



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

BISHOP MILNER CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL DUDLEY

Inspection dates	20-21 st February 2012
Reporting Inspector	Mr Joseph Skivington
Assisting Inspector	Mr Keith Ash

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11-18 years
Number on roll	778
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mrs Stephanie Partridge
School address	Burton Road Dudley DY1 3BY
Telephone number	0845 155 0412
E-mail address	info@bmilner.dudley.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	January 2006
DFE School number	332/4800
Unique Reference Number	103868

Headteacher	Mr Steve Haywood
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DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Diocesan Inspectors. The focus of the inspection was on the effectiveness and use of the school's self evaluation of Catholic life and religious education (RE). To validate the school's self-evaluation of teaching and learning, the inspectors observed 10 part RE lessons, some of which were observed alongside members of the senior leadership team, including the subject leader. In addition, the inspectors completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils and sixth form students to evaluate the impact of teaching on their learning over time. They held meetings with a governor, senior staff, and the chaplain, who is also a governor. They observed a Mass, class worship and a year assembly. They looked at a range of evidence related to the school's self evaluation such as RAISEonline, the development plan, a departmental review, and teachers' planning. Alongside the validation of school self evaluation, the inspectors gathered evidence about the quality of assessment for learning, evidence which will be shared with other diocesan schools.

Information about the school

Bishop Milner Catholic High School is a smaller than average Catholic secondary school serving parishes in Dudley. The proportion of baptised Catholic pupils is currently 69%. The pupils are mainly of White British heritage with 38% from ethnic minority households. This is about the national average as is the number of pupils eligible for free school meals and having special needs and/or disabilities. Attainment on entry is above the national average. At sixth form level the school works in partnership with other providers.

Main Finding

In its self evaluation, Bishop Milner Catholic School judges itself to be a good school in respect of its Catholic ethos, provision for and response of the students to liturgy, and the outcomes of public examination in religious education. Its judgements are substantially justified. The senior leadership team is comparatively new, with two assistant headteachers appointed in September 2010, and the headteacher in post only since the start of the current academic year. However, senior leadership knows the school well, the governors are supportive, and both pupils and parents hold the school in high regard. There are aspects of Catholic life and RE that need further development. These include opportunities for all students to be involved in planning and presenting their own liturgies and assemblies; more incisive challenge and input from the governing body; and the formalising of the monitoring and evaluation processes to secure evidence of the impact of Catholic life and religious education.

School Self Evaluation

The accuracy of the school's self evaluation results from the senior leadership's early and comprehensive grasp of the true picture of the school's Catholic ethos and quality of religious education together with the swift introduction of self review and enhanced processes of monitoring accountability and impact. This has already highlighted and clarified for the whole school community accurate judgements on its overall effectiveness. Student voice is proving a rich seam to extract, through feedback and involvement in discussion, viewpoints and suggestions, all of which have been wholeheartedly adopted and are leading to improvement. For example, the students have already been closely involved in reflection on the school's mission. This has encompassed designing the school's motto showing both understanding and youthful idealism, and they have also set up a Faith Room for reflection and periods of prayerful stillness. They can articulate why they behave as they do in valuing and respecting each other, and have internalised the values the school promotes leading to care for and outreach towards others less fortunate or vulnerable both in and beyond the school. The sixth form students have taken a real lead on this through role modelling, and acting as mentors and teachers to the younger pupils; likewise the Year 11 students act as responsible, trained mentors and prefects. Beyond the school, students have included other religious support groups such as the Asian Dawn linked to the local mosque.

Planning for improvement, both medium and long term is informed closely by the leadership's knowledge of, and honesty in confronting, the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The school's self evaluation document is punctuated at the end of every section by summative judgements followed by areas of weakness clearly identified for action. In the section, for example, on monitoring Catholic life, while judging it to be good, the school looks further to see how best it can use the professional development programme to support all staff in their faith and spiritual life, as well as building up expertise for working with students through spiritual occasions and experiences.

The monitoring of the success of the objectives in the school development plan, while making careful note of progress towards realisation, would benefit from a more formal evaluation process especially to highlight the evidence of improvement in Catholic life and religious education. For example the school evaluates the provision for and student response to collective worship, listing the different events and opportunities provided by the chaplaincy, the variety of liturgies, and the intention to increase opportunities for students to participate and lead whole school assemblies. It does not ask specifically if the quality of these experiences is good enough, or to what extent and proportion the students themselves are involved in planning and presenting their own assemblies and class prayers. Nor does it ask about quality where good practice exists. Three full day retreats are planned for July and student groups are being formed, such as SVDP. Lourdes helpers, and a Rainbow group, a promising indication of the renewed and re-energised Catholic ethos of the school and an indicator of the vision of the senior leadership being successfully communicated.

