

THE DIOCESE OF SHREWSBURY



The Catholic High School
Old Wrexham Road, Handbridge, Chester, CH4 7HS

URN: 111449

DfE No: 4603

22nd & 23rd November 2011

**Report on the
Inspection of Denominational Education**

Lead Inspector: Mrs Pat Barker
Link Inspector: Mr John Wilbraham

The inspection of the denominational education of
The Catholic High School, Chester
was carried out at the request of the Governors of the School
in fulfilment of their obligation under the requirements,
and according to the directives of, the School Inspections Act 2005.
The school was inspected within the framework
approved by the Bishop of Shrewsbury
for the conduct of inspection of the denominational education of
Catholic Secondary Schools within the Diocese.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL

The Catholic High School, Chester is an 11-18 Catholic, voluntary aided, co-educational comprehensive school. The school is under the trusteeship of the Diocese of Shrewsbury and in the Cheshire West and Chester Local Authority. The school has specialist status in Science. The school draws students from across the city of Chester, from three partner primaries, serving five parishes - St Clare's, Lache; St Theresa's, Blacon; St Werburgh's in central Chester; St Francis in the city itself and St. Columba's, Upton. There are two further partner primaries - St. Winefride's in Neston 8 miles away and St. Luke's in Frodsham 15 miles away. Students also arrive from around 20 other primaries in both Chester itself and in Flintshire. A good number of students from St Antony's primary school in Saltney, which is out of the diocese, also transfer to the school. There are 1035 students on roll of whom 235 are in the Sixth Form. A little over 70% of the students are baptised Catholics with 20% from other Christian denominations and 5% from other World Faith traditions. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average but the proportion of those with a statement to support their special educational needs is well above the national average. Around 12% of students are known to be entitled to free school meals, which is just below the national average. There are 80 members of teaching staff (Including 15 part-time) of whom 32 are Catholic. There are 5 full time and two members of staff who teach part - time in the RE department.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

GRADE 1

The Catholic High School, Chester is an outstanding Catholic School and highly effective in providing Catholic education. The school's motto, 'Christo Fidelis' and Mission Statement gives a clear outline of what the school's principle characteristics must be – "to provide the best Catholic education for all. A newly appointed very experienced teacher commented to inspectors, that "This school lives out its mission. The dimension that others are important is not just a 'bolt-on', but it underpins all that the school is about."

All recently inducted staff spoke highly of the session led by the school's Chaplain on Catholic ethos and professional support was seen to be provided for students with particular needs by the provision of an Inclusion centre Behaviour for Learning room and Autistic Spectrum Disorder Centre.

The school meets Diocesan requirements in delivering the RE Curriculum and is providing the entitlement for students in accordance with the recommendations of the Bishop's Conference.

The school enjoys good prestige and esteem in the local parishes.

IMPROVEMENT SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION

GRADE 1

The recommendations made in the last S48 Report in 2006 were:-

- Continue to review and present the Mission Statement into the daily life of the school.
- Appoint another RE Specialist
- Re-suiting of RE Rooms and ICT provision.
- Examine and evaluate the use of different teaching and learning strategies, especially at KS3.
- Develop use of Levels in RE

and these were seen to have been met, or developed.

CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINED IMPROVEMENT

GRADE 1

There is the capacity for sustained development which is evident from the detailed and thorough Self-Evaluation document provided for the Inspection. There is a sense of a shared vision for this school that is owned by all who work here. The Headteacher is line manager for the RE Department and is thus very aware of the challenges that are being faced by the department and the resources and support that is needed. Inspectors were impressed with the vision and drive of the Director of Operations to better serve the school community by bringing certain services in-house, such as the Catering Department. He remarked that these staff now felt more a 'part of the family'. This vision is that the culture and ethos of the school must be supported by the facilities and resources provided.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Ensure a balance in lessons that enables students to have active engagement with the issues and to develop high order thinking skills through the use of targeted questioning.
- Explore and implement means of enabling students to actively engage in parish life thereby strengthening the good links that already exist.
- Implement the plans to develop the RE 'Hub' so as to provide another focal point for celebrating the Catholic ethos and nature of this school.

OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

GRADE 1

Analysis of examination results and other relevant assessments, along with formal and in-class scrutiny of students' work, indicate high levels of attainment and achievement. Resources used provide challenge, guidance and differentiation to ensure that students of all abilities and needs make progress. End of key stage 3 reported levels (based on three formal assessments within the diocesan scheme) compare very favourably with other core subjects and GCSE results were outstanding in 2011. The entry of virtually the whole year (159) resulted in 86% of the students gaining grades A* to C, with 44% of the entry gaining A* or A. These results also represented a consistent improvement since 2009 - (75% A*-C) and 2010 (76% A*-C).

This success is reinforced by the target grades analysis, where Religious Studies exceeded its student points target by 352 points. At Advanced level the number of students taking the subject is impressive, (37, 28 and 25 over the last three years) with the numbers gaining grade A or B being 49%, 43% and 44%. The NOCN General RE course has consistently a high success rate with 97% of students completing the course.

QUALITY OF LEARNING

GRADE 1

Students learn effectively from the RE programme at all levels. Students are aware of their prior attainment and current targets. Tracking and monitoring, teacher feedback and support, mentoring, reports to parents and parents' evenings are all part of the successful process. Scrutiny of work samples and interviews with students indicate awareness of progress and engagement with and enjoyment of RE. Students are able to identify and recall the main elements of their learning. Their responses, attitudes and behaviours allow peers to make progress and learn effectively in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

GRADE 1

Interviews held by the inspectors with staff and pupils as well as questionnaires received, all bore testimony to the fact that this is a school which lives out its mission.

One NQT who had the opportunity to accompany Yr 11 students to a residential Retreat said that the pupils had described their experience there as 'life-changing'. This teacher commented that on the retreat she had a realisation too - "I know now why I am a teacher."

Students interviewed felt valued and well supported in faith matters by the School Chaplain and by the local clergy who serve the school. They said that prayer was an important part of school life and offered many examples, such as the Book of Remembrance and the Year 7 prayer as well as services in the chapel. Outreach to local and global communities was evident - Shoebox collection for Samaritan's Purse, the Kenya project and planned project in Borneo as well as Youth SVP were examples seen during the inspection.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

GRADE 1

The weekly theme and resources prepared by the Chaplain are well liked and give scope and flexibility to all teachers to support worship in school throughout the week. Daily prayers take place in Form Time and there is a weekly Assembly for each year group, and The Angelus is said at midday.

Pupil involvement is very good and the Yr 10 assembly observed during the inspection was well structured and engaged all pupils as they heard a powerful testimony from a Yr 13 student. Good use of ICT also enhanced the worship which included Scriptural references and communal prayer.

There is a weekly Mass as well as special services during the liturgical seasons. Also Mass is the focal point for welcoming new Year 7 students and their parents to the school and when students leave in Year 11 and at the end of Sixth Form.

PROVISION

TEACHING AND LEARNING

GRADE 2

Five full lessons were observed during the inspection (one a paired observation). Four of these were judged to be good with one outstanding. The teaching observed was effective in enabling students to make progress in their learning. The evidence of attainment levels and the consistency and quality of assessment procedures indicate that significant progress is being achieved but there is scope for further improvement in enabling students to become more actively engaged in aspects of the learning process. For example, students could be given more opportunity to articulate their own experiences or opinions, to debate the topic, or to develop more investigative approaches. The TEEP initiative is being developed in the department and involves the extensive use of ICT and other relevant resources. However, occasionally the technology moved the students quickly through some issues which needed further questioning and development.

EFFECTIVENESS OF ASSESSMENT

GRADE 1

Scrutiny of samples of work and exercise books, along with observation of evidence in lessons, indicates a consistent approach to the implementation of the departmental assessment policy in all key stages. The written teacher feedback in AS and A2 and its relationship to the OCR assessment criteria is a noteworthy example of good practice, as also is the system of review interviews after mock examinations. Students know where they are in their learning and are aware of what is needed to advance. They indicated their appreciation of this in their interviews during the inspection. The students find the inserts in their books indicating assessment levels, grade descriptors and personal targets not only very helpful but as fully integrated with their consciousness and practice; as also with peer marking. The effectiveness of the assessment policy and process is endorsed by the outcomes in the examination results.

