



Diocese of Arundel and Brighton

INSPECTION REPORT

St Richard's Catholic College

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DfE Number: 114612

Headteacher: Miss Doreen Cronin

Chair of Governors: Mr K Osborne

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Bishop of Arundel & Brighton
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of inspection: 28-29 November 2013
Date of previous inspection: 13-14 November 2006

Lead Inspector: Mr P Ward
Associate Inspector: Dr J Lydon

Description of School

St Richard's Catholic College is a Voluntary Aided 11-16 school. It is situated in the Hastings & St Leonards Deanery of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. It is maintained by East Sussex LA. The school serves the parishes of Eastbourne, Hastings, St Leonards, Bexhill and Hailsham. The college entrance criteria are based on faith background and the number of Catholics currently in the school is 93.5%.

The number of pupils on roll is 985. The academic profile of the college reflects the full ability range. The average KS2 point score on entry for the current Year 7 is just above the national average, whilst for other years it is well above the national average (Raiseonline). The percentage of Pupil Premium pupils is 13%. Approximately 16% of pupils receive in-class support; 75% of pupils identify themselves as 'White British' or Irish, while 5% are Asian and the remaining 20% are from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is an additional language is 11%.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1: Outstanding; Grade 2: Good; Grade 3: Satisfactory; Grade 4: Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

This is an outstanding Catholic College where the Catholic Christian faith is central to the whole educational mission, working collaboratively with pupils, parents and parishes. It realises to a very high degree the aspiration in its mission statement "to foster a commitment to genuine Christian values; to provide an experience of a living, worshipping community, and to develop a fully rounded curriculum that encourages all to challenge and to serve a society that is religiously, racially and culturally diverse". The college is a community where all are valued and actively encouraged and supported to develop to the full. Working with the home and parish, the college provides an excellent Catholic education that prepares its pupils for further study and for adult life. Collaborative college leadership includes the Governing Body, senior and middle leaders and is the result of outstanding leadership by the headteacher. Together they ensure that St Richard's constantly strives to address appropriately the educational needs of all its pupils.

Grade 1

Improvement since the last inspection

There have been many improvements since the last inspection. All action points of the last inspection report have been addressed.

Grade 1

What the school should do to improve further

- Secure an increase in curriculum time for religious education in Key Stage 3 in order to fully meet the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and reflect the fact that it is the core subject in a Catholic school.
- Explore and develop strategies to provide and support lifelong learning particularly in religious education.

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

Leaders at all levels are committed to the educational mission of the Church and the role of the school in promoting it. They provide very clear direction for the Catholic life of the school. The headteacher who has a positive presence around the school and the leadership team have a clear vision for the development of the school as a Catholic centre for learning and as an active Catholic community comprising and fully supported by pupils, parents, staff and governors. The inclusion of all is a central feature of the college reflecting its belief that all are created in the image and likeness of God and that the talents and skills of all should be developed to the full. Morale is very high.

There are close links with the diocese, the deanery and with its parishes although distance limits the frequency of visits to those parishes more distant to the college. This combined with excellent links with parents and external agencies contributes to the very high standard of care, guidance and support the college provides to promote its pupils' well-being and capacity to flourish. Many parents confirmed this in person and in writing, one expressing it thus: "having St Richard's Catholic College as your school is like having a third parent in your family, one who shares your values and supports your family".

Grade 1

The Prayer Life of the School

The celebration of Mass is at the heart of the community life of the college. Weekly voluntary Mass, celebrated before school by a rota of deanery priests, is well supported by both staff and pupils. There is a regular programme of form and year Masses throughout the year that are carefully prepared by pupils and celebrant, every pupil being actively involved in the form celebration. The feast day is celebrated with Masses and the end of year marked by a whole school Mass in the school grounds. Prayer punctuates the day. The theme for the week is based on the Sunday readings, the lay chaplain providing powerpoints to support the form teacher and pastoral leaders facilitating assembly prayer and worship. Music makes an outstanding contribution to all liturgies, services and assemblies. Pupils confirmed that an inspiring Year 7 act of worship witnessed by an inspector was a typical feature of the college, with many pupils participating, leading prayer and reflection as well as providing the music and dance. Tutor group morning prayer is reflective and reverential.

The outstanding lay chaplain, highly regarded by pupils, plays a key role in animating staff and pupils to be fully involved in planning and celebrating a wide range of liturgies within and beyond school. Pupils of other denominations spoke positively of their involvement in whole school worship. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is celebrated in Advent and Lent. The college marks the confirmation of pupils in both the Anglican and Catholic traditions. The many and varied

opportunities for pupils to contribute to the prayer life of the college, including involvement in the choir, dance, drama, reading or volunteering to be a liturgy representative for their form, are wholeheartedly embraced. Some Year 11 pupils have been commissioned as Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist at a Mass attended by their parents and parish priests. A programme of retreats for pupils is in place. Pupils interviewed by the inspectors said that they appreciated the retreat that they had attended. Prayer and worship make an excellent contribution to the spiritual and moral development of pupils.

Grade 1

How effectively does the school / college promote community cohesion?

Community cohesion is outstanding. The college truly realises its ambition to be a fully inclusive Catholic educational community in every sense. A thoughtfully designed programme of events and opportunities welcomes pupils in Year 6 who are joining the college and supports them throughout their college career to further education and beyond, enabling them to grow and flourish irrespective of ability or disability. Pupils in all years told the inspectors not only how much they enjoyed being members of the college but of the opportunities for service they enjoyed, within and outside the college. The fundraising efforts of the pupils are exemplary. Many curriculum areas and school assemblies inform and promote inclusion in very many respects, with an inspector observing one of a series of PSHE lessons on 'valuing difference' by a disabled member of 'JustDifferent' that enthralled pupils while challenging stereotypes. Supporting the local food bank, 'Surviving Christmas', links to the local special school and senior citizens groups are examples of the service undertaken by pupils in the local community.

