

Archdiocese of Cardiff

Inspection Report

St Mary's RC High School, Lugwardine

Inspection dates	2 nd -3 rd October 2007
Reporting Inspector	Mrs A Fowler
Type of school	Voluntary Aided Secondary
Age range of pupils	11-16
Number on roll	700
Appropriate Authority	Hereford
Chair of Governors	Mr Pat Burbidge
School Address	Lugwardine Hereford HR1 4DR
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Parish(es) served	St Francis Xavier, Hereford, Our Lady Queen of Martyrs, Hereford St Michael and all Angels, Belmont Abbey, St Joseph's Bromyard, St Thomas of Hereford, Weobley, The Most Holy Trinity, Ledbury, St Ethelbert, Leominster, St Francis of Rome, Ross-On-Wye
Date of previous inspection	November 2003
Headteacher	Mr Clive Lambert
URN:	116992

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archdiocese of Cardiff and inspection of denominational education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

Description of the School

St Mary's RC High School is an average-sized Catholic 11-16 co-educational comprehensive school serving the communities of Hereford, Ross, Ledbury, Leominster and the surrounding areas. Pupils come from a range of economic backgrounds, although overall the level of deprivation is lower than average. The boy-to-girl ratio varies from year to year. Currently 57% of pupils are girls and twice as many girls than boys took the 2006 GCSE examinations. Most pupils are of white British heritage and the remaining 4% are from a range of ethnic backgrounds. On entry to the school, pupils are of above average ability, although there is variation between different year groups. The school has about half the national average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school became a science specialist college in 2003. Approximately 60% of the school intake are baptised Roman Catholics. Priests from Belmont Abbey support the school in its liturgical provision.

Inspection grades

An overall judgement for each question is made using the following grades:

Grade 1: Outstanding

Grade 2: Good

Grade 3: Satisfactory

Grade 4: Unsatisfactory

Table of grades awarded

Key question	Inspection grade
How effective and efficient is the provision of Catholic education in meeting the needs of learners and why?	2
1. How effective are leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school/college?	2
2. How good is the provision for prayer, collective worship and the liturgical life of the school/college?	2
3. How well do learners achieve in religious education?	2
4. How effective are teaching and learning in religious education?	2
5. How well does the religious education curriculum meet the needs and interests of learners?	2
6. How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners in religious education?	2

Overall Effectiveness

How effective and efficient is the provision of Catholic education in meeting the needs of learners and why?

St Mary's is a good Catholic school with some excellent features. Pupils of all ages express a great sense of pride and belonging to their school community that nurtures them spiritually, academically, morally and socially. They grow in confidence and learn to value their own and others' achievements. Staff act as excellent role models. The religious education department makes a significant contribution to the spiritual, pastoral and liturgical life of the school. Behaviour and relationships in the school are excellent. The rapport between teachers and pupils is friendly, based on mutual respect and trust. Pupils are taught to use their gifts to serve the needs of others through the many charities they generously support. Academic achievement is consistently high. The monitoring and evaluation of the Catholic life of the school needs to be systematically and formally addressed.

Improvement since the last inspection

Some issues from the inspection held in January 1998 as well as the November 2003 inspection have still to be fully addressed. There is a sub-committee working on the provision of a new chapel and hopefully this will be resolved in the near future. The issue of assessment has been partially dealt with. The implementation of levels and the introduction of self assessment techniques are all extremely positive moves and these have been identified by the department as areas to be continued and developed.

Capacity to improve

The school capacity to improve is very good. The commitment of both staff and pupils, the appointment of a lay chaplain, the support from parents and the sense of community created within the school mean that the potential to be an outstanding Catholic school is present.

Grade: 2

What the school should do to improve further

- ❖ Formal procedures for monitoring and evaluating the Catholic life of the school need to be in place.
- ❖ All staff need to take responsibility for prayer and worship.
- ❖ Inset and induction provision with regard to the Catholic nature of the school need to be put in place.
- ❖ The school should continue to develop techniques for assessment for learning within the religious education department.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL/COLLEGE

Leadership and Management

1. How effective are leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school/college?

Good features

There is a very strong sense of community within the school. Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent. Staff are excellent role models for pupils and help create a climate of trust, respect and optimism. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility both for themselves and others. The school council is just one mechanism for enabling the pupils to make decisions which affect the life of the school. They are involved in the interview process for new staff and feel that their views are listened to respectfully. The school is focused on raising achievement and provides many varied opportunities for pupils to grow. Those pupils who have special needs are well catered for and the school is expanding its provision in this area. The environment is attractive and well cared for and respected by pupils. Incidents involving bullying are few and dealt with promptly. Pupils report that they feel confident in talking to staff about any problems they may have. Many subjects, for example science, incorporate spiritual and moral development within their taught curriculum. Governors are present in school on a regular basis and link governors are appointed to the different curriculum areas. Capitation for religious education is comparable with other curriculum areas. Parental views are sought on a regular basis and parents are kept informed about the school through newsletters and the school's website. There is a rota of priests who come to the school on a regular basis to celebrate Mass and the school has recently appointed a lay chaplain who takes up his post in September 2008.

Shortcomings

The school does not have a formalised culture of monitoring and evaluation for the Catholic life of the school. For example, much good work takes place within the various curriculum areas on spiritual and moral development, but there is no mechanism for evaluating the impact of this. The governors do not fully understand their responsibilities in relation to the diocesan self-evaluation form and as yet do not set performance management targets with regard to the Catholic life of the school. There is some confusion over the mission statement which needs re-evaluating in the light of the school as a specialist college. Links with the diocese need to be strengthened. At least one full inset day per year must be clearly identified as being devoted to the Catholic life of the school in accordance with the directives of the Bishops of England and Wales.

