

DIOCESE OF PLYMOUTH

Department for Formation

**St Boniface's Roman Catholic Comprehensive College,
PL5 3AG**

Record of Diocesan Review 12 July 2007

Summary Report

URN 113491

Introduction

The school was inspected by Ofsted on 6-7 June 2007 and was judged to be good overall with some outstanding features. A new Section 48 Inspection process is currently being developed for use in diocesan schools. Pending finalisation of this process and as an interim measure, Bishop Budd has given his approval to a formal review to be conducted jointly by a diocesan officer and the school, to meet the requirements of Section 48 of the Education Act 2005. This document is an agreed statement of the outcomes of that review, to be shared with governors, parents and other stakeholders as the school wishes. It identifies some of St Boniface's key strengths and also areas of focus that have been agreed to further strengthen the life and work of the school. The review covered a wide range of issues and as a process it sought to be creative and to support the school in its ongoing development as a Catholic community.

The review was conducted by Sue Pitcher (Diocesan Schools Officer) working with the Headmaster; the Acting Headmaster Designate; the Assistant Head who is also Curriculum Leader of Religious Education and has whole school responsibility for faith development and as director of Key Stage 4; the Chaplain; and the teaching staff of the Religious Education Department. The outcomes of the review were agreed on the basis of:-

- contextual documentation provide by the schools in advance
- further documentation made available in school
- visits to two lessons (Y7 and Y12)
- discussion with the members of staff referred to above
- observation of one Act of Collective Worship.

Strengths of the school

A significant number of key strengths were identified in the context of St Boniface's distinctive identity as a Catholic school, as factors in its educational success and contribution to the Church's mission in education. The list below is intended to be illustrative, not comprehensive.

1. Religious Education

Standards of attainment in Religious Education at GCSE are very good and at least comparable with attainment in other core subjects. The pass rate and average points score in A1 and A2 are also in line with other subjects. The Head of Department and his staff are highly committed and enthusiastic about their subject and this is clearly reflected in the students' attainment, their enthusiasm for the subject and the numbers who continue with the subject in Years 12 and 13. The Kirkland Rowell survey of student attitudes (2006) showed that students rate provision for Religious Education more highly than all other subjects.

Religious Education has high status across the school and this is evidenced in a range of ways.

- The leadership structure includes membership of the Assistant Head at the most senior level. Prior to re-structuring at the time when TLRs were introduced, the Curriculum Leader was a member of the Senior Management Team with 5 management points. In the new structure, an Assistant Head post was created to incorporate the role of Curriculum Leader and Faith Development Co-ordinator including director of Key Stage 4.

- With the exception of one class room which is significantly under-sized, the department has excellent accommodation in one of the newest parts of the school. The very attractive Quiet Room/Chapel where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved and which is used for prayer, liturgy and as a place where students can go for quiet reflection is the first room that people visiting the department encounter.
- Although the allocation of time to curriculum Religious Education (8% in Key Stages 3 and 4) does not meet the Bishops' Conference requirement of 10% of total teaching time available, the allocation at Key Stage 3 is equal to other core subjects (e.g. English) and in Key Stage 4 to other single examination courses (e.g. History).
- The commitment of both the Headmaster and First Deputy to teaching the core Religious Education programme in Year 13 is a further sign of the high status accorded to the subject.

2. Worship

There is sound provision for daily Collective Worship in the form of weekly House Assemblies, Year Assemblies once or twice a term, and form-based worship four days a week. Students lead House Assemblies. The Assembly seen during the Review involved more than half the students in the form and they undertook their role readily. Resources to support form tutors in delivering Acts of Worship have been enhanced and both the Chaplain and Assistant Head offer help and support in this area. There is good written guidance on Collective Worship. There are arrangements for voluntary Mass or other liturgical celebrations every Friday lunch time and additionally at various points throughout the year, including on Holy Days. Annual day retreats are an entitlement for all students in Key Stage 3 and there are optional residential retreats available in Key Stages 4 and 5. The daily staff briefing begins in prayer.

There was a highly successful mission organised jointly with Notre Dame High School in 2006. Significant time and resources were devoted to its preparation as well as to the mission week itself. Its impact on the school community at every level was, and remains, enormous.

3. Chaplaincy

In response to the last Denominational Inspection (Section 23) in 2003, a part-time (0.6FTE) lay Chaplain has been employed. With the support of senior leaders, he has begun to widen the provision for worship offered and is conscious of the importance of developing alternative approaches to worship which take account of the students' needs and experience. His survey of students' responses to worship has enabled him to clarify needs and plan to meet these with activities which are designed to be relevant and accessible to students. A 'roving' Stations of the Cross is a striking example of success in this. The school's ongoing commitment to chaplaincy is evident in the appointment by Bishop Christopher of a part-time clergy Chaplain (over many years) and two part-time lay Chaplains for September (to cover both RC secondary schools) in order that provision can continue to develop when the current lay Chaplain takes up a full-time teaching commitment in September.

4. Contribution to the common good

Fund-raising for charity is an important part of the life of the school. Students, supported and led by the Assistant Head and other senior leaders, regularly raise substantial sums, for example during the annual CAFOD week. Other departments show commitment to fund-raising activities through their support and their own contribution.

Agreed areas of focus for development

It was agreed that the school's mission as a Catholic school would be further enhanced by focusing planned development in the following seven areas.

1. Monitor Religious Education teaching staff's workload during the interregnum and provide appropriate support as necessary.
2. Agree and embed, initially in Key Stage 3, a system for measuring student progress which will inform the identification of appropriate learning goals for groups and individuals and will enable teachers and students to track progress and achievement. (This is a department SEF priority). This is consistent with the school's Assessment for Learning agenda and will be instrumental in ensuring that students realise their full potential.
3. Strengthen and embed quality assurance systems, to include sharing of good practice across the department (e.g. pupil learning questionnaires), in order to ensure continued high standards of teaching and learning (SEF priority – page 20).
4. Address the issue of the under-sized classroom.
5. Continue to promote excellence in provision for students' spiritual development by ensuring that all Acts of Worship are consistent in delivery and of high quality. In order to achieve this, it is recommended that consideration be given to the ways in which teachers might be supported in this – for example, through the Induction Programme, whole-school CPD and light-touch monitoring.
6. Continue to encourage and support the work of chaplaincy in developing a wider provision of voluntary prayer and worship which is accessible to students and appropriate to their age and experience.
7. Identify and implement whole-school strategies for explicitly promoting St Boniface's distinctive Catholic ethos and mission; for example, through inclusion of a Catholic ethos strand and related development priorities in the SDP and whole-school CPD programme.

Conclusion

St Boniface's is a successful school with a strong sense of purpose and proud of its Catholic identity. It provides students with a safe, ordered, well cared for environment in which to learn, develop their own spirituality and grow in relationship with God and each other. Both the school and department are at a point of transition with the departure of the Headmaster and the Head of Department at the end of term. The Acting Headmaster Designate is wholly committed to St Boniface's Catholic ethos and identity and will work to ensure that these continue to be promoted and developed. The members of the Religious Education Department will take on some additional short-term responsibilities in the period before a new Head of Department is appointed. Their commitment will do much to sustain them in this and they will work hard to ensure that the current very high standards are maintained.

Thanks are extended to all who participated in the Review process.

John Mannix
Diocesan Director of Schools

David Kavanagh
Headmaster

Peter Fairweather
Chair of
Governors