

**INSPECTION REPORT ON THE PROVISION OF DENOMINATIONAL EDUCATION**

School name: Our Lady's Catholic High School  
 Address: St Anthony's Drive, Fulwood, Preston PR2 3SQ  
 Unique Reference Number: 119779  
 Name of Headteacher: Mr N Ranson  
 Date of Inspection: 26<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> March 2008  
 Name of Inspector: Mr A Slade  
 Type of school: Catholic Secondary  
 Age range of pupils: 11 - 16  
 Number on roll: 905  
 Appropriate authority: The Governing Body  
 Chair of Governors: Mr P Rydeard  
 Head of Religious Education: Mr G Baines  
 Date of previous inspection: October 2004

<b>The Inspection judgements are:</b>	<b>Grade</b>	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	
Religious Education - Achievement and standards	2	
Religious Education - Quality of provision	2	
Religious Education - Pupils' needs and interest	2	
Religious Education – Curriculum leadership and management	1	
<i>The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements</i>		

**Information about the school:**

Our Lady's is a voluntary aided comprehensive Catholic High School and is a specialist school in mathematics and computing. It has a standard admission number of 180. 79% of the students are baptised Roman Catholics and the majority of the remaining 21% are from other Christian denominations. 62% of the teachers are Roman Catholics. It serves mainly the parishes of St Anthony, Sacred Heart, Our Lady and St Edward, St Bernard, Holy Family, St Andrew, Cottam, St Mary, Lea, St Mary and St Michael, Garstang, St Mary, Newhouse and St Thomas, Cloughton. The majority of pupils are from their associated primary schools.

The social background of pupils on entry is typical in comparison with other schools. Attainment levels on entry are also very close to the national average or slightly above. There are 70 pupils with special needs provision of whom 26 are statemented. The percentage of students who qualify for free school meals is below the national average.

**Overall Effectiveness of the school**

Our Lady's is an **outstanding** Catholic school with some elements which are **good**. It is clearly driven by a determination to live out its Catholic mission as exemplified in what it calls its core principles: *"First and foremost Our Lady's is a Catholic school .... the ethos should reflect the values of Christ ... and recognise the unique value of each individual."* As many documents state, *"Faith is at the centre"*.

### **Improvement since the last inspection**

Following the last Section 23 report in October 2004, all the recommendations have been acted upon. The Mission Statement, by means of its core principles, is well established (and is about to be reviewed) and its underlying principles inform all aspects of school policy and development. However, in regard to curriculum time allocated to RE, whilst there has been some improvement, curriculum RE time in Key Stage 3 is still below the 10% required by the Bishops' Conference directive. Levels of attainment at key stage 3 are in place and used. Improvements in accommodation have been made and ICT facilities within the department are well established and used. The role of the chaplaincy is focused on its main religious aim but gives active and mutual support to the social life of the school and the welfare of pupils.

### **Capacity to improve**

The school's self-evaluation is **outstanding**. This is demonstrated by the rigorous and robust documentation and methodology for development and improvement. The Religious Education department reflects this: there is an honest, realistic and thorough assessment of the current situation and a clear methodology for future improvement and development. It is based on an accurate awareness of the department's strengths and weaknesses.

### **What the school should do to improve further:**

- Implement the directive of the Bishops' Conference to provide 10% RE curriculum time in Key Stage 3.
- Maintain policies to remove some disparity of achievement between boys and girls in GCSE. The outcomes of recent changes need to be carefully monitored.
- Improve the levels of pupil participation in the weekly year assemblies.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL**

