



DIOCESE OF
SHREWSBURY

Ellesmere Port Catholic High School,
Ellesmere Port, CH65 7AQ

URN: 8964611

DfE No: 111451

6th and 7th October 2015

**Report on the
Inspection of Denominational Education**

Lead Inspector: Mr John Mc Cann

Link Inspector: Mr John Wilbraham

**The inspection of the denominational education of
Ellesmere Port Catholic High School
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 Requires Improvement

Grade 4 Inadequate

Information about the school

Ellesmere Port Catholic High School is an average-sized, voluntary aided, co-educational secondary school with a sixth form. The school is under the trusteeship of the Diocese of Shrewsbury and in Cheshire West and Chester Local Authority. The school mainly draws pupils from the four parishes it serves and the attached primary schools. There are 824 pupils on roll; 78% of the pupils are baptized Catholics with 16% from other Christian denominations and 7% from other world faith traditions. There are 59 members of teaching staff including the Head, 44% of whom are Catholic. The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium, which in this school provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is slightly below average.

Overall Effectiveness:

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education

Grade 2

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic

Grade 2

This area is a strength of the school. Pupils are proud that they attend here and they are appreciative of all that is being done on their behalf. They take on responsibilities and participate constructively in the Catholic Life of the School far beyond curriculum lessons and activities. There are many opportunities for pupils, in all years, to find time and space within the school day; in the chapel, and outside of curriculum time; on day retreats and residential visits, for reflection and inquiry. Some of the pupils are active within their parishes and their support is much appreciated and welcomed by the parish priests. The pupils show interest in the religious life of others and treat those of different beliefs with respect. In all classes visited religious objects were displayed sensitively and were obviously treated with respect. Pupils take a pride in themselves and in their school.

Throughout the school, aspirational quotes and images of religious leaders, and world figures from science, politics and literature, feature significantly. This sense of aspiration seems to permeate throughout all areas of school life. Within the schools Mission Statement - "I have come that they may have life and have it to the full." John 10.10, there is a culture which encourages everyone to do their best. Commitment to the wider community and service for others runs throughout the school. The pupils are considerate of others within the class and outside in the grounds. Incidents of bullying are rare and the pupils state they are dealt with efficiently, effectively and fairly. From parent questionnaires and pupil interviews it is overwhelmingly believed that this is a safe and secure place in which to learn where everyone is valued.

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

Grade 2

Standards pupils achieve in all Key Stages are in line with the national average and at least in line with standards achieved in other subjects. GCSE results, at 69% grades A*-C, are average for contextually similar schools. Pupils achieve more A* and A grades (24.65%) at GCSE than Mathematics (9.94%) and Science (11.21%), for example, while at Key Stage 3, 84% of pupils achieve the attainment benchmark of step 5 or above. Pupils are generally attaining above average standards in knowledge and understanding of religion (AT1) and an ability to reflect on meaning (AT2). Pupils are keen to do well and are focused on their work, with all workbooks evidencing a high standard of presentation and a complete absence of graffiti. Activity and pace are evident throughout the learning curriculum, with pupils responding with interest, positive attitudes and appropriate behaviour, creating a very positive learning environment. Classroom environments are safe, well-ordered and provide stimulating displays. Challenging targets for GCSE have been set. At AS Level, results have significantly improved in 2015 from 46% to 71%. Retention onto the A2 course has markedly improved with 15 of the 17 students continuing. The school has set a challenging aspirational target of 100% A*-C in 2016 for this group. This would represent a significant improvement and indicates confidence in the quality of teaching and pupil engagement.

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship **Grade 2**

Pupils respond with respect, reverence and improving levels of participation and ownership. They listen well and relate much of their prayer and reflection to the needs of local and wider communities and service to others. Pupils benefit greatly from the availability of the chapel area and an active and extensive chaplaincy provision, well supported by the RE team. During the inspection, a celebration of mass with a year 7 form, along with assemblies observed, indicated positive levels of engagement and attitude and full acceptance of worship as a key element of the life of the school. Staff appreciate and draw regularly upon the materials and support provided by the chaplain and the RE team. Events and liturgical seasons are appropriately marked and celebrated with the use of Scripture, artefacts, and an increasing amount of music and other relevant and stimulating media, including inspirational and aspirational quotations throughout the school.

How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan and implement improvements to outcomes for pupils **Grade 2**

This area is a strength of the school. Leaders, governors and managers demonstrate a strong commitment to the Church's mission in education, with spiritual and moral development a priority. The school sets out its vision under seven areas in which it seeks to make an impact and which is at the heart of all it does. There is evidence that it is making a positive and effective impact in each of the areas.

The school has a dedicated chaplain who is highly regarded by the whole school community for the opportunities that are provided with the support of others to develop the pupils' spiritual and prayer life. The school is keen to develop greater use of pupils' singing in worship and has recently made a key appointment to support this. The school is actively seeking to enlarge the RE team through a permanent appointment which will further enhance the present provision within the RE Department and will also allow further developments within whole school provision. There is a strong and effective pastoral support system in place to support students with different needs. Evidence from staff survey returns and pupils' interviews it is clear that there is a high regard for the Catholic Life of the school and the encouragement for everyone to be involved in it.

