



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD



Inspection Report

Name of School: St Benedict's Catholic College

Local Authority: Essex

Unique Reference Number: 115382

Inspection Date: 26th March 2012

Reporting Inspectors: Dr Michael Sutherland-Harper and
Mr Derek Kelly

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of School: Comprehensive
School Category: Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils: 11 - 16
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 827
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body
Date of previous inspection:

School Address:
Norman Way
Colchester
Essex CO3 3US
Tel. No. 01206 549222
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Chair of Governors: Mary Moriarty
Headteacher: Jo Santinelli

Introduction:

The Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education (Schools) Act 2005 by Inspectors appointed by the Diocesan Bishop at the request of the Governing Body of the School.

The Inspectors acknowledge and are appreciative of the full support, co-operation and courtesy they enjoyed from the Governors, Headteacher, Staff and Students of the College both before and during the Inspection. The Inspectors wish to express their gratitude to all concerned.

The focus of the Section 48 Inspection was:

- Classroom Religious Education
- The Catholic nature of the College through;
 1. Worship
 2. Links with the Catholic and wider community
- Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development

The Section 48 Report

St Benedict's Catholic College
Norman Way
Colchester
Essex
CO3 3US

Head Teacher: **Jo Santinelli**

Date of Inspection: **26th March 2012**

Description of the School:

St Benedict's Catholic College is a Voluntary Aided Catholic Comprehensive College situated in Colchester in the County of Essex. It serves the Colchester Deanery of the Diocese of Brentwood and the Catholic communities of north-east Essex. It is a smaller-than-average sized mixed comprehensive, specialist business and enterprise and languages college. The college has the Sportsmark and Eco-Schools Silver awards and Healthy Schools status.

Record of Evidence Base:

Two Diocesan Inspectors were in the college for the equivalent of two inspection days.

- The study of pre-inspection documentation including the Self-Evaluation Form/ Denominational Provision (SEF/DP).
- The observation of nine lessons.
- Participation in a Year 7 Assembly.
- Scrutiny of students' work.
- Meetings with the Headteacher, Head of Religious Education (R.E.), Chair of Governors, Chaplain, the School Council and a second representative group of students.
- Observations of R.E. displays in the classrooms and around the school.

What the School does well:

St Benedict's Catholic College is a satisfactory Catholic college. The Mission Statement has as its aim to 'support, encourage, inspire and empower every individual to achieve their full potential and become the person God wants them to be through prayer and work.' The new headteacher has well-focused ideas about how she wants to develop the college by raising standards and ensuring the personal development of learners. In promoting the Catholic life of the college, she is assisted by an experienced senior team, a focused Chair of Governors, deanery priests and an enthusiastic chaplaincy team working with the Head of Religious Education.

Religious Education is at the centre of the college's work. The R.E. curriculum is based on the 'Icons' Religious Education programme of study, recommended by the Bishop of the Diocese, and which is fully implemented. The college meets both the national and diocesan requirements for the allocation of curriculum time for taught R.E. of 10% at Key Stages 3 and 4. The Head of R.E. has clear ideas about developing the subject and department, included via increased links with personal, social and health education and the work of the in-house chaplaincy but these ideas are at an early stage of implementation. He meets regularly with the chaplain and other key staff. Planning systems ensure full coverage of the R.E. curriculum. Most staff are comfortable with the use of new technologies but resources used in classrooms currently show an over-reliance on worksheets and textbooks and display is not well used, or refreshed often enough, to reinforce the curriculum on offer. Cross- curricular links to reinforce the position of R.E. at the heart of the school are being put in place.

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Some good teaching was seen but a number of lessons are teacher dominated and opportunities for student input are limited as a result. Meetings with students confirmed that they most value those lessons which lead to debate and discussion with them over the impact of religion on life choices.

Some lessons are delivering the syllabus rather than moving learning on. These lessons fail to engage students because expectations are low and resources used do not engage students through a close link to their own experiences. As a result, R.E. is not a huge priority subject for many students. Attainment at Key Stage 4 is frequently above national standards but is not always matched by attainment and expectations elsewhere. The use of teaching assistants in promoting learning and in partnership with the teacher is variable as is the quality of presentation of student work expected from lesson to lesson. Assessment is characterised by praise for student efforts and some opportunities for self-assessment. Use of formative comments which indicate how to take work to the next level is less well developed in helping to ensure consistent improvement. Behaviour in classes and throughout the college is satisfactory with some good examples. Students say that behaviour has improved recently and that any incidents are quickly sorted out.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The college provides a good range of enrichment activities. Students have a clear understanding of right and wrong which they are keen to share with each other. Respect for individuals and good working relationships are being strengthened. Students seek to promote justice and equality through fund-raising for projects led by the Catholic aid agency, CAFOD.

St Benedict's College displays a satisfactory but improving Catholic ethos. Provision for collective worship and liturgical life is improving. It has been given new life by an enthusiastic chaplaincy team which now attracts increasing number of students, but prayer is less high profile than might be expected. Any prayers in class are often teacher led and opportunities for input from largely capable students are more limited. Student input into liturgy and worship and preparation for activities like fundraising and the recent very well received production of 'Godspell' are good. The school's mission prayer has been written by a current student. The School Council has a keen desire to augment its active role. Students feel their voice is now increasingly heard in the school. The college is looking at ways to promote spiritual development through a reworking of some outdoor areas. The seed for future improvement has been planted and is being nourished.

The college is working to develop its links with parents and carers to ensure that they are consistently good. In this, as in the careful support and increasing challenge they offer, the college is well served by the governing body. Regular visits and close contact between the headteacher and the Chair of Governors ensure that the governing body has an accurate picture of current developments.

The new headteacher has clear ideas about how to move the college forward. Leadership and management are under review and new systems are being considered for implementation, including plans to develop the roles and expectations of middle managers. As a result of the focused initiatives now being put in place, the support and challenge offered by governors and student recognition of an improving college, the college has good capacity to improve.

What needs to be improved?

- Develop consistent expectations of presentation, behavior and achievement in R.E.
- Enhance the roles of students in learning so they have a greater input into determining the way forward.
- Regularly review interim progress to ensure the school is moving forward.
- Link teaching in R.E. to PSHE and related subjects to reinforce its role at the heart of the school.

The Inspectors endorse all the areas identified by the college for improvement in the Section 48 Self-Evaluation Form which they judge as accurate in identifying many strengths as well as those areas requiring further development.

Overall, St Benedict's Catholic College is a satisfactory Catholic college. The college's capacity for sustained improvement is good.