



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST EDMUND'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL WOLVERHAMPTON

Inspection dates 28-29th September 2009
Reporting Inspector Mr Joseph Skivington

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Comprehensive
Age range of pupils	11-19 years
Number on roll	771
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mrs Margaret Gallagher
School address	Compton Park Compton Road West Wolverhampton WV3 9DU
Telephone number	01902 558888
E-mail address	Enquiries@stedmunds.lppplus.net
Date of previous inspection	September 2006
DCSF School Number	104400
Unique Reference Number	336 4605
Head Teacher	Ms Deirdre Finucane

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two Diocesan Inspectors. The inspectors visited 10 religious education (RE) part lessons to observe teaching and learning, students' behaviour, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work, including assemblies, and looked at a range of evidence, including key documentation such as the school's improvement plan, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in RE, and students' work.

Information about the school

St Edmund's School is a smaller than average, oversubscribed school with 771 students on roll, including 113 in the sixth form, 73% of whom are baptised Catholic. Students are drawn from six designated feeder schools but 50% come from a variety of schools and backgrounds further afield. The majority of students come from challenging socio-economic backgrounds but the free school meals indicator is about average. Of the present teaching staff around 30% are Catholic.

Overall effectiveness of the school as a Catholic school

St Edmund's provides a good Catholic education for all its students and this is warmly endorsed both by the students themselves and their parents. Differences in faith and background hold no one apart or prevent them from being accepted completely as precious individuals in the eyes of God. The good provision for community cohesion is based on the well thought out policy of the school and the active involvement of many students both in the local community and in the wider, global world. Pupils' participation in collective worship and their response to the invitation to prayer and reflection is satisfactory and beginning to improve. With the recent appointment of the new lay chaplain more students will hopefully be enthused and moved to become active members of the chaplaincy team.

Outcomes from the religious education programme are good, both in the main school and the sixth form. Good progress is the result of good teaching, which supports purposeful learning. At Key Stage 4 standards are well in line with similar schools and rising to above average compared to national GCSE results. At the end of Year 9 students are at the expected level judged against the subject's level indicators. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as the others because of extra support and when they have work which is matched to their learning needs. St Clare's Success Centre is an excellent supportive facility for these young people. More able students are not always challenged to produce their best intellectual effort in some lessons where the teaching is less than good. Although attainment at AS and A Level is below the national average, achievement is good given the students' starting points. Teachers are more and more committed to high pupil achievement as good practice is disseminated. The religious education programme makes a significant contribution to their spiritual and moral development.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement is good because of the quiet but inspirational quality of leadership, the very pleasing sustained upward trend in standards of achievement, the appointment of the new lay chaplain, and good teaching in the RE department. Religious education and Catholic life is regularly monitored through well-embedded procedures, which include specific in-service education and very detailed faculty reviews, allowing for reflection and the revisiting of the mission of the school. This involves parents, governors, students and staff. This monitoring is driven by a knowledgeable and challenging governing body.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the quality of teaching across the school is consistently well planned and challenging to match the level of the best practice.

- To encourage, by inspiration, animation, and student participation, a more positive response to the school's collective worship programme

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils

Standards of attainment in religious education at the end of Key Stage 4 are above average compared to those in similar schools, and reflect a very pleasing upward trend in the last three years. In 2007 61% of students achieved grades A*-C, in 2008 67.4%, and in 2009 69%. There was no significant difference between boys and girls. At the end of Year 9 standards are well in line with expectation, when measured against the subject's own level indicators. Results at AS and A levels are broadly in line with the national average, and achievement is good considering the students' starting points. The growing substantial numbers opting to take RE at A Level indicates the enjoyment and real interest in the subject, which has been inspired by the often excellent teaching at this level. Students in the sixth form follow a core RE programme which is relevant and popular, because it calls for real intellectual effort and achieve a satisfactory level of attainment. The quality of students' learning and progress is good. Those with learning difficulties achieve as well as the others because of extra support in lessons and when tasks are set which are tailored more specifically to their learning needs. The excellent provision of St Clare's Success Centre contributes enormously to outcomes not only in learning but also in personal development and growing confidence, particularly of the more vulnerable students. In lessons students work hard, especially when they are intellectually challenged by skilful questioning. This is not always the case, however, in some lessons, where independent learning and research could be encouraged further. In the best lessons they are enthused and fully engaged.

