

**DIOCESE OF PLYMOUTH
VICARIATE FOR EVANGELISATION CATECHESIS AND SCHOOLS**



St. Boniface Catholic College
Boniface Lane
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URN 113558

Head Teacher: Mr Frank Ashcroft
Chair of Governors: Mr. Malcolm Teague

Canonical Inspection under Canon Law 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Plymouth and
inspection of Denominational Education under S48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of Inspection 9-10th May, 2017

Inspectors:
Miss Sarah Adams
Mr. Michael Antram

Context of School

St. Boniface College is a small Catholic Academy school for boys from 11-18 years. Girls are admitted into the 6th Form. It welcomes pupils of all denominations and faith backgrounds. There are currently 555 boys on roll and 10 girls in the 6th Form. Of these 26% are on the SEND register with 12.6% of pupils having a statement of special educational needs. 7% of children have English as an additional language, 9.2% receive free school meals, 12.2% are in receipt of pupil premium funding and 11.9% of pupils come from British Service families.

Over-All Effectiveness:	Requires Improvement	Grade 3
The School as a Catholic Community:	Requires Improvement	Grade 3
Leadership and Management:	Requires Improvement	Grade 3
RE Leadership	Requires Improvement	Grade 3
RE Achievement	Requires Improvement	Grade 3
Quality of Teaching	Requires Improvement	Grade 3
Worship and Spiritual Life of the School	Requires Improvement	Grade 3

This is a school which **Requires Improvement**

THE SCHOOL AS A CATHOLIC COMMUNITY (WELCOME, WITNESS, WELFARE)

Key Strengths:

- St. Boniface College is a warm and welcoming community.
- The leadership is honest in its appraisal of how well the school is doing and has identified accurately the areas for development.
- The part-time voluntary lay chaplain is making a significant contribution to nurturing the Catholic Life and Mission of the school.
- Staff and students speak positively about the nature of the school's catholicity, in terms of it being supportive, friendly, happy.

Areas for Development

1. Provide all staff with INSET on the five 'W's (Welcome, Welfare, Witness, Worship and Word) so that all can appreciate and work with the framework for the 'School as a Catholic Community'. From this establish a cross-discipline working party to monitor and support how the school lives within this framework.
2. Revisit the Mission Statement of the school and develop a programme of INSET which supports all staff to grow in their understanding and capacity to articulate the distinctive nature of the Catholic School.

St. Boniface College is a school which has the potential to be a good school. A falling roll and poor results over a period of time have resulted in a need for the school to place its focus

firmly on improving standards and ensuring that students can achieve at the highest levels. Although the community recognises the importance of its Catholic identity and have some understanding of how this might be reflected, the gaps in an understanding of what this looks like on a daily basis have yet to be bridged.

Gospel values are implicit in the life of the school but, as yet, are not embedded in such a way that they are explicitly lived out within the community. Greater attention to the school's Mission Statement, so that everyone knows and understands its aims and purpose, would help to ensure that it has impact on the life of the community.

The quality of welcome is a strength of the college. In particular staff in the reception area of the school make sure that visitors and students feel welcomed. People are respectful of one another and as a small community are alert to responding to the needs of others, particularly when someone may be struggling.

Currently the school is being supported by a part-time volunteer lay chaplain who is working tirelessly to support the ethos of the school. Her commitment to engaging with students and putting in place support for them to appreciate what it means to attend a Catholic school is having an impact. As a result of her drive and enthusiasm, the assistant lay chaplain is also growing in confidence and skills to support the students.

Relationships within in the school are generally good. Staff and students spoken to speak positively about them. The pastoral team of the school, is relatively new in its formation and is beginning to identify the need for clear expectations around behaviour. Students understand both reward and sanction systems. Students seem to value the different reward systems in place and most students seem to be responding well to these. Occasionally restorative approaches are used, as and when the need arises. At transition and break times boisterous behaviour around the school often goes unchecked. This needs to be addressed to ensure that all pupils feel safe around the school.

