

Report of the Denominational (Section 48) Inspection
Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

NOTRE DAME CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Surrey Street
Norwich, NR1 3PB

DFE No. 926 4605
URN No. 121189

For Catholic Diocese of East Anglia



Headteacher: Mr Brian Conway

Chair of Governors: Mrs Linda Bennett

Date of Inspection: 17th – 18th October 2011

Diocesan Inspector: Mrs Sue Aldous

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Description of the School

Notre Dame High School is a Roman Catholic comprehensive voluntary-aided school, situated in the centre of Norwich, which provides secondary education for approximately 1400 pupils aged 11-18 year of age. The school serves both the local and wider Catholic community by admitting pupils from a wide geographical area, including parts of Norfolk and north Suffolk. There are seven feeder primary schools. The school is a training school and a specialist school for both languages and science. There are 90 equivalent FTE teachers, 170 staff in total of whom 40% are Catholic. Five teachers hold the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies qualification. All are in the RE department. 72.4% of pupils are Catholic in Key stage 3 and 4; falling to 42.5% in Key stage 5 as many pupils join in Year 12 from other schools.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS. Grade: 1

Notre Dame is an outstanding Catholic school. The school's self-evaluation proclaims its Catholic identity manifest through its central mission "I have come so that they can have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10) There is a culture of high standards of achievement, care and behaviour. Pupils recognise this. One commented, 'Notre Dame develops you as a person as well as academically - who you are as a person and how it is good to give to others.'

The school is very well led by the head teacher who seeks continuous improvement in all aspects of school life through robust analysis of data. He is ably supported by the leadership team who work to turn the school's mission into a living faith. The governors provide strong support to the head teacher. The Catholic life of the school is at the heart of all that they do. The Head of the Religious Education Department is a dedicated manager and teacher who leads with pedagogical expertise and creativity. Staff provide good role models for pupils which promotes a conducive learning environment.

Outcomes for pupils, the provision for Catholic education and the capacity for sustained improvement are excellent.

Since the last inspection there has been a significant increase in pupil participation in planning and leading assemblies and school liturgies allowing an increase in the range and frequency of opportunities for pupils to pray, worship and reflect.

Also, since the last inspection the school Mission Statement has been reviewed and is communicated effectively throughout the school community.

Although the curriculum time for Religious Education in Key Stage 3 has not yet been increased from 8%, there is a careful audit of planned curriculum activities to provide 10%.

The Catholic life of the school has been monitored and evaluated by the School Development Committee whose task is now done. The school is deciding how to modify the role of the 'Chaplaincy Team' to take on some of the monitoring and directing of the Catholic life of the school in the future.

The senior leadership roles and responsibilities have been reviewed recently, offering outstanding opportunity for maintaining effectiveness. School and RE department systems for tracking, monitoring, analysing and evaluating the impact of the school's work are in place and lead to improvement for all pupils. Self-evaluation is an outstanding feature of the school and the RE department. The RE SEF could improve further by assessing the expected impact on the pupils of its INSET and areas of development. The senior leadership team is very effective in supporting the RE department and the Catholic life of the school is at the heart of all decisions made by the senior leadership team and the Governing body. The vision of the Head teacher and his team is strong and communicated to all staff through the Cornerstone booklet, the summary of aims and the Faith School SIDP which looks to sustaining and developing the effectiveness of the school further.

What the school needs to do to improve further?

- Keep under review the time allocated to classroom RE at Key Stage 3
- Make collective worship in form groups more consistent, particularly encouraging continuing leadership by pupils.
- Strengthen the RE department's marking further, by identifying clearly aspects of pupil's work that have been successful and making suggestions for improvement to pupils more regularly.

PUPILS. How good are outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups. Grade: 1

The SEF identifies a wide range of Prayer and worship across the school, produces a weekly bulletin with the Gospel theme and seal theme for use by staff and students and good practice was observed during the inspection.

Prayer and worship play a daily part in the life of the school. The whole school community comes together several times each year for the celebration of Mass and year 8 Mass was observed during the inspection; the Sacrament of Reconciliation is available to students in Advent and Lent. Pupils have contributed to other opportunities for prayer & spiritual development. A group of pupils helped review the use of the Chapel and the visibility of religious artifacts throughout the school. Others have planned elements of year group and whole school services. Pupils regularly help plan and lead assemblies. An effective example of this was observed during the inspection on 'Service' where pupils had recorded and thanked support staff. Some pupils are Special Ministers of Holy Communion. Pupils join the Tuesday morning voluntary Mass and Friday Vespers. There is a 'Christian Union' that meets weekly for prayer and discussion. The school is fortunate to have a beautiful Chapel and receives outstanding support from its chaplain. Pupils also value and enjoy their charity work and were eagerly planning the annual sponsored walk for the end of the week expected to raise £16,000 for good causes.

The standards that pupils achieve in Religious Education are outstanding; at GCSE they are well above the national average and compare very favourably with the very best in the country. In the last three years the results of the GCSE Edexcel course at Key Stage 4 have increased: A*- C in 2009 and 2010 were 82%; A*- C in 2011 was 88%. Significant numbers of pupils got either A or A*. RE provided the most A* of any department (In 2009, 28; in 2010, 28 and in 2011, 26.) Pupils gain knowledge, skills and understanding at a very good rate across all key stages. Very few pupils underperform. The results at A level reflect pupils' target grades. Assessment for learning techniques are used to great effect across the key stages, impacting on attainment. These are all clear indicators of a successful Religious Education Department.

