



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN CATHOLIC COLLEGE SOLIHULL

Inspection dates	10 th – 11 th July 2013
Reporting Inspector	Dr John Lally
Assisting Inspector	Mrs Janet Mellor

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	977
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mr Mike Russell
School address	Chelmsley Road Chelmsley Wood Birmingham B37 5GA
Telephone number	0121 770 0055
E-mail address	office@jhnc.org
Date of previous inspection	First inspection since conversion to academy
DFE School number	334/4661
Unique Reference Number	136347

Headteacher	Mrs Jenny McGuirk
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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 9 RE lessons, two of them with members of the senior leadership group, lessons in 5 other subjects to observe the school's developing work on the Catholic Curriculum, and a workshop led by a visiting team from St Basil's on homelessness. In addition the inspectors completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with students to evaluate the impact of teaching on their learning over time. They held meetings with senior staff, the chair of governors, and the school chaplains. They observed form worship and a year assembly. They looked at a range of evidence related to the school's self evaluation such as RAISEonline, the school improvement plan, and departmental planning. Alongside the validation of school self evaluation, the inspectors gathered evidence about the quality of the Catholic curriculum, evidence which will be shared with other diocesan schools.

Information about the school

John Henry Newman Catholic College is a smaller than average Catholic secondary school serving parishes in North Solihull and into Birmingham. It is situated in an area of high social deprivation. The number of Catholic students is currently 38%. The proportion of ethnic minority students is average. The number of students eligible for free school meals is almost twice the national average. The proportion of students with special needs and/or disabilities at school action plus or with statements of SEN is above average. Attainment on entry is below the national average. The college opened as an academy in January 2011 after the closure of its predecessor school.

Main Finding

In its self evaluation the school judges itself to be outstanding in every respect other than students' attainment which it considers to be good. In the short period since its opening as an academy John Henry Newman has indeed made outstanding progress in all areas of its Catholic life and religious education. Leaders of the school and its Catholic life are outstanding and, working with the newly appointed head of RE, have transformed students' attitudes towards the subject in a remarkably short time. Teaching of RE is of a very high quality and impacts strongly on students' learning. Collective worship is good and has the full support of staff and the chaplaincy team who are working hard to develop it further by giving students greater opportunities to lead and organise. Considerable progress has been made in ensuring that the Catholic ethos of the school informs the whole curriculum. While self evaluation is predominantly accurate and reliable, the judgement that the curriculum in RE is outstanding is premature based on the requirements of the Bishops' Conference Curriculum Directory. Behaviour of the students throughout the school is excellent and, with their close co-operation, teachers achieve a calm and supportive climate for learning.

School Self Evaluation

On the establishment of John Henry Newman College the task for senior leaders was evident: staff had to pull together with a commitment to the Catholic values and ethos of the school; negative attitudes of many of the students towards both Catholic life of the school and, more particularly, religious education had to be overcome; and the quality of teaching and learning across the school had to be raised. In order to respond to these urgent and all too apparent needs, rather than taking time for detailed monitoring and evaluation, effective plans and swift and determined action were required. That commitment, attitudes, and teaching and learning have been radically turned around in a short time indicates the quality of the improvement planning and action taken to implement the plans. At the same time, processes of self evaluation have been put in place to begin the task of monitoring and evaluating the plans and actions since the establishment of the college. So, while improvement planning led actions, the school is now at the point where the relationship between monitoring and evaluation and planning is changing. The school is now gathering information about and reflecting upon the effectiveness of the actions that have been taken and identifying on this basis what next needs to be done to build upon what has already been achieved. The consultations

taking place across the school about the plans for the next three years are being led by its mission as a Catholic school and motivated by the principle of the school's patron that "Heart speaks to Heart."

The draft improvement plan, though still subject to further consultation, reflects the considerable thought and monitoring that have been given to the planning for all aspects of Catholic life. It covers prayer, reflection and worship; the Catholic community in the school, locally and nationally; religious education; developing vocation and commitment to the common good. The detail of the plans includes outline provision for monitoring and evaluation. However, the director of Catholic life has established processes to review what is currently happening. For example, she has met with heads of year to review their roles as leaders in a Catholic school and how they monitor tutor teams in the way they lead prayer and worship and teach and model Catholic values. She monitors the programme of presentations on the lives of saints which are being undertaken in tutor groups and presented in assemblies. She works closely with the chaplaincy team which meets weekly to plan and evaluate the success and progress of new initiatives and has undertaken student surveys. While she considers that the evidence reveals that the school has made and is making outstanding progress towards a strong Catholic life and effective staff and student evaluation, she is wise enough to judge that the Catholic life and RE are taking root in the school and that the "stirring roots are growing." This is an accurate assessment of where the school is, but it is clear that it has an excellent capacity to maintain and extend that growth.

