



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST PETER'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Whitefields Road, Solihull, West Midlands B91 3NZ

Inspection dates	12 th -13 th November 2014
Reporting Inspector	Janet Mellor
Assisting Inspector	Rachel Waugh

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11-19 years
Number on roll	1248
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Mrs Jane Loughran
Telephone number	0121 705 3988
E-mail address	office@st-peters.solihull.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	October 2009
DFE School Number	334/4650
Unique Reference Number	104119

Headteacher	Mrs Marie Murphy
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Previous inspection:	2
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This inspection:	1
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DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



Evidence

The inspection was carried out by 2 Diocesan Inspectors. The focus of the inspection was on the effectiveness and use of the school's self evaluation of religious education (RE) and Catholic life. To validate the effectiveness of the school's self evaluation of teaching and learning, the inspectors observed one full RE lesson and 11 part lessons, some of which were with senior leaders. In addition the inspectors completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate the impact of teaching on their learning over time. They held meetings with governors, staff, and the parish priest. They observed assemblies and form time prayers, and attended a meeting of the Spiritual Life Committee. They undertook a learning walk with the head boy and head girl of the school in order to observe the presentation of the Catholic life of the school, and pupils' behaviour. They looked at a range of evidence related to the school's self evaluation such as RAISEonline, examination results over time, development plans, and teachers' planning. Alongside the validation of school self evaluation, the inspector gathered evidence about the school's provision for chaplaincy, evidence which will be shared with other diocesan schools.

Information about the school

St Peter's is a larger than average Catholic secondary school serving the parishes of Solihull and neighbouring parishes in south-east Birmingham. The level of social deprivation is well below average. The number of Catholic pupils is currently 93% overall, with 100% in Year 7. 47% of the teaching staff is Catholic. Pupils are mostly white British and a proportion has an Irish cultural background. The number of ethnic minority pupils is below average, as is the number of pupils with English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is significantly below national average as are the numbers with special needs. 12.3% of pupils are eligible for special funding for their education. Attainment on entry is significantly above the national average in each year group. The school population is very stable.

Main Finding

In its self evaluation St Peter's judges itself to be an outstanding Catholic school, in which pupils richly benefit from the provision for rigorous and enjoyable RE, and from the unequivocal and inspiring attention to Gospel values within the framework of the Catholic Church. The judgement is fully justified because the school has secure processes for monitoring and evaluating its provision for Catholic life and RE, and for planning for improvement. There is a sincere drive to receive feedback from all parts of its community. Senior leadership is wholly committed to the primacy of the Catholic ethos and is highly reflective in striving for constant improvement for the sake of the pupils in its care. Senior teachers are very well supported by staff, pupils, governors, and the local clergy. Pupils achieve very well in RE, enjoy their lessons, and recognise how much they benefit from the robust Catholic ethos of their school and the vibrant community which exists for them. They value highly the work of their teachers and the opportunities which they have to contribute. Pupils feel safe and secure in an environment where there is attention to individual needs. They achieve very well in RE, enjoy their lessons, and recognise how much they benefit from the robust Catholic ethos of their school. They value highly the work of their teachers and the opportunities which they have to contribute to the community. Senior leaders and other staff are committed to constant improvement. Governors and local clergy are a very active and highly valued source of support.

School Self Evaluation

The school's self evaluation of its Catholic life and RE is thorough and based on a rigorous process of monitoring, evaluation and forward planning. The headteacher with her team of senior colleagues takes the lead in analysing each aspect of provision for the Catholic life of the school. Results of surveys and audits are examined with a clear and determined passion to find ways to improve, which are then included in the forward planning. This is presented in documentation in which links between analysis and targets are apparent. Planning is swift and practical, but does not lose sight of ideals. Reporting of success is frequently modest but there is no spirit of complacency because of an overriding focus on performing even better for the sake of the pupils. This approach enables monitoring, evaluation and forward planning to become a part of everyday life at the school, and leads to outstanding outcomes.

The school's evaluation of its Catholic life is founded on a range of evidence and is wholly accurate. It is based upon a range of questionnaires and audits involving pupils, parents, staff and governors, which through their use in planning contribute to the overall objective of creating a school in which all pupils grow in faith and knowledge of the teachings of Christ and his Church. The regular meetings of the spiritual life committee are central to the provision and evaluation of Catholic life. They are chaired by the head of RE and include wide representation from across the school community, for example senior managers as well as pupils who are soon to be trained as Eucharistic Ministers. The committee works very productively to analyse previous activities and set targets for improvement, for example in providing more accommodation for visitors for the Year 7 Welcome Mass, as well as planning for future events. The structure for the student council encourages the highly valued contribution of pupil voice, and parish clergy contribute to self evaluation through meetings with the headteacher and their work on the governing body. The school has evaluated its strategy for recording and reporting judgements about the attitude to learning of each pupil in each subject, based on clear criteria, and this is shown to be having a very positive effect on behaviour as part of the Catholic ethos of the school.

