



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARGARET WARD CATHOLIC ACADEMY

Part of the Newman Catholic Collegiate

Little Chell Lane Tunstall Stoke on Trent ST6 6LZ

Inspection dates	25-26 th November 2014
Reporting Inspector	Mr Joseph Skivington
Assisting Inspector	Mr Robert Hall

Type of School	Academy
Age range of pupils	11-18 years
Number on roll	1088
Appropriate authority	Board of Directors
Chair of Academy Committee	Mr J Thomson
Telephone number	01782 883000
E-mail address	smwadmin@sgfl.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	November 2009
DFE School Number	861/4711
Unique Reference Number	140149

Headteacher	Mr C E Smith
--------------------	---------------------

Previous inspection:	2
----------------------	---

This inspection:	2
------------------	---

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 13 full/part RE lessons with senior leaders. In addition the inspectors completed a work scrutiny and held a discussion with pupils to evaluate the impact of teaching on their learning over time. They held meetings with the parish priest, staff, and chaplain. They observed assemblies, tutor group prayers, 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, the development plan, teachers' planning, and learning journals.

Information about the school

St Margaret Ward is an average size Catholic school serving the parishes north of Stoke on Trent with 1088 students on roll, 62% of whom are baptised Catholic. Since the last inspection it has become an academy, collaborating closely with eight primary schools as The Newman Catholic Collegiate, and with other sixth forms as the Trinity Sixth Form. There has been a new build and upgraded facilities: only the chapel remains to be built by the end of the present academic year. Since September the role of RE co-ordinator is now shared between the leader of the subject RE, and the leader of mission and Catholic life. Attainment on entry is broadly in line with expectation.

Main Finding

In its self evaluation the school judges itself to be a good school, and the findings from the inspection confirm this. It is an inclusive school, open and welcoming to all regardless of cultural or faith backgrounds. All students benefit enormously from, and contribute to the Catholic life of the school, by their willing participation in every area and activity. Their response to collective worship is good. The provision and outcomes from the religious education programme are likewise good. The governance of the school is strengthening, recognising a need for a 'hands on' approach, and seeking a clearer picture of its day to day life and the challenges of the school's mission.

School self evaluation

The school's processes for self evaluation have become more robust, accurate and reliable, evident in the more measurable objectives in the school development plan. This was an area for development highlighted at the last diocesan inspection. There are, for example, automatic reviews and reflection on the quality of collective worship and how it can be improved. Opportunities for feedback from students enable strategies and practice to be re-shaped resulting in better learning outcomes in the classroom. The academy board and senior leadership have come to a clearer recognition of the vital importance of encouraging students' ownership of their learning and worship and this is now being embedded.

Good and outstanding teaching is the result of closer monitoring through subject review, lesson observation, learning walks and book trawls. However, the formative marking of pupils' written work is inconsistent and is not always helpful in showing the student how to improve, nor yet an incisive tool to drive on progress. The emphasis on learning from religion is a strength of the RE curriculum and results in students having a secure grasp of what it means for them in their daily lives, quite evident in their good behaviour and caring attitudes towards others. They are given many opportunities to exercise their idealism and

spirit of generosity through outreach and charity support in the local community and beyond. Their knowledge and understanding of other religions is widened by the rich diversity of faith backgrounds of other students and their families, while at the same time looking at and reflecting on life through the prism of the Catholic Faith. All these aspects are now being identified, reflected on, and better ways sought to prepare students to play their part in a challenging environment outside of school.

The new leader of the RE programme is setting out a clear programme of assessment and tracking of students' progress. Reviews and reports back to the governors specifically on RE have been sporadic in recent years but this is now being rectified, with the recognition of the need for more clarity about the specific role and responsibility of the academy board vis a vis religious education. Action points have been drawn up after every analysis, solutions identified and effective focus is being put where it is needed. The full impact of all these measures is still to be seen but already processes for self evaluation have been tightened significantly.

Leaders are now monitoring and evaluating Catholic life of the school more formally. There is a newly worded mission statement with plans to spend time in discussing and reflecting how it is to become present and effective in the school's daily life. Also being implemented is an RE review, a spiritual life audit, and liturgies assessed for impact. They have taken steps to get up to speed with a spirituality Inset in September, attending the Catholic life meeting at Coleshill, and the October Spirituality day. The spiritual needs of the staff are also addressed, with a growing awareness in staff of prayer and its practice. Governors' overview of the spiritual life and RE in the school has not always been sufficiently hands on and knowledgeable enough to provide challenge and accountability. The academy board recognises the need to be more proactive in this vital area.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

Outcomes for students in RE are good, the result of typically good and sometimes outstanding teaching over time. They make steady progress through Key Stage 3 through a curriculum that is well balanced in terms of emphasis on both learning about religion and learning from religion. They are able to explain what they learn in terms of meaning, and can make the connection between belief and action in their own lives. GCSE results at Key Stage 4 have over the last three or four years consistently matched the diocesan average A*-C attainment levels. Progress over time is in line with expectation with a slight positive residual. Students with special educational needs make the same progress because of the extra planned support and differentiated tasks they have in lessons.

