



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Monitoring Visit

ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI CATHOLIC TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE WALSALL

Inspection date 20 May 2013
Reporting Inspector Bernadette Morton

Monitoring Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11-18
Number on roll	1101
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chairman of governors	Fr David Mellor
School address	Erdington Road Aldridge Walsall WS9 0RN
Telephone number	01922 740300
E-mail address	postbox@stfrancis.cc
Date of previous inspection	November 2006
DFE School number	335 4606
Unique Reference Number	104255

Headteacher Mrs Philomena Mullins

DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE





20th May 2013

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

Mrs P Mullins
Headteacher
St Francis of Assisi Catholic Technology College
Erdington Road
Aldridge
Walsall
WS9 0RN

Dear Mrs Mullins

Section 48 Monitoring Inspection: 20th May 2013

Thank you for the welcome you, your staff and pupils gave to me when I inspected your school on 20 May and for the information you provided both before and during the inspection. I am grateful for the time given by all including the vice chair of governors, the chair of the pastoral and spiritual committee, the school chaplain, teaching and non-teaching staff and many pupils in speaking with me.

The inspection was a "light touch" monitoring inspection because your school was judged at the last section 5 inspection to be an outstanding school and because it is now five years or more since you last received a section 48 inspection.

The purpose of the inspection was to assess the quality of the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning for Catholic life and religious education. In order to make this judgement I read school documents, including a summative self-evaluation, interviewed senior leaders, governor representatives, the subject leader for RE and her deputy, non-teaching staff and pupils, observed one full lesson, observed a sixth form spiritual activity with primary school students, observed Key Stage 3 and 4 students leading a lunchtime reflection on the rosary, and looked at a sample of pupils' written work. In addition, evidence of some of the outstanding practice in the school was gathered as part of a diocesan wide survey of good practice in Catholic life and religious education.

The school, following on going and extensive self evaluation, judged itself to be outstanding both for Catholic life and collective worship. The evidence collected and examined during, and prior to the inspection demonstrates the accuracy of these judgements. The judgements are reliable because they are tested continually by differing members of the wider school community. The school knows itself. The headteacher offers exceptional leadership of the Catholic life of the school both through her personal faith and the priority given to the Catholic ethos at all times. The leadership team and RE Department also give the same dynamic commitment and example.

Governors play a significant role in assessing the reliability of self evaluation. They offer both challenge and support. Minutes of governors' meetings show that the headteacher reports to governors on the Catholic ethos regularly and this promotes discussion about quality and further developments. The governors' pastoral and spiritual committee has the particular responsibility for monitoring and evaluating Catholic life and collective worship on behalf of the governors. Members of this committee have observed assemblies and spoken to students about their views on the Catholic life of the school. This provides feedback to both governors and the leadership team in order to affirm effective practice and promote further improvement. The school chaplain is co-opted onto this committee and so involved in a variety of ways in self evaluation. He presents a chaplain's report to this committee each term. The contribution made by the school chaplain to both the Catholic and pastoral life of the school is appreciated by staff, governors and parents.

The extensive use of student voice is a strong feature of the self evaluation of all aspects of school life. Detailed conversations with students during the inspection as well as the school's own student voice records show that Catholic life is threaded through everything the school does. Very effective collective worship is the product of a commitment to a high level of student involvement and leadership and evaluation by the leadership team and heads of achievement and learning. The school



has moved beyond a quantitative evaluation of collective worship of the frequency of collective worship to a qualitative approach. Observations take place both formally and informally and the students review material in their liturgy meetings. All staff whether Catholic or not, both teaching and non-teaching, are totally supportive of the Catholic ethos. The skills required to promote this are given high priority in new staff induction programmes. Parents are also involved regularly through a parents evening questionnaire in reviewing Catholic life. Parents are asked to respond to the statement 'The Catholic life of the school nurtures and supports the faith journey of my child.' At the Year 11 parents evening in the current school year 98% agreed.

There is a clearly tangible expectation from governors through the headteacher and leadership team that all staff contribute to the promotion of Catholic life and collective worship. The diocesan self evaluation audit form has been used by all staff at a meeting to articulate the wider dimensions of Catholic life. This is reliable evidence because what was committed to paper can be witnessed in action by everyone; for example, the office and site staff have their own prayer and attend worship in the school. All departments have also been involved in completing a cross curricular spiritual audit which not only confirms their current contribution to this aspect of Catholic life but also plans for a further deepening of their contribution. In the audit the school addresses wider Catholic values and virtues as well as questions related to the meaning of life. These are also the content within the very full and thought provoking Catholic Citizenship programme which all pupils are taught and which they rate very highly. This programme is reviewed and evaluated regularly by both the pastoral staff who deliver it and the member of the leadership team who has overall responsibility for it.

The school's judgement that religious education is outstanding is reliably based on lesson observations by the chairman of governors, senior leadership team and the head of RE, regular work scrutinies, data analysis at the end of each key stage, the fulfilment of performance management targets and pupil voice. Lesson observations in RE show that the teaching and learning is consistently good and usually outstanding. Work scrutinies show marking and assessment of the highest order including detailed comments for improvements, clear links with learning objectives, both self and peer assessment and a written dialogue with pupils. Where marking is not outstanding staff are given clear guidance for improvement. Student voice is used to evaluate the work of the RE department. Students confirm that they are asked their opinion on teaching in RE. Pupil attainment in RE from entry to Key Stage 4 is outstanding. In the sixth form work completed in General RE is very good but there have been fluctuations in standards at AS and A2; data records indicate that there is likely to be a marked improvement in these results this year.

Evidence collated by the school and governors show that the RE department is deeply respected by all members of the school community for the leadership and support it offers to both staff and students in order to equip them to play their part in the Catholic life of the school. Alongside the headteacher and leadership team they contribute to the Catholic element of every training day.

The school's self evaluation shows that student leadership and involvement in both the Catholic life and collective worship are outstanding. This aspect of school life is led by the sixth form and Key Stage 3 and 4 liturgy groups. They are so successful because they closely evaluate what they do through a weekly log and meeting and very detailed planning plus the sheer love of their faith shown by the young people and staff involved.

This school is a vibrant spiritual and learning community in communion with Christ and the Catholic Church. All its members are known and cared for. It knows itself well and strives to continually improve. To improve further the school should ensure that the strategies they have adopted to improve attainment in AS/A2 are carefully monitored and evaluated and that there is greater clarity in the RE departmental improvement plan.

Yours sincerely

Bernadette Morton
Diocesan Inspector