Grade: 2

Collective Worship

2. How good is the provision for prayer, collective worship and the liturgical life of the school/college?

Good features

There is a full school assembly once a week. Year assemblies are also held once a week and pupils have the opportunity of attending voluntary Mass every Wednesday. Assemblies take place in tutor groups during the rest of the week and resource books of prayers are provided to support tutor prayer. At the voluntary Mass observed during the inspection, pupils were attentive and respectful. The use of PowerPoint enhanced the liturgy as did the music group. During the religious education lessons observed there were opportunities for pupils to pray together and reflect together. Other opportunities are provided throughout the school year, for example, penitential services during Lent. The annual pilgrimage to Lourdes is highlighted by most pupils as an occasion of real spiritual growth. Last year 165 pupils took part in this pilgrimage and all speak of it as a prayerful and in some cases life changing experience. The use of CAFÉ resources to help explain the Mass is helping develop pupils' understanding and is particularly useful for those children who do not come from a Catholic background. The school possesses a small chapel which is situated in the religious education block. This is some distance away from the main school and therefore does not receive as much use as it might. The school has identified the need to provide a new school chapel and has a committee considering this. This development is to be encouraged.

Shortcomings

The religious education department is still responsible for much of this aspect of school life. The whole school however needs to take ownership of this. The appointment of a lay chaplain and the plans for the development of a chaplaincy team should help in this area. There is no mechanism in place for evaluating the impact of collective worship. When worship is not led by the religious education department, there is confusion over the difference between assembly and worship. Provision for staff training in delivering prayer and worship is inadequate. Prayer needs to be incorporated into every inset day.

Grade: 2

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and Standards

3. How well do learners achieve in religious education?

Good features

Work in religious education is assessed regularly. The department has begun to use the new levels of attainment. Learners attain high standards in religious education. GCSE results are above average. Although the analysis of data is new to the department, this is now being collected and used to inform planning and to set targets. Pupils know, understand and can articulate the teachings, beliefs, values and way of life of Catholic Christianity and were knowledgeable about other faiths. Some pupils cited this as one of the most exciting aspects of religious education. Pupils were able to talk about their faith and make connections between faith and life.

Shortcomings

At present there is no analysis of the 'value added' factor. Assessment information is not yet incorporated into planning.

Grade: 2

Quality of provision for religious education

4. How effective are teaching and learning in religious education?

Good features

The quality of teaching and learning observed throughout the inspection was generally good and in some cases outstanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Lessons are well planned and teachers use a variety of strategies to engage pupils. For example, a game used at the start of a lesson about the commandments meant that pupils began thinking about the topic from the moment they entered the classroom. ICT was used effectively to enhance learning. In a year seven lesson on the Eucharist, for example, the use of video, an interactive website and visual images made a stimulating exciting lesson which enabled pupils to develop their understanding. Teachers take care to explain the task clearly and use questioning to check pupils' understanding. The use of diagnostic marking and assessment for learning techniques are beginning to help pupils develop the skills to improve their own work. Even though this is in its early stages, older pupils were able to articulate what they needed to do to improve their own learning. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and the climate of mutual respect helps learning. Pupils are given the opportunity to work together in groups or pairs and are helped to become independent learners.

Shortcomings

Occasionally lessons lack pace and challenge and expectations of some pupils can be too low.

Grade: 2

5. How well does the religious education curriculum meet the needs and interests of learners?

Good features

The curriculum meets the requirements of the *Curriculum Directory for Religious Education*. Other faiths and cultures are explored. Religious education is taught mainly in a building some distance away from the main building and pupils like this aspect of their lessons. They expressed the view that it helped them realise that religious education was special. The disadvantage of this is that the rest of the school is largely unaware of the work of the religious education department. The curriculum makes a good contribution to the spiritual and moral development of pupils, raising awareness of the needs of others and stressing the connection between faith and life. Lessons aim to be fully inclusive and engage all pupils regardless of their ability and background.

Shortcomings

The Personal Relationships and Sex Education policy document and curriculum have not been reviewed for some time.

Grade: 2

Leadership and management of religious education

6. How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners in religious education?

Good features

At the time of the inspection, the head of religious education was on maternity leave and had been absent from the school due to ill health during the previous year. The school meets the requirements of the *Curriculum Directory for Religious Education*, the diocesan policy and guidelines for religious education and the time allocation set by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. However, the new guidelines for 14-19 religious education have not yet been incorporated into the planning. The school has sufficient teaching staff with qualifications and experience to meet the requirements of the religious education curriculum. The department works well together as a team and is focused on high standards. The curriculum and teaching in religious education tries to ensure that every learner fulfils his/her potential. In the absence of the head of department, the religious education staff plan together and support each other in the delivery of the subject. Capitation is on a par with other curriculum areas and resources are used effectively. Staff discuss the marking and grades given, particularly at key stage four. The department has an effective plan in place to supervise the newly qualified teacher in the department.

Shortcomings

Staff are not given the opportunity to observe each other's lessons and lack the opportunity to interact with other religious education departments. Performance management is not yet in place. Self-assessment techniques are not yet fully in place.

Grade: 2

The diocesan reporting inspector wishes to express sincere thanks to governors, head teacher, staff, pupils and parents for the courtesy and co-operation received during the inspection.