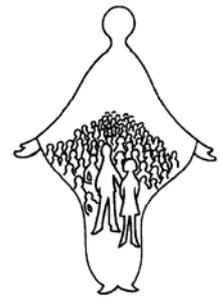


**SALFORD DIOCESE
INSPECTION REPORT**



**ST. DAMIAN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC
SCIENCE COLLEGE.**

Lees Road Ashton-u-Lyne Tameside OL6 8BH

Inspection date September 2008

Reporting Inspector Mr. W. Ryan

Inspection carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School Catholic Secondary
 URN 106270
 Age range of pupils 11-16
 Number on roll 781
 Appropriate authority the governing body
 Chair of Governors Rev. Fr. Myles Sheahan
 Head teacher Mrs. F. Ashton
 Head of Religious Education Mr. P. Hives
 Date of previous inspection May 2007

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades 1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3 = Satisfactory 4 = Inadequate
Overall effectiveness of the school	2	
Leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school	2	
The quality of Collective Worship	2	
Achievement and standards in Religious Education	3	
The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education	3	
The quality of the Religious Education curriculum	2	
Leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education	2	

The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Damian's is an 11-16 voluntary aided Roman Catholic co-educational Science College. The school serves an area which is socially and geographically large and diverse. It provides education for the pupils living in the associated parishes of St. Christopher (Ashton-under-Lyne), St. Stephen (Droylsden), St. Joseph (Mossley) and St. Ann (Ashton-under-Lyne). Approximately 15% of learners come from extra-district schools. The indicative admission number is 150 and there are currently 781 learners on roll of whom 89.2 % are baptised Roman Catholics. 5.9 % of learners are eligible for free school meals. The school has 138 learners who are identified as having special educational needs and of these 9 have a statutory statement of special educational need. The number of Catholic teachers in the school is 32 and this represents 69 % of the total staff.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Damian's is a good Catholic school. The School Mission statement and its six principles form the solid basis on which its policies are built. Its primary aim of "Furthering the development of our Catholic Faith" is the first criterion by which the school measures its success. These aims feature prominently in school documentation, learners' diaries and in policy statements and are the initial point of reference for all strategies to improve provision. The school is well served by an experienced governing body which in its role of critical friend evaluates, monitors and supports the work of individual faculties and of the community as a whole. The chair, the link governor for Religious Education and clergy governors make a significant and valued contribution to supporting the school's Catholic ethos. The headteacher, along with her extended Senior Leadership Team, are dynamically engaged in leading the drive to improve standards and achievement. Prayer and worship are every day features and liturgical celebrations are planned and evaluated. The school community engages in a liturgical life that is rich in variety and content, and it demonstrates an admirable respect for its Faith and for its practice. This might be further developed through involving the learners at the planning stage of liturgies. The school has the benefit of a prayer centre, a well used and valued resource. The Religious Education Faculty plays a prominent part in developing the school's spiritual provision and, in challenging circumstances, continues to maintain the drive to raise achievement in curriculum Religious Education. The pastoral care provision that is offered here is a feature of the school. Form tutors and progress managers make a significant contribution to the spiritual and moral development of their charges. Arrangements for welcoming learners to the school are excellent and well devised strategies are in place to ensure that the learners are well supported. Relationships in the school are excellent and teachers work hard to encourage good learning and progress. The learners behave well and relationships between teachers and learners are excellent. The ethos of encouragement and reward leads to well-motivated learners who make good progress, while they and their parents for their part value the school. Students are actively engaged in supporting each other through their work as members of the school council, as prefects or as peer mentors. Concern for others motivates the learners to give generously to a variety of charities. Funding for Religious Education is good and Religious Education receives 10% of teaching time for the majority of Key Stage 3 learners and 10% for all at Key Stage 4.

Improvement since the last inspection

Since the last inspection a specialist teacher in Religious Education and an assistant headteacher who is also a Religious Education specialist have been appointed. The number of non specialists has been reduced and there are no shared classes. The governing body has not yet found a suitable candidate for the post of lead teacher in Religious Education. The vast majority of classes are now taught by specialist teachers.