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are **outstanding**. They are clearly determined to run an institution which is truly Catholic in character, aim and practice. Evidence for this is seen in the provision of high quality worship and pastoral care, supplemented by a policy which gives Christian priority to inclusion, care for others and the moral and spiritual development of pupils. The mission statement impacts well in the attitudes and practices of the school, with its reference to *"everyone will be given the opportunity to develop their faith in a supportive context ... and has the right to be treated with respect at all times."* Further evidence of the school's commitment is seen in the provision and support for the work of a chaplain and a chaplaincy team. Both a staff training session and a governors' training session - to study the distinctive nature of a Catholic school have taken place very recently. There are good facilities and staffing for the RE department. The pastoral care system displays a clear desire to ensure that pupils are well cared for. The standards of behaviour observed during the inspection were good and are clearly instrumental in promoting pupils' moral, spiritual, social and cultural development. Catholic teaching underpins the school's policies on matters such as sex education. Non-Catholic staff and pupils are not simply made welcome but are fully integrated into the life of the school. The governors are very well informed and actively involved, with a professional approach to ensure that they are "critical friends". During the inspection there was evidence of genuinely excellent relationships between all people, staff and students alike. Pupils have many opportunities to exercise responsibility and they do this with enthusiasm: there is a School Council, there are buddies and an SVP was recently started. Parents are supportive as shown by the overall positive responses in the replies to the parental questionnaire although a very small minority disagreed. The school has strong links with local primary schools and parishes. It also gives fervent support to a range of charities. These include the Diocesan Good Shepherd Fund and CAFOD as well as various local charities. After each Faith and Justice Day, money is raised for one of the organisations represented there: for example, money was raised recently for a school in Zambia and for railway children in India.

## **THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

This is an **outstanding** feature of the school: this is the result of the high level of determination to ensure that collective worship is a key element in the school's life. It is also the result of the high quality leadership stemming from the chaplain and her team. This results in pupils having numerous opportunities to pray. There is a beautiful Chapel, which in addition to its use for prayers and services, can also be used by anyone wanting to have quiet moments of reflection. It is used regularly for the exceptionally well attended weekly voluntary Mass and other services. There is a thought for the day for public use on the school's Moodle. The school is most fortunate to have the services of a dynamic and enthusiastic lay chaplain as well as the active and systematic support of local priests. Through them, there are strong links with the local parishes and with Cardinal Newman Sixth form college. Chaplaincy work is underpinned by the Spirituality and Community Working Party – its name indicates its broad purpose. There is an excellent policy for collective worship and an awareness of Bishop Patrick's document "*Fit for Mission? Schools*". During the inspection a voluntary Mass was celebrated: it was a genuine religious experience, stimulated by the planning, participation, excellent music and periods of meditation. Each week's Mass is prepared by a form in rotation. There is one area where improvements could be made: during the observed year assembly, which was very thoughtful, there was no pupil participation and this is an aspect which needs addressing. There is very good support for daily worship with prayers, readings and suggestions supplied by the chaplain: these are used and welcomed by staff for their regular form assemblies. Also, there are prayers in the pupils' planners. Some pupils are Eucharistic Ministers. Prayers are said at staff briefings and there are special end of term liturgies. Staff from other departments especially music, dance and drama, are involved in the whole-school Masses and services. There are reconciliation services for Lent and Advent, and the whole-school Mass is a highlight of the school year. The regular participation by local priests is greatly welcomed and appreciated. There is an approach which is highly inclusive: this is seen in the comments of some non-Catholic pupils who stated that they felt comfortable and involved in the worshipping life of the school. The school has an excellent Chaplaincy policy which is linked to the Mission Statement. It gives guidelines for collective worship and the chaplain has her own newsletter. All pupils in year 7 have a religious retreat at Hying Monastery whilst years 8 and 9 have Faith and Justice Days and there is a retreat at Castlerigg Manor for year 10 pupils. All pupils spoke highly of their experiences in these activities. An SVP group has recently been formed and its progress indicates that it will soon have a significant effect on the religious and social life of the school. As a result of all these activities, the school's worshipping life makes an outstanding contribution to the pupils' spiritual, cultural, social and moral development.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION - ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS**

The achievements and standards in Religious Education are **good**. Key Stage 3 attainments and standards show good progress. Progress in Key Stage 3 is monitored with the department's own systems which reflect the diocesan and national attainment targets of the Bishops' Curriculum Directory. Regarding GCSE results, in 2005, 55% of all year 11 pupils (60% of those entered) obtained grades A\* to C. In 2006, this rose to 60% but in 2007 dropped to 55%. Whilst these figures are below the national average, they are only marginally below the average grades achieved in other core subjects at the school. More significantly, there is a positive outcome in terms of value added. Almost all pupils are entered for GCSE and nearly all obtained at least a grade G. In 2005, girls generally performed better than boys, but in 2006 this disparity was removed. However, in 2007 girls performed better than boys. There is an awareness of the problem and there are constant steps being taken to remove the disparity. It is important that these professional efforts be maintained. Within the department there has been an active adjustment to the syllabus adopted in Key Stage 4 – with the welfare of pupils to the fore – and this is but one strategy which is aimed at improving results. The outcomes will need to be carefully monitored. Pupils themselves spoke of their enjoyment of the subject, particularly the fact that it gives them an opportunity to express opinions on important issues. Progress and attainment are also assisted by the generally good standards of behaviour of the pupils. The contribution which learning makes to pupils' spiritual and moral development is outstanding and this is reflected in the positive attitudes shown by pupils.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION - QUALITY OF PROVISION**