At Key Stage 5 attainment at A2 level A*-B 44% compares well with the national average of 43%. Progress figures with APS 210 in 2013-4 were slightly below national average at 216. General RE in the sixth form is not taught discretely but as part of the Key Skills programme. Discussion includes topics such as how they justify their charity work, for example, community service in terms of Church teaching and the New Testament.

Students contribute to, and benefit well from the Catholic ethos of the academy. Processes are now in place to enable them to feedback on their lessons, their prayer opportunities, and their ideas on how things could be improved. After their trips to Rome and Lourdes older students were inspired to pass on their experiences to the rest of the school. There are still opportunities untapped to encourage more ownership and involvement in specifically Catholic aspects, such as students' interpretation of the recently re-worded

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.

mission statement, or a chaplaincy/liturgy group set up to steer and evaluate the quality of their prayer life and collective worship.

There is a positive student response to collective worship, in whole school or tutor assemblies and Masses, as well as form prayers. All take part readily and fully in the liturgies, for instance, approaching the altar for Communion or a blessing. In the tutor groups there is a basket for prayer intentions and this brings a meaningful relevance to their daily act of worship. The newly appointed chaplain is beginning to put in place more chances for them to express and grow in their own spirituality, and together with the leader for Catholic life provides effective support, with encouragement and resources, for tutors to take on responsibility for their groups' daily prayer. A record is now kept of every assembly with an evaluation of its effectiveness and how it could have been improved. Sixth formers pray together every day, discuss the *Thought for the Day*, and are real role models for the younger students. There are still opportunities missed for students to create and plan their own liturgies, and to make the precious assembly time each week more inspirational and appealing to their youthful idealism. Opportunities are missed too often by using assembly time for silent reading.

The quality of teaching is solidly good. In the best lessons there is student engagement, good questioning that both challenges and probes for understanding, students taking ownership of their own learning, and formative comments on their written work showing them how to improve and progress. Lessons which are less effective are not challenging enough. One task for all does not take account of or build on students' prior knowledge, and such lessons become the task rather than teaching for meaning. Hands up only questioning does not check understanding before teaching moves on. The book scrutiny reveals some books that had untidy or unfinished work, with students taking no heed of comments to improve, an indication that some teachers have low expectations.

The curriculum and allocation of time for RE meets the Bishops' Conference requirements. Relationship and sex education is delivered sensitively and with a Catholic perspective. The programme is currently being reviewed and evaluated. The new Year 7 curriculum is now in place and a review of the rest of the curriculum should be complete for September 2015. The school has a rich extra curriculum of retreats, Lourdes, Rome, and the Flame gathering and developing the spiritual life group.

The quality of the provision for collective worship is good. The Church's liturgical year is celebrated. The local clergy are proactive animators in the school, celebrating collegiate Masses, class Masses, the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Advent and Lent. The Year 7 students had a spiritual life day. The staff have benefited enormously from training specifically for RE. Due to the new build the school has been without a chapel for a considerable time, a situation which has had no small impact on the ethos of the school. The planned new chapel should be ready for the next academic year.

The capacity for sustained improvement is good, thanks to systems for managing performance, professional development arrangements and better quality of self evaluation. The school has addressed issues from the last inspection with some success viz the formal monitoring of Catholic life, RE provision in Year 7, the frequency of collective worship, and reviewing responsibilities within the leadership team. The move to academy status has refocused leadership at all levels, and the Collegiate with the primary schools and the sixth form Trinity Group has meant more accountability and the benefits of mutual support and planning.

Recommendations

- Encourage more opportunities for students to take full ownership of their prayer life and liturgies
- Ensure the Academy Board is more involved in the evaluation and monitoring of RE and Catholic life
- Spread the existing good practice of using challenging formative marking to make a real impact on students' learning over time



December 2014

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

Dear Parents and Carers

Diocesan Inspection of St. Margaret Ward Catholic Academy

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.

St. Margaret Ward is a good Catholic school. It is an inclusive school, open and welcoming to all regardless of cultural or faith backgrounds. The leadership is good, monitoring carefully and effectively the quality of Catholic life and religious education. The governance of the school is strengthening, recognising a need for a 'hands on' approach, and seeking a clearer picture of its day to day life and the challenges of the school's mission. Students speak highly of the school and their behaviour is exemplary. Their attainment and achievement in RE are both good, the result of consistently good and outstanding teaching. GCSE results consistently equal the diocesan average as do results at advanced level. The students enjoy their work in RE and are eager and valued members of the school community. Their response to collective worship is positive and wholehearted.

I have recommended that the school encourage the students to take more ownership of collective worship and have opportunities to take initiatives in planning and presenting their own liturgies and assemblies. Also I have recommended that teachers use the marking of work as an aid to learning and challenging students to reach their full potential. The academy board will make a more significant impact by being more involved in the monitoring and evaluation of RE and the Catholic life of the school

I met and talked with many of the pupils, whom I found were invariably welcoming and courteous, and I was impressed by the contribution they make to the school community through their excellent behaviour. 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 St Margaret Ward Catholic Academy, and I wish it every success on its continuing journey towards excellence.

Yours sincerely

Joseph Skivington
Diocesan Inspector