons seen were most effective in enabling students to make good progress and in reinforcing prior learning.

The learning environments are vibrant and effectively used as a means of celebrating and supporting pupil learning. There are some excellent examples of differentiation. The Learning Wall is effectively used to stretch and challenge pupils. There is evidence of good questioning techniques which are inclusive. Effective use of mini reviews in some lessons demonstrates a quick measure of pupil learning and progress. Where this is used well, we would commend this practice be shared throughout the department. Marking of pupil work provides feedback and targets to help pupils progress further. Pupils are clearly aware of the progress they have made and can discuss what they need to do to progress further.

EFFECTIVENESS OF ASSESSMENT

GRADE 1

There is a rigorous and systematic programme of assessment across KS 3,4,5. The assessments are appropriate and challenging. The assessments provide an accurate picture of achievement for all pupils. The school sets challenging targets. Almost all pupils questioned knew their target grade and had opportunities to reflect on their learning and progress. There is a clear approach to preparing students to answer GCSE examination questions. The Head of Department monitors the progress of each group and of individuals towards their personal target and effective strategies are in place to enable underperforming pupils make effective progress. The KS5 marking we saw was particularly commendable, in that it was corrective, instructive, challenging and affirmative.

RE CURRICULUM

GRADE 1

The requirement of the Bishop's Conference that 10% time should be allocated to RE, is met at Key Stage 4/5 across the fortnightly timetable, including General RE in the Sixth Form. At Key Stage 3, 8% of timetable time is given, but the Faith Days and Multi Faith experiences and Retreat days are additional to this thus meeting the requirement.

A review of the curricular provision in RE has been completed to ensure that it is relevant and exciting e.g. the decision to change to Paper 8 at GCSE and the development of the NOCN programme at KS5. There is evidence that enjoyment at GCSE is positively impacting on uptake to A level Ethics & Philosophy. The provision for the teaching of World Religions is noteworthy as are the cross curricular links with other Humanities subjects. There are a variety of opportunities for pupils to engage with social and ethical enterprise projects e.g. 'Stop the Traffik'; Fair Trade; SVP; Lourdes. Interviews with pupils highlighted the pupil's enjoyment of these experiences. Opportunities for pupils to reflect on and develop spiritually and morally are embedded in the RE curriculum.

QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP AND PUPIL CONTRIBUTION/RESPONSE

GRADE 2

Two assemblies were observed during the Inspection which were well-prepared and had interesting and challenging messages. Students were respectful and engaged with the message and appreciated what was taking place. In the Form times observed by inspectors, worship was led by the Form teacher who in each case had ownership of the content that was delivered. For example where the topic was Racism, an English teacher effectively used extracts and a film clip from 'To Kill A Mockingbird' to enhance the students understanding of the Christian message that all are equal in God's eyes. Prayers to complement the themes are made available on the network, by the Chaplain, for teachers to access.

Students valued the exam prayer placed on their desks during the examination period, and commented that Collective worship was well led when it "came from the heart". A Lenten Service for Year 12 students led by the Chaplain was creative and inclusive and described by the Inspector present as 'amazing'. The students spoke of memorable worship activities such as the one for Holocaust Memorial Day. The Inspectors recognise that although not much evidence of student participation in Collective Worship was seen during the Inspection that it does happen, and that students prepare Form or Year group assemblies. However, it was felt that there could be more opportunities for student participation and leadership in acts of worship and we recommend this as an area for development. Let it be something they 'do' rather than have 'done' to them.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE AND ETHOS

GRADE 2

Leaders and managers demonstrate commitment to the mission of the Church and have a high regard for the Catholic life of the school. This is evidenced in the provision of both personnel and curriculum in the school, and also in the voices heard during the course of the Inspection which spoke of - support in the journey of faith; pride in what the school achieves; outreach to those in need; quality of relationships between students and staff; and the ability to both challenge and support.

Students are actively involved in supporting and caring for others by mentoring younger students in the school or by work experience in the community. They respond readily to the Shoebox appeal and provide hampers for the elderly at Christmas. Staff and students have worked in the partner school at Noonkodin in Tanzania equipping a laboratory and delivering science lessons. The support for this project is ongoing and more students and staff will be able to visit and bring practical skills and expertise to the school next year as the two schools continue to develop their Global Partnership that they call 'Learning Together', They will take much needed equipment provided by the Ellesmere Port Catholic High School community through their fundraising efforts.