Capacity to improve

The school's capacity to evaluate itself and improve is good. Leadership continues to be committed to raising achievement and enriching the lives of the learners. The Religious Education Faculty, is making good progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Allocate some time for whole school in-service training on the Catholic nature of the school.
- Develop the role and composition of the chaplaincy group to encourage greater participation of learners in the planning and presentation of assemblies and liturgies.
- Maintain the drive to raised boys' attainment in Key Stage 4.
- Continue the effort to ensure that all classes are taught by Religious Education specialists.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The school deems the leadership and management of its Catholic life to be good. Evidence gathered during the inspection supports this view. St. Damian's benefits from a Mission Statement with clearly defined aims shared by all stakeholders. The community as a whole would benefit from some in-service training on its Catholic nature. The governing body provides expertise and leadership which challenges and supports the headteacher and the Senior Leadership Team in their efforts to raise the standard of the quality of opportunity which the school provides. Through its link governor structure the governing body evaluates, monitors and supports the school's academic, spiritual and pastoral provision. Religious Education and liturgy also benefit from the enthusiastic support offered by other members of the clergy on the governing body. Members of the governing body attend and participate in major liturgical events celebrated in school. The headteacher is committed to developing the school as a Catholic community and is supported in doing so by a dedicated Senior Leadership Team. The Religious Education Faculty provides support and guidance in developing the school's ethos. Robust pastoral care arrangements and excellent support for the varying needs of the learners engender a sense of welcome and inclusion, which in turn leads learners to value their school. Student support officers make a valuable contribution to the school's care provision. In recent years the influx of students from Europe in particular has presented the school with challenges which it has met successfully. Parents/carers are kept informed of progress through the regular reports while communication between school and home is sound. Links with partner primary schools are good and transition arrangements are comprehensive. Learners' attendance is good, indicating that they enjoy attending school and sharing its success. The learners extend the school's links with the wider community through their support for various local and world wide charities.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The inspector agrees with the school's judgement that the quality of collective worship is good. The school's chaplaincy group, whose membership includes governors, senior managers, members of the Religious Education Faculty and other members of staff, plans the liturgical calendar. The addition of some representation from the student body would further enhance the catholicity of this group. Liturgies are celebrated throughout the year, initiated by a welcome celebration for new intake learners. Advent and Lenten liturgies prepare the community for the major celebrations of Christmas and Easter while Holy Days are marked by opportunities for school celebrations of Holy Mass. Members of the community have the opportunity to attend services of reconciliation. Liturgies are well prepared, sometimes using information communication technology to engage the community. Learners are attentive and pray with reverence. Prayer is a feature of life at the school. Staff meetings and briefings start with prayers. Assemblies, led by the Senior Leadership Team and registrations feature opportunities for prayer, not only for people of their own Faith but also for those of other faiths. The school prayer book is a valuable resource for form tutors. Learners pray with respect and a registration in the Emmaus Room observed during the inspection was a prayerful experience. Though small, this room is well resourced and valued by the community. The contribution made by non-Catholic members of the school community is recognised and valued. Learners are provided with a number of opportunities to attend residential retreats. There have been no requests for learners to be withdrawn from prayer and worship occasions.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The school considers achievement and standards in Religious Education to be satisfactory. The inspection evidence indicates that this is an accurate assessment. In recent years the Religious Education Faculty has had staffing difficulties. Recent appointments and curriculum arrangements have now been put in place with subsequent indications of improvement in achievement. The introduction of the Icons syllabus subsequent to discussions with the diocesan adviser for secondary education is seen as a move to better meet the needs of the learners in Key Stage 3. Early entry to Key Stage 4 examinations is impacting on the achievement of boys and the school should maintain its drive to raise their achievement. Assessment in Key Stage 3 is in place and is informing planning and teaching. A large majority of Religious Education lessons are now taught by specialists. Standards within the department are high and continue to be challenging. Learners make satisfactory progress at both key stages. Regular monitoring of work by the department, a sound school based marking procedure, departmental self assessment and lesson observation both within the department and by the Leadership Team maintain the momentum of improvement. Learners are attentive in lessons. They work co-operatively together, respect their teachers and hold the subject in high regard. Members of the department make a substantial impact on the spiritual life of the school not only as leaders in this area but also as role models by their own personal witness to the Faith.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The school considers the quality of teaching and learning to be satisfactory and the inspector agrees with this judgement. Members of the department follow the diocesan guidelines at Key Stage 3, together with the Icons syllabus recently introduced to Year 7. These are well resourced. Effective communication and sharing of good practice are features of this well organised department. Lessons are well planned and are presented in interesting and challenging format to the learners. Information communication technology is effectively used to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Assessment is used to inform planning and to inform learners and parents/carers of progress. The school marking scheme ensures that learners are aware of progress and are set realistic targets to improve. Lessons observed during the inspection were generally good with some teaching that was outstanding. The pace of lessons was suited to the ability of the learners and a variety of teaching strategies was used to engage the differing styles of learning among them. Learners responded well. They were attentive, respected the contributions made by fellow learners and treated the teachers and subject matter with appropriate respect. The school makes excellent provision for learners with special needs through comprehensive in-class support from a team of teaching assistants whose work is valued at all levels. Communication with parents/carers is good.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The school considers the quality of the Religious Education curriculum to be satisfactory, while evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that it is good. The Key Stage 3 scheme of work follows the diocesan guidelines for Years 8 and 9, while Year 7 learners are following the Icons syllabus. This will be rolled in to all Key Stage 3 learners over the next two years. It is well supported with appropriate texts and teaching materials and incorporates good use of information communication technology. Lesson plans for all Key Stage 3 as well as assessment tasks are all in place. Learners are aware of the level to which they are working and set themselves targets to make further progress. Self and peer assessment are features of lessons, thus enabling learners to develop their assessment skills. Early entry for a cohort of year 9 learners to Key Stage 4 examinations was successfully introduced this year. This is proving to have a positive effect on boys' attainment. Evaluating learners work within the department is leading to rising standards and raising learners' expectations. At both key stages learners have the opportunities to learn about those of other Faiths and to evaluate their beliefs. Further opportunities for personal development exist through the school's prayer life and by contributing to the numerous charities the school supports.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The school considers leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education to be satisfactory. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that it is good. The head of faculty leads a diverse team with skill and enthusiasm. In challenging circumstances he has maintained a clear vision for the faculty and has the drive needed to realise it. Organisation is good and recent appointments and re-organisation of the teachers is enabling him to improve the faculty and support its members. Self-evaluation is thorough and realistic enabling the head of faculty to develop appropriate strategies to improve the quality of the syllabus and develop suitable resources. Good quality assessment within the department and by the Leadership Team is leading to better awareness of the needs of the learners and improving achievement. The school Leadership Team and the link governor support and encourage this progress. Those teaching Religious Education are in general well qualified, skilled and dedicated. They are excellent role models for the learners. The school is encouraged to continue in its efforts to ensure that all classes are taught by Religious Education specialists. The faculty is well resourced, with good information communication technology available in both specialist rooms. Funding for the department is good, with additional moneys available for liturgy and for unforeseen needs. 10% of curriculum time is allocated to Religious Studies at Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 3, with the exception of year 8 which receives 8%.