There are clear strengths in the partnerships that are in place between the partner primary schools and their headteachers, the local parishes and parish priests and the wider community links that the school has made. The role and influence of the recently appointed headteacher has been instrumental in this.

How well leaders, governors and managers resource, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvements to outcomes for pupils **Grade 3**

Leaders, managers and governors are highly committed to developing the quality of Religious Education to the highest level. Levels of departmental funding are commensurate and appropriate with other core subjects. An effective range of systematic monitoring and training activities are in place which have succeeded in very significant whole school improvements. Issues are identified and strategies implemented to ensure rapid improvement; for example within RE there are some very challenging targets at A Level and GCSE for Summer 2016 and a determination to close the gender gap at KS4 which characterises aspects of boys' relative underperformance.

However, there are aspects of School Development Planning for the religious life of the school and the RE curriculum which should be further developed: planning should be integrated with the whole school process and benefit from the same time scales. Owing to issues of capacity, which are being addressed, there is a shortfall in the time allocated to curricular RE at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 5 General RE. The appointment of a further specialist should assist the rectification of this issue. The provision at GCSE and A level meets all Bishops' Conference requirements.

The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education

Grade 2

All teaching observed is never less than good and there are some examples of outstanding practice. All the teaching is effective in ensuring that pupils are consistently interested in their learning and making good progress. As a result of good assessment procedures, teachers and learning support personnel plan well to meet the needs of all pupils. Teachers have strong subject knowledge which inspires and challenges most pupils and contributes to their good progress. As a result, in all lessons, pupils are keen to learn, concentrate well, enjoy their work and achieve well. Good and imaginative use is made of resources and activity, including technology to maximise learning. Support provided by other adults is effectively deployed with strategies to develop differentiation and personalised support. Pupils are provided with constructive and helpful written feedback at GCSE with examples of highly effective marking and feedback in KS5. The Sixth Form pupils are especially appreciative of this. They know how well they have done and can discuss what they need to do to sustain good progress. Achievement and effort are highlighted.

Greater consistency in application of the marking scheme and pupils' use of tracking and self-assessment documentation across the department will assist in the achievement of even higher levels.

The extent to which the Religious Education Curriculum promotes pupils' learning

Grade 2

The Religious Education curriculum is enriched through imaginative and well planned strategies to capitalise on the expertise within and beyond the school. This leads to learning that is often stimulating and memorable. The curriculum is customised to meet the needs of groups and individuals, including personalised programmes for those who need them. The Religious Education curriculum provides good opportunities for spiritual, moral development and vocational guidance. Extra-curricular opportunities are varied, have a high take up and are much enjoyed. The curriculum is characterized by ready reference to local and world-wide social and ethical issues and opportunities for, and reflection on, service to others.

The Quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

Grade 2

Acts of Collective Worship are given high profile and are well delivered with expertise by staff, lay chaplain and clergy with increasing ownership and participation of pupils and the development of musical input. Staff and pupils are comfortable praying together. There is a range of formal and informal opportunities for daily prayer in form time, assemblies and chapel area. Attendance by parents and others associated with the school is facilitated and encouraged where appropriate. The 'Bridge Building' event and mass for new pupils prior to entering year 7 is a significant exemplar. Staff review and plan improvements to the school's provision and are planning to develop ways of ensuring that pupils are skilled and equipped in leading prayer and owning aspects of collective worship. All staff value the prayer and reflection/discussion materials supplied by the chaplain to support them in form time. The Church seasons and feasts are well celebrated. Themes are consistent with the Catholic character of the school and take note of the religious diversity of pupils and the wider community. The lay chaplain and local clergy significantly enrich and support the provision and their contribution is much appreciated by the staff, governors and pupils.

Recommendations for further development

1. To ensure the provision for Religious Education in KS3 and General Religious Education throughout KS5 meets the requirements as described in the Bishops' Statement on Religious Education (2000)
2. Apply the whole school marking policy consistently across the Department to provide clear guidance for improvement and to give opportunities for students to respond to these targets
3. To ensure that the Catholic Life Development Plan fully captures and more clearly reflects developmental progression within the Religious Education department and Catholic Life of the school.
4. Further develop pupil ownership and delivery of Collective Worship and Tutor Group Prayer time.

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Key to judgements: Grade 1 = outstanding, Grade 2 = good, Grade 3 = requires improvement and Grade 4 = inadequate	Judgement
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OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS: How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school	2
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	2
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	2

LEADERS GOVERNORS AND MANAGERS How effective leaders, governors and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the school	2
How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	2
How well leaders, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	3

PROVISION How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic Education	2
The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education	2
The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning	2
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	2

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS	
How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education	2