A strong programme for transition from the feeder primary schools to the college and enhanced transition for boys who need this, ensures that new pupils feel welcomed and confident when they join the college. All students are visited prior to coming to the school and any specific needs carefully responded to. An example of this would be the efforts made to ensure that students are placed with tutors who may be best placed to nurture or respond to a particular student's needs. The college has a designated area which vulnerable students can access, particularly at break times. However, targeted intervention is focused in the classroom so that students are in class and working alongside their peers.

THE SCHOOL AS A CATHOLIC COMMUNITY (LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT)

Key Strengths:

- All members of the school community are valued.
- The Leadership team and the Governing Body are committed to improving outcomes further and have identified the next steps to take.

Areas for Development:

1. For the Catholic mission of the school to be explicit and a central driver of development planning.
2. Focus on formation for all members of the community so that they understand and can consciously articulate and promote Catholic Values (through, for example, induction and staff training).

Leadership in a Catholic school is a significant opportunity for ensuring a strong ethos rooted in Christ's commandment to 'do this in memory of me'. Sharing in communion with one another and having the humility to serve one another is crucial if witness is to be authentic and meaningful. St. Boniface College is a school which has as its foundation the charism of the Christian Brothers. Rediscovering this charism, which has at its heart: faith in the divine presence, a profound sense of the dignity of every human person and a heightened sensitivity to the poor and the marginal, would give the leadership of the College the direction it needs to move the school forward as a strong Catholic community.

The current leadership team is making an effort to bring about positive change in the school. At present the focus for this is ensuring that outcomes are good for all students. School attendance and how the vulnerable are supported have been the primary focus of a Catholic ethos sub-committee on the governing body. However, they have also supported the Year 7 retreat programme and received reports from the lay chaplain about the work she has been doing. These are positive lines of enquiry. As yet they have not been involved in reflecting on the Diocesan framework (The School as a Catholic Community) and so their work has not been concerned specifically with driving the Catholic nature of the school forward.

RE is seen as a curriculum priority, but historically standards in RE have not been strong. There is a genuine commitment on the part of the Head of the Faculty to change this. RE is now taught by permanent teachers and the quality of teaching in RE is improving.

THE SCHOOL AS A TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMUNITY (WORD)

Leadership and Co-ordination of RE

Key Strengths

- The Director of Humanities who is responsible for RE, has a thorough grasp of effective strategies to raise standards and outcomes, and of pedagogical approaches that engage and inspire.
- The Head Teacher has taken the pragmatic decision to appoint a strong middle leader over RE to raise standards, aware that in the longer term such a leader, who is in addition an RE specialist, will be needed.
- The status of RE is high, with all subjects contributing towards the wider religious formation of students via liturgies and retreats.
- There are some elements that are good, including rigorous monitoring, the development of Catholic Social Teaching and the prominence of the subject within the curriculum.

Areas to Develop

1. Ensure that the Director of Humanities is given the training in specific features of Catholic RE so that this can be factored into monitoring and development processes.
2. Seek to recruit an outstanding RE specialist who can additionally drive up standards in RE and provide effective CPD for colleagues (including and beyond the departmental team).

Attainment and Progress in RE

Key Strengths

- Processes in place focus attention on the progress of all, including disadvantaged and more able students. These are likely to have a positive impact on progress and outcomes.
- There is a growing confidence in the reliability of data in making predictions, which, in turn, leads to better targeted interventions.
- Students in general are enabled to enjoy RE and to see it as relevant and useful. Their motivation and enjoyment of learning has the potential to raise levels of effort further.
- Relationships are positive and contribute to learning.

Areas for Development

1. Ensure that expectations of student progress are raised, based on prior learning and target adjusted; to ensure that staff and students increase aspirations, with a commensurate increase in accountability (e.g. quality of work, behaviour) and pace

in learning; and that planning is based on assessment. Key Stage 3 is a special area of focus.

2. Build on development of processes to enable recall over time, such as by interleaving learning within schemes of work; so that individual lessons make more of opportunities to follow students' curiosity and reflection, so that they engage personally, at a deeper level rather than racing through content.

Quality of Teaching

Key Strengths

- Indications of learning over time suggest that feedback is growing in effectiveness, as students respond more thoughtfully and thoroughly to teacher assessment.
- Teachers have built positive relationships with students which are often used to motivate and secure engagement with learning.
- Teachers generally show a good degree of subject knowledge, which is used to good effect when answering students' questions.
- Students are informed about their progress in detail and know how to improve.
- The quality of teaching has improved so that there is more evidence of good teaching over time, however this needs to be consolidated further.