Students benefit enormously from the Catholic life of the school and, in a variety of ways, make a good contribution to it. They appreciate and value the Catholic ethos of the school while at the same time they are able to discuss spiritual and moral issues and the different viewpoints of other faiths without losing their own Catholic stance. They respond generously to the needs of others beyond the school and this makes a valuable contribution to the harmony of the whole community. Many are involved in fund raising, take part in outreach to the more vulnerable, such as those in Compton Hospice, and overseas projects in India. Students have invested much in their own education, taking part in evaluating the quality of their school experience, and playing an acknowledged part, particularly through the lively school council, in the whole school reflection on its Catholic mission. The students appreciate this opportunity to play a part in the running of the school and to act responsibly in representing the views of every group of students.

Their response to collective worship is satisfactory. There has been a lack of consistency and momentum in the chaplaincy team because of earlier difficulties largely beyond the control of the school. Since the beginning of this academic year a new lay chaplain has been in post but her ministry is at a very early stage. Students are prayerful and reverent in Mass and assembly, but are not enthused to offer their participation willingly without being asked. An example of what is possible, and an indication of a new blossoming in prayer life, was a sixth form tutor group Mass where the students had prepared well and participated in the prayerful, candle lit atmosphere of the welcoming school chapel. Occasions such as these will hopefully encourage and inspire all students to bring their talents and hearts to the prayer life of the school. The chaplain is an always available and supportive figure in the celebration of the Mass and the Sacraments.

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the school

The Catholic life of the school is promoted effectively by leaders and managers, who plan and review continually how to improve outcomes for students. Collective worship is likewise monitored, with close liaison between governors, senior leadership and the parish priest / chaplain to ensure good provision for assemblies and liturgies. Governors meet regularly to specifically scrutinise and evaluate the Catholic life of the school as well as the progress of the RE schemes of work. Much effort has been expended by the governors to find the right successor to the previous lay chaplain,

recognising a lack in student response to provision, but it has taken a considerable time. Tutors are well supported by useful and relevant materials, as well as role modelling by other staff in providing a meaningful quality of daily prayer for their charges, and this is much appreciated particularly by those teachers who are not Catholic. Regular inset provides a scriptural and Catholic grounding for the mission of the school. The success of leadership and management is seen in the students' good behaviour and care for others and their very good relationships with peers and staff.

The leadership and management of RE is very effective and has created a reinvigorated approach and interest in the subject. Priorities are clearly laid out and planned for and through lesson observation and subject reviews the quality of teaching and learning is steadily improving. This is impacting on standards of achievement, which are consequently improving year on year.

There is a clear policy promoted by governors and senior staff to promote community cohesion with the result that the school has an openness to all; all are included in its life and generous outreach to the local and global community is a strength of the school. The school collaborates well with other Catholic schools and participates in community undertakings. Those of other denominations or faiths feel that they are able to express their beliefs comfortably. Students explore other faiths to some considerable depth through the RE curriculum. All groups of students feel included and welcomed into every aspect of the school's life.

The quality of the school's work in providing Catholic education

The quality of teaching is good with both satisfactory and outstanding practice observed during the inspection. Teaching in the sixth form is also good and this is reflected in the achievement of students at AS and A Level, as well as the relevant engagement offered by the core RE course popular with all sixth form students. Excellent lessons have a buzz and engagement of students because they are challenging and much is expected from students in contributing to their own learning. Satisfactory lessons are less well planned or pitched to meet the specific needs of every group of students. The result is that they do not achieve as well as they could. The scrutiny of written work shows that helpful marking shows the students what they must do to improve. In the best lessons observed the more able were challenged to use and develop their thinking skills and to handle quite difficult theological and philosophical concepts. Assessment procedures and the tracking of individual progress are becoming well embedded and beginning to inform teaching strategies and individual learning programmes.

The curriculum meets the needs of all groups of students, as well as meeting the *Curriculum Directory for Religious Education* and Bishops' Conference requirements, such as the allocation of time. Relationship education is dealt with sensitively and clearly, consistent with the teaching of the Church. Teaching about other faiths is included in the curriculum with good effect, so that students can understand and have a conversation about similarities and differences between the world's major religions. Resources are well managed and ICT, art and music particularly are used imaginatively to support the learning experience.

Provision for collective worship is good. There are ample opportunities for spiritual nourishment through prayer, retreat and pilgrimage. Masses are celebrated for all tutor groups as well as year group and whole school Masses. The liturgical seasons are well marked and celebrated, particularly Advent, Lent and Holy Week. The provision has a good range and is well supported by staff, not least in their own personal commitment and role modelling. Provision by itself, however, does not always generate a ready response nor anything more than satisfactory levels of participation from the students. The school itself has clearly identified this as an area for improvement.