Self evaluation of collective worship is also accurate. Since the last inspection, the school has developed strategies for greater pupil involvement and for other improvements as a result of monitoring by senior staff and by the RE teacher with responsibility for liturgy in the school. It has led for example to a change in timings in the school day in order to facilitate greater emphasis on morning prayer in form time. Whilst this is well supported by training and a range of resources, it has been shown that adequate time for prayer is not yet fully part of the routine.

Self evaluation is part of the life blood of the RE department and it is reliable, extensive and effective. There is a dual focus on monitoring teaching and learning, and on a forensic analysis of progress and outcomes. Because of the highly developed reflective culture, the department is fully able to plan for improvement, and the success of pupils. The head of department and his staff use data very competently and accurately in order to focus on the individual needs of the pupils and to determine future planning to improve teaching and learning. Lesson observation is both formal and informal, and teachers are constantly monitoring the pupil response to their teaching. The culture of improvement and team work provides an openness to the results of analysis and a readiness to set and implement new targets. Meetings of the head of RE with the headteacher as line manager enable frank discussion and the emergence of practical and immediate solutions to issues. The whole school decision to move to more frequent overall data analysis during the school year was based on the recognition of the need to provide more rapid intervention strategies, and there is evidence that RE is benefitting from this.

The capacity of the school for sustained improvement to its Catholic life and RE is outstanding because of the commitment of leaders to the process of self evaluation and to manageable and effective targets for further improvement. This is reflected widely in the school where there is a spirit of generosity and hard work for the sake of the success of the pupils in its care.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is significantly above average. They make rapid progress in religious education in Key Stage 3 due to careful monitoring and interventions where appropriate. The perceived need to introduce new criteria for measuring progress has led the department to introduce levels based on Bloom's taxonomy. These are fully embedded and pupils know their current working level and how to reach their target. Assessment of pupils' work is frequent in both formative and summative forms, though the recently introduced strategy requiring pupil response is not yet consistent. At GCSE level outcomes are outstanding. They are well above average national and diocesan levels at both A*-A and A*-C grades. A very large percentage of pupils make extremely good progress in RE from Year 7 to Year 11. In the summer of 2014 pupils in Year 11 sat examinations in both modules rather than over a two year period, and nevertheless outcomes very nearly matched previous years. In this respect the school is ahead of the new regulations for examination entry. At Advanced Level progress is in line with progress in other subjects or above, and attainment is broadly in line with national levels, though the course has not attracted many pupils from the highest achievers at GCSE in recent years.

Teaching in religious education is consistently good and sometimes outstanding. In terms of its long term impact overall it is outstanding because pupils learn well and make rapid progress. Consistency in the quality of teaching has been greatly improved since the last inspection due to the careful leadership of the department, and to the generosity and diligence of teachers in contributing to the team approach. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and their pupils respond with enthusiasm. They behave very well in lessons and are fully engaged in the learning. They are clearly religiously literate, and contribute well to discussions, using prior learning and biblical knowledge appropriately. They consider that the respect and encouragement which they are shown contribute much to their enjoyment of the lessons where philosophical and theological themes are presented highly skilfully. Pupils relish the varied activities and resources which the teachers employ. Relationships in the classroom are very positive and pupils recognise that their teachers go the extra mile for them. Lesson planning is thorough and focused on high achievement, with attention given to individual needs. In general pupils are highly challenged by the work and the pace is rapid. In some classes this can lead to a varied amount of completed work, but teachers provide the extra support needed for some pupils. Encouragement for independent learning is achieved through the use of technology and booklets designed by the teachers to complement and extend classroom work.

The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is currently being rewritten and includes the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and some of life's big questions as well as the study of other faiths. This opportunity is very well received and respected by pupils, who recognise that it prepares them for life in 21st century Britain. Catholic life and RE are intrinsically bound up with each other at St Peter's and the curriculum in RE contributes greatly to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils as well as to their awareness of vocation. The whole school audit of spiritual and moral development has served to raise the profile of the

¹ As the quality of the school self evaluation has been affirmed, the judgements in this section of the report conform to those of the school.

contribution of all curriculum areas. Pupils are able to make connections across the curriculum for example in their study of texts in English and of the First World War in History. They have opportunities to learn about vocation in the curriculum from Year 7 to Year 11 in RE, and in the sixth form through visiting speakers, for instance that of a seminarian who formerly trained as a doctor, and parents who volunteer to speak to pupils about their own careers. Sex and relationship education is part of a staged curriculum for each year, and pupils appreciate the sensitivity with which these lessons are delivered. In the sixth form core RE takes the form of a Christian Living course for all Year 12 pupils, involving outside speakers, for example from the Lepra charity, as well as discussion and coursework based on topical issues such as euthanasia. In Year 13 provision for core RE is covered by retreats and assemblies, but this does not fulfil the requirements of the Bishops' Conference for 5% of time for curriculum RE.