Areas to Develop

1. Develop questioning techniques in order to rapidly assess the depth of understanding of all students, and stretch the thinking of all students, especially the more able.
2. Reduce reliance on a common format for lessons (e.g. some, most, all) which may constrict learning or be ineffective as outcomes are not demonstrably ensured; so that students are developed as curious independent learners, with reduced reliance on the teacher.

The key strengths, highlighted in each of the three areas above, outline how the teaching and learning within RE is on an upward trajectory. Results will be key to demonstrating the progress that has been made. There is a growing confidence in the College's commitment to ensuring a solid basis for developing this department, so that ultimately it is performing on a parity with History and Geography. In addition, as confidence grows, the potential for RE to be central to the life of the school is a genuine prospect.

Throughout the course of ten lesson observations, the students appeared to enjoy their RE, could talk about their learning and in a number of lessons were challenged sufficiently to ensure that they remained on task and engaged with their learning. Occasionally it was not clear to students what was expected of them and so they became dis-engaged. Low level disruption in some lessons occurred when students were not being challenged sufficiently.

THE SCHOOL AS A CELEBRATING COMMUNITY (WORSHIP AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT)

Key Strengths

- The energy and commitment of a voluntary lay chaplain with an assistant lay chaplain supporting, are enabling staff and students to participate in a number of different worship activities which help to deepen their relationship with God.
- A three day residential retreat programme for Year 7 provides a solid introduction for students to appreciate the Catholic ethos of the school.
- A well-devised programme for worship provides support for those members of staff who are less confident about enabling students to participate in a daily time of prayer.
- The close proximity of the local clergy and their willingness to be involved in the life of the school is an asset to the College.

Areas for Development

1. Provide training for staff on praying with adolescents.
2. Establish a student chaplaincy team to support the Catholic Life of the college.

The College is blessed to have an enthusiastic and committed volunteer who understands the mission and vision of the Church and is passionate about finding ways to share this with the students so that they can come to an appreciation of its purpose. She has worked sensitively to share ideas and empower the assistant chaplain to take ideas forward, particularly with Year 7.

A residential retreat programme for students in Year 7 is now in its third year. Involving staff, governors and 6th form students, the Year 7 students are given an opportunity to live as community, pray and work together so that they appreciate more fully what it means to be part of a Catholic community. Within the experience they are given opportunities to be creative as well as meditative, opening them to the presence of God in all things. The involvement of 6th formers in running the retreats has led them to want their own retreat experience. Consequently the lay chaplain facilitated this happening for them with a number of students taking up the opportunity.

The provision of a programme of worship themes, put together by the chaplaincy team has provided staff with the materials they need to lead acts of worship within their tutor groups. There is still a need for staff to be helped with how to use these resources and enable students to take a greater lead in the delivery of worship. In terms of whole school liturgies, the involvement of the drama department has been beneficial and supportive. This is an area which could grow with the development of a full time chaplaincy team.

The College is situated on a site adjacent to the Parish church. This is a valuable means of contact with the parish clergy who are willing and readily respond to requests to go into

school both for liturgies and lessons. They are a visible presence in the school and younger students, in particular, are forming positive relationships with the clergy. Their continuing engagement is crucial to the life of the College.

Staff are willing to engage with the ethos of the school and meet fortnightly to pray and reflect on the Gospel together. There is an expectation that all staff attend this and those asked about the experience were positive about having such an opportunity. As community gatherings like this become more common place within the College, the capacity for different staff to facilitate the prayer life will grow. The school's capacity to be Good in this area will require all staff to take responsibility for this dimension of the school's Catholic life.

Conclusion

St. Boniface College is a school which has the potential to offer a real experience of what it means to be a Catholic community with high academic standards at the heart of the Church. We would like to thank the Head Teacher, Senior Leadership Team, all staff, Parish Clergy and Governors for making our visit to the school a positive experience. We would also like to express our appreciation to the students who were a delight to be with and who showed us respect and kindness at all times.