There have been changes in personnel since the last Inspection, such as the appointment of a new Head of RE and new Chaplain and also changes in structures within the Leadership Team. There are three Deputy Headteachers who have overall responsibility for the Assembly programme of each of the Key Stages. The Headteacher recognises that good things are happening in Form tutor time and in departments but that this may be variable, and is an area to be developed further. We would recommend more formal monitoring of Catholic Life and Ethos across the school and that this could be added as an area to be addressed by all departments in the School Improvement Plan, and could feature regularly in Staff Inset.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE RE DEPARTMENT

GRADE 2

We evidenced a range of systematic monitoring activities both at senior management and departmental level. There is a programme of monitoring and evaluation meetings calendared and evidenced in the departmental development plan, between the Head of Department and her Line manager who is part of SLT. Together they have clearly identified the strengths of the department, analysed student progress and identified areas for further improvement (which are now being developed as areas for whole school improvement.)

The Subject Leader has a clear vision for RE and a clear ability to reflect, to challenge and to implement change. The departmental development plan has clear objectives and is 'shared'. There is a process in place for quality assuring lessons and we feel that enabling teachers within the department to observe that which is identified as good practice both within the department and within the school would further strengthen what is already very good teaching and learning. We noted that the same quality assurance could be applied to the scrutiny of student work where the departmental policy was not always evident.

GOVERNING BODY

GRADE 2

The Governing body gives wholehearted support to the school and takes pride in what the school achieves. Link governors have been appointed to departments and they generally meet once a term. The governors are not afraid to ask challenging questions and are ready to support departments and the school as a whole, when implementing change. They provide a regular presence at school events and we applaud the weekly meeting held between the Head teacher and the Chair of Governors and the links they maintain with the neighbouring Primary and main feeder school.

COMMUNITY COHESION

GRADE 1

We have witnessed excellent examples of whole school and departmental projects and work to promote community cohesion. Leaders and managers actively work with others beyond the school community to ensure that its pupils develop a dialogue with and respect for people from other faith and cultural backgrounds. The following are particularly noteworthy:

The Multi faith days organised by the RE department (which students enthused about in the KS 3 interviews, and the opportunity to involve parents/carers in a similar evening experience, which was very well received. The proposal within the school to use this program as part of the primary/secondary transition is commendable.

Through the work of the chaplain there is evidence that links with the parishes have been strengthened as has the uptake of pupils on the sacramental programme. The liaison between the school through the work of the chaplain with the Christians Together in the Port is excellent.

Cross curricular links with the Fair trade project, work with Cafod, the school in Tanzania, Holocaust memorial day; the youth club and work experience opportunities in the local community, are all examples of the opportunities offered to pupils to be able to develop a respect for the faith of others while putting their own faith/values into practice. These opportunities while very practical are also tied in with periods of reflection on Stewardship and Social justice through collective acts of worship and liturgical celebrations in the school chapel.

QUESTIONNAIRES

The returns from parents were overwhelmingly supportive of the work of the school. Parents on the whole felt welcome at the school and were happy with the values and attitudes taught at the school. One parent commented that “ the school does an excellent job in producing citizens with high moral values in challenging times.” The multi- faith events were valued by those who attended. A non-catholic parent expressed much satisfaction with the values and ‘clear’ religious teaching her child benefitted from.

Some staff would like to contribute more to the school’s self evaluation process.

Over 600 responses were received from the student body. Well over 90% indicated that they enjoy school and that they feel well supported by the staff who encourage them to develop. The majority of students feel that the school is well run and that they are treated with respect and trusted.

97% said they are well taught in RE and that high standards are expected of them. The students indicated that their work is effectively assessed and that they know how to improve.

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

| | |
|---|------------------|
| Key to judgements: Grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory and grade 4 inadequate | Judgement |
|---|------------------|

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

| | |
|---|---|
| How effective is the school in providing Catholic Education | 2 |
| The school's capacity for sustained improvement | 1 |

OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS

| | |
|---|---|
| How good outcomes are for individuals and pupils | |
| How well pupils achieve in Religious Education | 1 |
| pupils standards of attainment in religious Education | 1 |
| the quality of pupils' learning and their progress in Religious Education | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the School | 2 |
| How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship | 2 |

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

| | |
|--|---|
| How effective the provision is for Catholic Education | |
| The quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education | 2 |
| The effectiveness of assessment in Religious Education | 1 |
| The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs | 1 |
| The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school | 2 |

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

| | |
|---|---|
| How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic Life of the School | |
| How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils | 2 |
| How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils | 2 |
| The extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so areas needing development are addressed decisively and responsibilities met | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion | 1 |