Pupils, parents and clergy all report good links with local parishes although necessarily stronger with those closer to the school. Each year the school contributes significantly to the celebration of Sunday Mass in three local parishes, while seven or eight clergy from across the deanery regularly visit the school to support religious education lessons and celebrate Mass and Reconciliation. Notable among many volunteering opportunities, Year 11 pupils annually support HCPT: the Pilgrimage Trust's pilgrimage to Lourdes during the Easter holiday. Religious education and school liturgies are organised in such a way that all pupils are included, Coptic Orthodox pupils making a particular point of this to inspectors.

Relationships throughout the college between and among pupils and staff are very good. Pupils said that they felt very safe and that they knew to whom to turn in the event of any concern. Parents spoke very positively of the way in which the school keeps them informed and works collaboratively with them to support their children, providing many detailed examples to inspectors. The achievement of the college in this area is recognised by the wide range of awards it has received, often at the highest standard, including Inclusive School, International School and Fairtrade School

Grade 1

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

Pupils make excellent progress throughout their school career and achieve very high standards. Typically 90% of pupils achieve at least Level 5 at Key Stage 3 and at least grade C at GCSE Religious Studies. In 2013 at Key Stage 3, 93% achieved Level 5, with 9% achieving Level 7, and at GCSE 94% achieved grade C with 67% achieving grades A*-A, making it the most successful subject in the college. Pupils with learning disabilities and other vulnerable pupils generally achieve their target grades while pupils for whom English is not their first language also perform particularly well.

Pupils gain knowledge, skills and understanding at a consistently high rate and so become religiously literate. This is demonstrated for example by the way Key Stage 3 pupils discuss the religious significance of places of worship of other religions and in Year 11 discussions about the nature of God. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoyed the variety and challenge of lessons which significantly enhanced their learning. Behaviour in lessons is outstanding overall.

Grade 1

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

Based on lessons observed and the school's detailed records over time, teaching is outstanding. Teachers' accurate understanding of their pupils and very good subject knowledge enables them to use a wide range of teaching strategies so that pupils of all abilities make excellent progress. For example, in Year 8 less able pupils worked in different groupings using a variety of tasks to successfully develop their knowledge and understanding of the Nicene Creed at Mass while in a Year 8 mixed-ability class ICT contributed to a range of engaging activities that introduced pupils to some of the issues raised by the Crusades.

Outstanding lessons observed consistently engaged and challenged all pupils at appropriate levels using a range of activities and questions. Care is taken to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are fully engaged appropriately in the lesson. Accurate assessment and tracking informs and supports teaching which includes various assessments for learning strategies including peer assessment. Pupils' written work displays formative assessment, and summative assessment takes place regularly. Pupils confirmed to inspectors that they knew their actual and target level or grade and what they need to do to make progress. Learning is enhanced by the range and quality of displays in each classroom.

Grade 1

Quality of the Curriculum

The religious education curriculum is matched to the requirements of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools and Colleges 2012* and responsive to local needs. It is reviewed annually with pupils contributing through 'pupil voice' to the development of a curriculum that engages pupils. The Years 7 and 8 curriculum provides a systematic introduction to the Catholic faith leading to a creative and engaging study of Mark's gospel in Year 9 based on the Edexcel specification. In Year 10 all pupils study the 'Religion in Society' specification. In Year 11 the most able pupils, having sat their GCSE at the end of Year 10, study GCE AS Religious Studies while all other pupils study the 'Religion and Life' specification. Pupils of all abilities told inspectors that they welcomed this arrangement, valuing the positive

challenge it provided. This arrangement is in its first year and is being closely monitored by the link governor as well as the religious education department team. This curriculum is complemented by specific lessons focusing on lived Catholic faith, with lessons on the liturgical year and preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Advent for example.

The curriculum time devoted to Religious Education is 10% at Key Stage 4 in line with the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. At Key Stage 3, timetabled religious education falls short of this requirement but inspectors are satisfied that teaching and activities that form part of the *Curriculum Directory*, including elements of the area of study on The Church, such as the Church's vocation to have special care for the poor and oppressed and the Church's role as witness in society, and Celebration, including participation in the Eucharist, regularly and routinely take place during PSHEe which is directed and line-managed by a member of the religious education department. Inspectors also noted that the curriculum presence of religious education in Key Stage 3 is currently being reviewed with a view to it being increased.

Grade 1

Leadership and management of Religious Education

The leadership and management of religious education are outstanding. The Governing Body and headteacher demonstrate a clear vision of its significance in the overall educational mission of the school in the local Church and community. This vision is shared and implemented by the excellent subject leader who very effectively leads a team of specialist teachers committed to all pupils both achieving their full academic potential and realising their own personal faith and belief.

Excellent management of the department is demonstrated by the comprehensive yet realistic systems in place, including lesson observation, assessment and tracking, and monitoring and evaluation. All teachers work collaboratively to develop and review schemes of work and share best classroom practice to promote pupil learning. They are supported by an appraisal system focused on their improvement, complemented by professional development opportunities that include shadowing the subject leader.

There is a particularly strong emphasis on the practice of teaching and learning, the subject leader leading on this throughout the school. He is also a Specialist Leader in Education (SLE) who supports other local community schools. The subject is taught in well-equipped specialist classrooms, one of which has a suite of computers. Capitation is broadly in line with other core subjects. The central role of the department is demonstrated by its being line managed by the headteacher, and by the link governor regularly attending department meetings and also observing lessons to ensure that the Governing Body is fully informed.

Grade 1