The findings from the evaluation processes are reported to the principal and governors. The principal, as the one who drives the Catholicity of the school, also reports regularly to the governors on Catholic life and ethos. While the school's summative self evaluation says little about the leadership of the principal, it is evident that it is her leadership, planning and continuing monitoring that have transformed teaching and learning and, with that, students' behaviour and staff confidence all within the context of a wholehearted commitment to the Catholic character of the school. She acknowledges, too, that the support of the sponsor school has freed her to focus strongly on these areas. The summative evaluation also does not judge the governors' role in evaluation, but they are aware and very active. For example they recognise that the strong relationship with the sponsor school benefits both communities and the growth model used to develop an initially inexperienced senior team has led to outstanding leadership. They have oversight of the school's Catholicity, have checked the summative self evaluation, and are robust in their support and constructive in their challenge.

Planning, recruitment policy, and close support and monitoring have transformed religious education within the last year. From a situation where RE was the lowest performing subject at GCSE in 2012 and the least popular of subjects with the students, it has become one of the most popular with predictions of GCSE grades close to the diocesan average. It has not proved possible to make any judgement about the predicted grades as no evidence of students' work in Year 11 other than data was available during the inspection. Where evidence was available for other year groups the school's judgements about progress and achievement were confirmed. The school judges the quality of teaching to be outstanding and every lesson observed by inspectors was either outstanding or had outstanding features, including those from teachers still to be qualified through Schools Direct and Teach First. Each teacher has been observed on numerous occasions during the year so the evidence base for the school's judgements is very strong. The frequency of observation of teaching has had wholly positive effects as it is seen as normal, supportive and non-threatening and it has enabled the teachers to develop rapidly. The recently appointed head of RE has played a full part in this and she has quickly established a team which works closely together to develop their teaching skills and build excellent working relationships with the students. As in other aspects of the school's Catholic life and RE, while it would be premature to judge the leadership of the head of RE to be outstanding on the basis of only two terms as the substantive leader and one term as temporary head of department, she has made excellent progress in the role.

Where the school's self evaluation is less convincing is in relation to the curriculum in RE. The curriculum which has been established has its focus on a philosophical approach, which has enabled the teachers to change students' attitudes to the subject. However, at present the curriculum is not meeting the requirements of the Bishops' Conference Curriculum Directory. The

philosophical focus means that the students are learning from religion with a significantly lesser content of learning about the Catholic faith. The criteria used to judge the quality of the curriculum provision do not take account of the extent to which it enables students to learn about Revelation, Celebration, Church, and Life in Christ. While aspects of these are dealt with to an extent, the inclusion of these four elements is not coherently planned. Assessment in RE is also slightly problematic. As the school has re-written the national levels of attainment to suit its own purposes, the levels by which standards are judged are difficult to validate against any external criteria. The re-writing is of a good standard, but at times the use of the levels is motivational rather than realistic. Almost all students are judged to be performing on the range of levels 5 to 7 from entry to the school up to the end of Key Stage 3 and, in some classes, there was little secure evidence for the levels ascribed to the work. For example, Level 7 is frequently noted in books for little more than the expression of a personal opinion which is not necessarily informed opinion. Assessment is, as self evaluation judges, often excellent, but there are occasions when the use of levels takes the place of explaining to students how to improve their work. However, most teachers challenge the students in their feedback and some have excellent practice in encouraging students to respond to their comments.

The school correctly judges one of its strengths to be in the way subjects other than RE contribute to a Catholic curriculum. While this development is in its early stages, it has already involved humanities, arts and science subjects and they have contributed to the more positive attitudes the students have developed towards the Catholicity of the school and RE. They are also contributing very well to the spiritual and vocational development of the students. The wide acceptance of monitoring as a normal part of school life enables the director of Catholic life to evaluate effectively the progress being made with the Catholic curriculum. It is a new venture which reflects the way in which the school now operates with planning, implementation and review working closely together.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

Outcomes in religious education at GCSE in 2012 were well below the performance of students in other subjects in the school both at A*-C and A*-G levels. The school has a firm conviction that the renewal of the RE department, the more positive attitude of the students, and the quality of work produced during the current year will move the GCSE performance in the current year's examinations closer to the diocesan average. It would represent a very significant improvement. Even if results were not as predicted, the rise in standards in the subject across the key stages is marked. The focus of the school on extended writing and literacy across the curriculum has had a significant effect on outcomes in RE. Students enter the school with below average attainment and all, including those needing most support, are now making very good progress.