Evaluation of the outcomes from the religious education programme is work in progress and a solid start has been made in analysing examination data, and an overall review of the subject, both of which are reshaping planning objectives within the overall school development plan. The findings from the school's own self evaluation are consistent with those in this inspection, borne out by the similar findings as to the quality of teaching and learning. While data analysis is beginning to measure progress and identify need, the impact of assessment on the quality of teachers' lesson planning to meet the learning needs of all the students has yet to be embedded and its impact evaluated. There are some good examples, however, of very effective peer and group work which is spreading rapidly and encouraging good, but not yet outstanding, independent learning.

The school judges its capacity for sustained improvement to be good and in this judgement it is justified. If a more formal process to evaluate the Catholic life and the response to collective worship is embedded, this will more clearly identify to leadership, staff and students what their roles and expected response and responsibilities are. The governing body, although supportive, has gone through a substantial turnover of members, and must now swiftly become part of this driving process and adopt firstly, a more knowledgeable, and then a more analytical, evaluative, and challenging approach to spiritual, moral, and vocational development, the Catholic ethos of the school, and the performance of the religious education department.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

Outcomes for students at GCSE RE are good and slightly above the performance of other subjects. The progress of students through all the key stages is good, given their broadly average starting points. At the end of Key Stage 3, 95% of pupils attain Level 5 or above, with 39% achieving Level 6. The results at GCSE grades A* - C, show boys in line, at 67%, and 89% of girls attaining well above, the diocesan average. The more able are well challenged with 34% attaining grades A*-A. The less able and lower ability students achieve as well as the others given extra support, differentiated work, and targeted SEN provision. At A/S Level and A-Level numbers are small and students make good progress, achieving above their expected grades. This would indicate that the school has correctly assessed and enabled both the lower ability and the more able, to make good progress towards achieving their potential.

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

Outcomes from the Catholic life of the school are evident in the students' commitment through their positive behaviour, their input to the mission statement, and their growing involvement in its Catholic life. Students have many fruitful opportunities for prayer, and to contribute to the liturgies, and the school is well aware that they could be given more responsibility to organise, and subsequently evaluate, their own impact on collective worship. Much of the responsibility for the quality of the school's ethos is beginning to reside in the growing ownership, through partnership, of the students themselves.

At the heart of all Bishop Milner School does, is the openness and inclusive welcome to all regardless of background, and the total focus of the leadership in the pursuit of excellence in a vibrant Catholic community. Leadership keeps the provision for students' spiritual, moral and vocational development under close scrutiny, and this is evident in high morale and the impact on rising levels of commitment of staff to the school's whole mission. Leadership of the RE department is effective. In its self assessment it has correctly identified and prioritised areas for development in relation to the monitoring and evaluating progress, and communicating best practice through role modelling and lesson observation.

Teaching is good throughout all key stages, with better lessons observed at GCSE and A Level. The best lessons contain all the good features of challenging teaching, directed questioning which tests understanding, and reshapes the lesson to meet the learning needs of all the students. The encouragement of peer learning and assessment is making a real impact on the quality of learning and is proving to be a really effective strategy in accelerating progress. The support for students with different learning needs and abilities is also good because of the extra support they receive.

Recommendations

- Embed more formalised processes of monitoring the impact of Catholic life and religious education.
- Involve more students, particularly down the school, in practising the skills of planning and preparing their own liturgies
- Evolve a stronger and more challenging governing body fully engaged in partnership with the leadership of the school.



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March 2012

Dear Parents and Carers

**Section 48 (Diocesan) Inspection of Bishop Milner Catholic High School, 20-21st
February 2012**

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 has a good Catholic ethos which informs all that it does. The present leadership is making a significant impact on developing its Catholicity, based solidly on clear self evaluation, which will sustain and move the school swiftly forward. It now has clear potential to become an outstanding school. Students speak very highly of the school and are using the opportunities to become involved and take ownership of their own education well. Their performance in public examinations is good. The more able students achieve results which are high and those needing support also achieve well. Girls do particularly well and the school is aiming to close the gap with the boys, although they already achieve levels which match those of other schools. The students enjoy their work in RE and are active and valued members of the school community. Teaching in RE is overall good and we observed some satisfactory as well as outstanding lessons.

We have recommended that the school should gather evidence more formally so that it can judge better how well it is doing. Also that it give all the students more opportunity to plan and present their own assemblies and liturgies. The governing body is finding its feet and should work towards being a real challenging force in raising achievement to excellent, while the RE department should focus on using assessment data to shape teachers' lesson plans and objectives.

We met and talked with many of the students, whom we found, were invariably welcoming and courteous and we were impressed by the contribution they make to the school community and their own education. They are a credit to the school and to their families and those who care for them.

It was a pleasure and privilege to inspect Bishop Milner and we wish it every success on its road to excellence.

Yours sincerely

Joseph Skivington
Keith Ash

Diocesan Inspectors