RE PROVISION

GRADE 1

The Curriculum in R.E. is judged to meet the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. The provision at key stage 3 is within the Diocesan Framework, the GCSE is the Edexcel scheme which includes units specifically tailored to the needs of Catholic schools, the General RE in the Sixth Form is ratified by NIBRIA/NOCN and a challenging and stimulating Philosophy and Ethics RS course is offered (and is popular) at A level. Time allocations meet the requirements at all key stages. All the curricular schemes provide for students' spiritual and moral development and there is evidence from the students that they see the benefits they gain from the R.E. curriculum. The provision takes into account student needs and provides differentiation, support for Special Needs, Inclusion and Autistic Spectrum Disorder Centres and a variety of support through classroom assistants and other specialists.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE AND ETHOS

GRADE 1

Leaders and managers are effective, and consistently and robustly promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school. This process is exceptionally well-led by the Headteacher whose vision and practice is given full support by the Senior Leadership Team. The School Improvement Plan, the Mission Statement and the prospectus are all examples of clear declarations of the school's purpose and values. The evaluation of the school's Catholic ethos is integrated into the whole-school processes, thereby embedding it into the consciousness and practice of the whole staff. Candidates for posts in the school are asked, 'How do your values support the Catholic ethos of the school?' It is also inspiring to have both the Heads of RE and SEN on the Extended Leadership Team. The monitoring of form tutors is undertaken through the Heads of Year and the Headteacher himself is the line manager of the RE Department.

Assemblies are led by the Headteacher and Senior and Pastoral Leaders and the RE and chaplaincy team. The Head teacher's 'open-door' approach allows all members of the school community regular access and contributes to the overall positive, welcoming ethos and channels of communication.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE RE DEPARTMENT

GRADE 1

The RE Department is a key department in the school and the staff and the work they do both individually and as a team, is highly valued by colleagues, students and parents alike. The Department is very effectively led, monitored and evaluated by the Head of Department (currently on maternity leave) but has been very well managed and led in her absence by the second in Department who has stepped into the role extremely well (this due to a very effective working relationship, induction and support).

The Student Leadership Team is noted as an example of good practice. Departmental student questionnaires keep the department in touch with student needs. Evaluation processes are in place through lesson observations and examinations analysis. Assessment and feedback is well managed and materials used are appropriate and supportive of learning. There is an evident commitment to maintaining success and continuously improving standards.

GOVERNING BODY

GRADE 1

The Governing body is aware of and shares the common vision for the school, which is to provide a well-rounded education for all, and over time help to develop the formation of faith and morals of each student. All governors have attended the relevant training and also workshops that are provided on specific issues e.g. Teaching and Learning. The Chair of governors sees their role as two-fold, in that they provide support, - there is a link governor to specific departments who can act as a critical friend; and also intervention is provided when necessary. Governors have the vision to see that the school has to adapt (not compromise) to reflect the changing nature of education and indeed society. They also recognise that an increasing number of non-catholic children come to the school and ensure that they are welcomed. They believe that the school does a good job in integrating them.

COMMUNITY COHESION

GRADE 1

Leaders and managers are very committed and effective in ensuring that the school makes a major contribution to community cohesion. Internally, the whole spectrum of student needs is addressed with provision for Special Needs, the Inclusion Centre, Behaviour for Learning Room, the Autistic Spectrum Disorder Centre, and support for students with English as an additional Language. Externally, links with Primary Schools and parishes are strong, especially at transition. Parental support is very evident, as also is the policy of contact with parents both for problem solving and celebration of the good. Students have opportunities to engage in many and various trips, retreats and residentials, including expeditions as far away as Kenya and Borneo (planned).

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Key to judgements: Grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory and grade 4 inadequate	Judgement
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OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective is the school in providing Catholic Education	1
The school's capacity for sustained improvement	1

OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS

How good outcomes are for individuals and pupils	1
How well pupils achieve in Religious Education	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pupils' standards of attainment in religious Education 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality of pupils' learning and their progress in Religious Education 	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the School	1
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	1

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education	1
The quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education	2
The effectiveness of assessment in Religious Education	1
The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs	1
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	1

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic Life of the School	1
How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
The extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so areas needing development are addressed decisively and responsibilities met	1
How effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion	1

Questionnaires

The questionnaires returned were overwhelmingly supportive of the school and pleased with the way in which the school is managed and of the Catholic Education it provides.