ARCHDIOCESE OF BIRMINGHAM

INSPECTION REPORT
CARDINAL WISEMAN CATHOLIC TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE
BIRMINGHAM

Inspection Dates  29th - 30th April 2010
Reporting Inspector  Mr Joseph Skivington

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School  Comprehensive
Age range of pupils  11-16 years
Number on roll  612
Appropriate authority  The governing body
Chair of governors  Mr John McCarthy
School address  Old Oscott Hill
                Kingstanding
                Birmingham
                B44 9SR

Telephone number  0121 360 6383
E-mail address  enquiry@cardinalwiseman.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection  April 2007
DCSF School Number  330 4801
Unique Reference Number  103539

Headteacher  Mr Martin Jones
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 collective worship, and looked at a range of evidence, including key documentation such as the school’s development plan, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in RE, and students’ work.

Information about the school

Cardinal Wiseman Technology College is a smaller than average school with 612 students on roll, 43% of whom are baptised Catholic. The majority of students (83% White British) come from challenging socio-economic backgrounds: the free school meals indicator is well above average. Of the present teaching staff around 50% are Catholic. Attainment on entry is below average.

Overall effectiveness of the school as a Catholic school

Cardinal Wiseman is a satisfactory and improving Catholic school with good features, dealing in a professional and effective way with very challenging circumstances. It provides a sound Catholic ethos and education, which is warmly supported both by the students themselves, and their parents. Differences in faith and background are no barrier to an open, welcoming and comprehensive acceptance of every individual as precious in the eyes of God. The provision for community cohesion is good, based on a well planned policy and the growing active involvement of students both in the local community and in the wider, global world. Students’ participation in collective worship and their response to the invitation to prayer and reflection are satisfactory and plans are being put in place to improve provision.

Outcomes from the religious education programme are satisfactory. The quality of teaching is satisfactory with some good and improving practice observed during the inspection. At Key Stage 4 standards are below the diocesan average, and have been since the last inspection, with only satisfactory progress and achievement, albeit from low starting points. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as the others. More able students particularly do not make the expected progress because often less than good teaching lacks challenge and provides tasks that are too easy. The religious education programme makes a convincing contribution to their spiritual and moral development.

The school’s capacity for sustained improvement is at present satisfactory. There is more stability in staffing with Catholic teachers who are well qualified to teach RE. A review of the curriculum, as suggested at the last inspection has seen better coverage at Key Stage 3 and the introduction of the GCSE course in Year 9 for the two upper sets of students. An evaluative audit of the spirituality and Catholic life of the school has been carried out but improved outcomes have still to be assessed and reviewed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve provision for the spiritual life of the students and encourage a better response from students to this provision, by a more effective chaplaincy which will inspire and animate all students to participate more fully in collective worship.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring better planning to meet all students’ learning needs, but particularly the more able, with challenge and higher expectations; and consistent marking of written work to drive up attainment and progress.
- Develop further links and outreach to the local community.
How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils

Standards of attainment in religious education at the end of Key Stage 4 are below the diocesan average. In 2009 only 29% of students achieved A*-C grades in RE. The school expects to see significant improvement in this year’s GCSE RE examinations with 48% gaining C+ grades. Currently in Year 9 just over 60% of students are at Level 5 and above. There is no significant difference between boys and girls. The quality of students’ learning and progress is satisfactory and improving. More attention is being paid to preparing students for examination by rehearsing exam techniques and working through past examination papers. 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.

Students benefit from the Catholic life of the school and, in a variety of ways, make good contributions to it. They appreciate and value the Catholic ethos of the school while at the same time able to discuss spiritual and moral issues and the different viewpoints of other faiths without losing their own Catholic stance. They demonstrate the capacity to praise, thank, and to forgive, as well as understanding the corrosive nature and consequences of prejudice. 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 for a variety of charities, and take part in outreach to the more vulnerable. The school council is active and they feel their voice is heard in the school. They appreciate the 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. While there is a small group of faithful and involved students who willingly help to plan the liturgy and attend the weekly voluntary Mass, there has been a lack of effectiveness and momentum in the chaplaincy to engage the majority of students in active participation. Students are prayerful and reverent in Mass and assembly, but are not enthused to offer their participation without being asked. There are many missed opportunities for more students to develop skills in planning and presenting their own liturgies and assemblies. The parish priest and chaplain are available and supportive figures in the celebration of the Mass, the sacraments, and the prayer life of the whole school community.

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 how to improve outcomes for students. Collective worship is likewise monitored and the school is aware of the work needing to be done to improve its impact and the student response. The mission of the school is frequently reflected on as part of regular Inset and good work has been done in drawing up the Wiseman Curriculum which emphasises the Catholic ethos of the school. Governors scrutinise and evaluate the Catholic life of the school as well as the progress of the RE schemes of work, but their intervention in challenging the poor record of achievement and attainment since the last inspection has been up until recently slow and ineffective. Teachers are well supported by useful and relevant materials to encourage daily prayer. The success of the leadership and management in maintaining and nurturing Catholic life is seen in the students’ good behaviour and care for others and their good relationships with peers and staff.

The leadership and management of RE has seen, in the recent past, instability and a level of neglect, but the situation is now significantly improved and has created a reinvigorated approach and focus on 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 beginning to move.

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. Year 10 Young Leaders are involved in working with the elderly in nearby Maryvale. Charity fundraising is very successful and has touched the lives of many worldwide through CAFOD, Fairtrade and the Haiti appeal. The school would like to encourage even more students to become involved in the community and to witness against mistrust and prejudice. Those of other denominations or faiths feel that they are able to express their beliefs comfortably. Students explore other faiths to some 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 satisfactory with some heartening good practice observed during the inspection. Good lessons engage students because they are challenging and much is expected from students in contributing to their own learning. Satisfactory lessons are less well planned and 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 more able students particularly are not stretched to anything near their full potential. Written work is not always well presented or marked consistently and helpfully. Where marking is helpful it shows the students what they must do to improve. Assessment procedures and the tracking of individual progress are being embedded but do not as yet fully or effectively inform teaching strategies and individual learning programmes consistently across all years.

The curriculum meets the needs of all groups of students, as well as meeting the Curriculum Directory for Religious Education requirements, such as the allocation of time. It has been improved satisfactorily since the last inspection. 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, but more work could be done in this area so that students can understand and have a conversation about similarities and differences between the world’s major religions. Resources are well managed.

Provision for collective worship is satisfactory. There are opportunities for spiritual nourishment through prayer, Lenten and Advent services, paraliturgies, and Masses celebrated for special occasions, such as the Ascension Mass in the parish church for the whole school. However, opportunities are missed to raise the profile and impact of prayer and reflection in the day to day life of the school, and to provide more chances for the young people themselves to celebrate their faith.