The school considers that the quality of provision for RE is **good** and the inspector agrees. The school observes the curriculum directive from the Bishops of England and Wales to allocate 10% curriculum time to RE in Key Stage 4 but in Key Stage 3 the time allocated is only 8%. Urgent planning to raise this to 10% is required. The curriculum leader is a senior post in the school's staffing structure. There is a suite of four well-equipped rooms dedicated to the teaching of RE. The subject is well resourced and equipped, with wide access to ICT. Books are modern and attractive. The teaching of RE is done by specialist and well qualified RE teachers. By means of their commitment and enthusiasm there is vibrancy and cohesion in the department. They are up to date with current developments and ideas. During the inspection, all the teachers were observed and the standard of teaching was good, some of it outstanding. These standards were achieved because the lessons were well planned, delivered with pace and confidence and within the context of a good classroom atmosphere. Teachers clearly demonstrated a desire to ensure that pupils made progress. Lessons observed included a study of the Mass, the sacredness of life, and world poverty. Pupils worked cooperatively in various group work exercises and there was an industrious working atmosphere. The teachers ensure that the work produced for students is suitable for those of varying ability. Marking is up-to-date and positive. Use of levels enables pupils to know what standard of work they have produced as well as what is required to effect improvements, helped by a self-assessment scheme. The school's Virtual Learning Environment is an outstanding feature used for support and development. There is good display work in the classrooms, including pupils' work in which they take great pride. Display work in the school generally is lively and topical, some of it produced in conjunction with the chaplain.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION - PUPILS' NEEDS AND INTEREST**

The needs and interest of students are provided for in a **good** way. The content of the Religious Education curriculum matches their needs and meets national and local requirements. Teaching is geared to raising standards and thus pupils generally make good progress. Pupils said that they enjoy their RE lessons, especially those which have a relevance to their own lives or are about interesting issues. In Key Stage 4 especially, contemporary issues such as marriage, racism, abortion and care for others are fully addressed within a Catholic Christian context but there is an awareness and sensitivity to the needs of non-Catholic pupils, some of whom are from other Christian denominations and some from other world faiths. Pupils are encouraged to work out their own opinions and justify them – something which several of them said was a valuable exercise. They said that they enjoy the controversial and ethical topics but are always aware of Catholic teaching. Whilst pupils are at Our Lady's they also study other world faiths including Judaism and Islam. Activities such as the Faith and Justice Days promote a greater awareness of the needs of others throughout the world: one of the results of this is that pupils feel a personal involvement with the organisations for which the money is raised. It is for these reasons that the religious education department makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral and cultural development of pupils. Additionally, the links with other departments, especially for the school masses and services, provide a further contribution to this development.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION – CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management of the religious education department are **outstanding**. This is because of the clear thread of commitment and support from all levels of management. The senior leadership team is dedicated and supportive. The governors show well informed and enthusiastic encouragement. The curriculum leader has a clear vision, is knowledgeable and is highly committed. He is an outstanding and professional role model in his teaching and has an eye for detail in the provision of the necessary documentation and administration. The aims of the department are excellent and they reflect the aims and mission of the school. The department's handbook and documents give comprehensive guidance on all aspects of the department's work. The curriculum leader is open-minded to fresh developments, is fully aware of current issues and is not afraid to make radical decisions in the interests of pupil welfare and progress. He gives good support to the staff in his department and they in turn share his enthusiasm and determination. The work of the department is rigorously monitored and evaluated externally and internally. The development plan contains sound proposals and robust criteria for funding aimed at promoting success. Learning resources are up-to-date and well used and there is excellent use of ICT. There are strong formal and informal links within the department resulting in a highly collaborative team.