Most students enjoy RE lessons. They enjoy their work, they are challenged in their thinking, and progress. Relationships within the department are excellent. The care for the pupils is impressive. Teachers use praise well to motivate and stimulate pupils and this leads to a lively response and positive attitudes to learning. Students know that they are uniquely valued and work hard to achieve in lessons. They are courteous and appreciative and work collaboratively.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS. How effective are leaders and managers in developing the Catholic life of the school? Grade 1

Leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school are outstanding. The Headteacher communicates very effectively the Catholic vision of education within the school as well as in the wider community. There are very good systems to monitor the effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school. This in turn has informed self-evaluation and led to detailed action planning and is reflected in all school committees' policies.

Governors provide very good support to the school as critical friends; they safeguard and promote the Catholic life of the school by holding the leaders to account; they have a good understanding of the Catholic life of the school for example through links with specific departments.

The school is very inclusive and there are pupils from other faiths, no faith and other denominations who feel welcomed and valued as full members of the community. There is a strong commitment to service in the local and wider Community. There are many outstanding opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the wider community especially through the school's link with the Notre Dame Network of schools, their fundraising and the broad range of charities that are supported. Within the school there is very good cohesion. The pastoral support in the school is very strong and pupils feel safe and valued. The Religious Education department contributes significantly to community cohesion through the systematic teaching of other faiths so that pupils are prepared and able to engage meaningfully in dialogue with others, this was observed during the inspection. The school has analysed and planned for Community cohesion to develop in its policy Promoting Community cohesion

PROVISION. How effective is the provision for Catholic education: Grade 1

Prayer is a very important feature of school life. Staff pray together in briefing, and the school day begins for students with prayer in registration. The assembly and prayer in registration observed were carefully planned, well-resourced and involved staff and students in planning and participation. Students know what is expected of them and are well behaved, calm, attentive and reflective. The beginning of Acts of Worship should be marked with the sign of the cross.

The quality of teaching in RE is at least good and much is outstanding. Almost every RE teacher was observed teaching and each key stage was included in the observation schedule. In particular, the teaching and learning observed at Key Stage 5 was innovative and challenged the pupils to explore difficult concepts with confidence. The RE department mainly takes place in a suite of 4 rooms, making a learning environment that allows for both celebration of students' work and stimulating and interesting displays in corridors and classrooms. The department is well resourced. Pace and challenge are appropriate, and IT provision is good. The vast majority of students enjoy lessons, are motivated and enjoy excellent relations with staff. Teachers use praise well to motivate and stimulate pupils and this leads to a lively response and positive attitudes to learning. As a result pupils make outstanding progress. At Key Stage 4 use of past exam questions aid learning. Assessment of pupils' work observed included peer and self-assessment. Teachers mark and assess pupils' written work but inspection noted inconsistency across the Department in diagnostic marking and formative comments. More consistency could enable all groups of learners to know how to make improvement.

The Religious Education curriculum provides excellent opportunities for continuing spiritual and moral development of pupils. The schemes of work provide a systematic study of God, the life and teaching of Jesus and the Church, the central beliefs that Catholics hold and the relationship between faith and life. Pupils are encouraged to investigate and reflect, develop appropriate skills and attitudes to respond to God's call in everyday life. The curriculum time given to classroom Religious Education at Key Stage 4 meets the Bishops' requirement of 10%. At Key stage 3 the shortfall in lesson time is carefully audited to include worship and planned activities in other parts curriculum to meet the Bishops' requirement of 10%. At Key Stage 4 the department follows the Edexcel examination specification which covers the requirements of the diocese. There is a very good General Religious Education course that fully meets the needs of pupils in the Sixth Form. Recruitment to AS is strong and retention to A2 is good.

The result is that pupils and staff flourish at Notre Dame High School.

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2nd November 2011

Dear Pupils

Section 48 Inspection

I greatly enjoyed my visit to your school. During the two days I was with you I talked to quite a lot of you. I appreciated how welcome you made me feel. You told me how happy you are at school and how proud you are of it. It is clear that your Head teacher and his staff have worked with you to improve your school.

The focus for my visit was to look at your learning in Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school. Most of you make good progress in RE. The exam results in RE are excellent and you told me that you have good relationships with your teachers which help you to do well. I have asked that they use comments in your books to point out to you to how to do even better.

While I was at the school I attended your year 9 assembly, a year 8 Mass and a tutor group morning assembly. Some of you were participating. I particularly liked Year 9's video about being thankful to support staff. I saw that you want to be more involved in acts of worship and have great ideas of your own about how to get across the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. I have asked that you have more opportunities to plan and lead acts of collective worship. I hope that your sponsored walk went well and that you raised as much money as you hoped to help the charities you support. It is a strong feature of your school that you want to help others less fortunate than yourselves.

Everywhere I went I saw you behaving well and there was a calm and purposeful atmosphere in your classrooms. You should be very proud of yourselves.

Yours Sincerely,

Mrs Susan Aldous
Section 48 Inspector