The very large majority of students have a developing awareness and understanding of what it means to be a Catholic Christian. They are growing in their appreciation of the spiritual in their lives and how they are each called by God to serve a particular purpose and role in life. They are always ready to offer their views and opinions but also to listen and respect those of others. A small number have joined a Youth Alpha course in the school and their mature and spiritual responses are beginning to impact on relationships in the school. Arising in some significant measure from their growing awareness and acceptance of the Catholic values of the school they have responded very positively to the school's charities, created plans for a new peace garden, and were to participate in a "Big Sing" event alongside Catholic primary feeder schools in the week following the inspection. The impact of those values and the Catholic ethos of the school is shown perhaps most readily in the excellent behaviour of the students and the calm atmosphere in all classrooms.

Students increasingly value the opportunities for prayer and participate reasonably well, many despite their lack of a background in Catholic schools. They are responding to opportunities to organise and lead assemblies and prayer and to prepare for and involve themselves in class Masses with role play, singing, prayers, and Gospel reflections. The college chaplain comments on the speed of the developments in the Catholic life of the community and how the vision have

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.

become a reality, fully expressed in the celebration of acts of worship as congregation. The priest chaplain and the college chaplain, working very closely with the director of Catholic life and other members of the chaplaincy committee including students, have played a major role in the rapid development of the liturgical and spiritual life of the school. They are doing this with the full co-operation of the staff and the willingness of the students to play their part. The Sacrament of the Eucharist is at the heart of the school's liturgy with all classes having opportunities for Mass as well as year Masses and other liturgies. It is an increasingly vibrant Catholic community which looks beyond itself into the feeder Catholic schools and to parents and carers of the students.

The commitment, maintenance and development of the Catholic life of the college is driven by the principal who devolves responsibility onto the director of Catholic life and other school leaders, though without releasing her own firm expectations. She has a clear perception of the school's needs and knows how to translate this into effective plans and action. Well supported by her senior team and the chaplaincy committee, she inspires the staff to accept, understand and promote the Catholic values of the college. Improvement planning is excellent and self evaluation is both accurate and reliable.

The quality of the teaching in the department is always at least good and very often excellent. The RE teachers work together very well as a team under the guidance of the head of RE and the director of Catholic life who is the line manager of the department. They share good practice as, for example, in the whole departmental use of a distinctive structure for lesson planning which ensures that lessons are clearly organised, well timed, and rounded in such a way that expected outcomes of the lesson are reached and achieved. Relationships with the students are excellent and they are thus well motivated and enthusiastic about the subject. They understand what constitutes good work and have been well trained in self and peer assessment. A major strength of the RE teaching is that it is taught in a discursive fashion enabling the students to express their own opinions with confidence and this has been partly instrumental in changing students' views of the subject.

John Henry Newman Catholic College correctly judges that it has made outstanding progress in the short time since it opened and that there is excellence in much that it does. It has outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

Recommendations

Review the curriculum in religious education to ensure that it meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference Curriculum Directory.



July 2013

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

Dear Parents and Carers

**Section 48 (Diocesan) Inspection of John Henry Newman Catholic College,
10th-11th July 2013**

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 made outstanding progress as a Catholic school since it opened as an academy and much that it does for the students is excellent.
- The principal, her senior leadership team, and governors lead the Catholic life of the school extremely well. All of the staff give them their full support in this as in all other things.
- The capacity of the school to continue to improve is outstanding because the teaching, planning and ability of the leaders to evaluate what they do are outstanding.
- Students make a strong contribution to the life of the school and their behaviour is excellent. They accept the Catholic values that the school teaches and participate increasingly well in its very good prayer, worship and liturgy.
- There is very strong support for the school from the chaplains, Brother Andrew and Fr Kevin.
- The head of the religious education department and her team work extremely well together and their teaching and support for your children are excellent.
- Students are now making much better progress in their work in RE than in the recent past. Examination results are expected to improve significantly. One reason for this is that the students now enjoy RE.
- The staff of the school care about the local community. They are determined to enable all students to achieve as much as possible. In the inspection this care was very evident.

We have recommended that the school should review the content of the curriculum in religious education.

After some years of links with this school and its predecessor, I am personally delighted to see the enormous progress which it has made and how your children are playing their full part in the improvements that are taking place. We thank them for their welcome and their explanation to us of the ways in which they feel that the school has improved.

Yours sincerely

John Lally (Dr)
Diocesan Inspector



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Diocesan Education Service