Provision for Catholic life centres on faith and prayer, and pupils are fully able to explain the school's motto 'Faith is our foundation' and the significance of their patron saint. Opportunities to put faith into action include food collections to mark the CAFOD Harvest Fast Day when enough food was collected to provide 913 meals, and raising funds for the HCPT pilgrimage to Lourdes where Year 12 pupils work with disabled children. The excellent pastoral care of members of the school's community flows from faith and its strength has been shown at times of loss when support is most needed. There is support for parents in dealing with e-safety for their children and the course has been made available to other schools. St Peter's offers a wide programme of retreats which are very well supported and have a lasting impact, and there are many opportunities to attend Mass in school, including the weekly voluntary Mass, which form groups attend on a rota basis. Funding has been raised to refurbish the chapel. This has been further enhanced by the gift of an icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour in memory of a former headteacher. Form time is now timetabled for the start of the day and includes time for prayer although the school is aware that this is sometimes omitted or is rushed, and support is increasingly provided for staff. Sometimes prayer is unsupported by time for reflection and does not involve a range of pupils. Weekly assemblies are led by staff and pupils, senior staff having modelled expectations at the start of the year. There are some opportunities for reflection, for example in a profound and moving tribute to the fallen in the week of Remembrance Day, though this is inconsistent. The school reaches out to the nearby parishes in support of weekend and special event Masses particularly through the presence of its choir and musicians. There is outstanding support from local priests who, in the absence of a formally appointed chaplain, make excellent provision for the sacramental needs of the pupils and staff. Their presence and input into the spiritual life of the school are highly valued. The school is increasingly seen as a vibrant hub of the Catholic Church in the area.

Recommendations

- Ensure consistency in form prayer and collective worship particularly in full pupil involvement
- Consider ways in which more opportunities for reflection can be offered to pupils, particularly as an introduction to prayer.
- Embed student response to teacher assessment of work to ensure a productive dialogue
- Ensure that sixth form RE meets fully the requirements of the Bishops' Conference.



November 2014

Diocesan Education Service,
Don Bosco House,
Coventry Road,
Coleshill,
B46 3EA

Dear Parents and Carers

Section 48 (Diocesan) Inspection of St Peter's Catholic School, November 2014

I am writing this letter to share with you the findings of the diocesan inspection of your children's school. Diocesan inspection now explores in detail the school's own view of itself as expressed in its self-evaluation. For this reason, much of the report is more technical than used to be the case. You are still entitled to have a copy of the full report should you want one and it will be available on the school website or by request from the school office.

The school judges itself to be outstanding in its Catholic life and religious education. This is fully justified. Over the last few years there has been consistently excellent attainment in RE at GCSE level, which is much higher than diocesan and national averages. At A level pupils make good progress and achieve grades which compare very favourably with their other subjects. Pupils benefit from a high level of teaching in RE and recognise that they are very well supported. They enjoy RE and are fully engaged in lessons, where activities and resources are varied and well planned. They are challenged by discussion of philosophical and theological issues and know how to use prior learning to develop ideas and argument. From the start of their time at St Peter's pupils make rapid progress because they know how well they are achieving and are motivated by challenging targets and advice about how to move forward. The school uses data very effectively as part of a sincere desire that all pupils achieve their very best.

At St Peter's pupils develop in knowledge and practice of the Catholic faith and in their Catholic identity. The Catholic life of the school is led by the headteacher with senior colleagues and the head of RE, and is the priority in all planning. The school provides many opportunities for spiritual development including retreats and the weekly Mass. The refurbishment of the chapel and the gift of an icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour have greatly encouraged spiritual life within the school, which reaches out to local parishes, particularly through the choir and orchestra. There is an outstanding culture of evaluation of the Catholic life of the school and this helps it to move forward so positively. Behaviour in school was seen to be excellent and pupils enjoy being there. They consider themselves to be well supported, cared for and safe. The school benefits from the excellent support of many local clergy and the governors.

We have recommended that the school continues its work to ensure the quality of morning prayer and to provide more opportunities for reflection as a basis for prayer. We have also asked that pupils be encouraged to develop a dialogue with their teachers by responding more thoughtfully to the marking of their work.

We would like to thank staff and governors, and the pupils especially, for their contribution to the inspection, and wish them well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Janet Mellor (Mrs)
Diocesan Inspector