

The Diocese of Hallam



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

ST BERNARD'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL ROTHERHAM

School URN	106963
Name of Chair of Governors	Monsignor John Ryan
Name of Headteacher	Mr David Butler
Date of inspection	28th November 2011
Section 48 Inspectors	Mr Tom Moore Mrs Deirdre Cleary

“..... an enthusiasm for the things of God”

Introduction

The Inspection of St Bernard's Catholic High School has been carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Diocese of Hallam Framework and Schedule for Section 48 Inspections as approved by the Bishop of Hallam.

The process of inspection in the Diocese of Hallam has been developed as an activity of the Church to support schools in further deepening the quality of Catholic education provided.

Description of the School

St Bernard's is an 11-16 Catholic Voluntary Aided comprehensive school located just outside the centre of Rotherham. It is of smaller than average size with 699 students on roll. The school serves the parishes of Forty Martyrs'; St Bede's; St Mary's (Herringthorpe); St Mary's (Maltby); Blessed Trinity; St Gerard's in the Rotherham Deanery and St Joseph's, Dinnington, in the Bassetlaw Deanery.

The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is a little below average. The proportion of students from minority-ethnic groups is below average, as are the proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities supported at the level of school action. However the percentage of students supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.

The school has specialisms in the arts and applied learning.

Information about the school

Type of School	Catholic Aided Comprehensive Voluntary
Age profile of students	11 – 16
Number on roll	699
Number of students on Special Needs and Disabilities Register	95
Number of students with a Statement of Special Educational Needs	17
Number of Catholics on roll	457
Number of Other Christian Denominations	139
Number of other Faiths	14
School Address	Herringthorpe Valley Road Rotherham S65 3BE
Telephone Number	01709 828183

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

How effective the school is in providing Catholic education
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1

St Bernard's Catholic High School is outstanding in its provision and promotion of Catholic education for the young people it serves.

Outcomes for the students in Religious Education over the last five years have been consistently very high and with the exception of 2011, achievement has been outstanding. There is little variation between groups and the performance of boys over a two year period has been well above the national figure.

The leaders and managers of the school are outstanding in their promotion, development, monitoring and evaluation of the Catholic life of the school. The Headteacher, Senior Management Team, Governing Body and the Head of Religious Education provide committed and outstanding leadership. The Chaplaincy Co-ordinator together with the Strategy Leader for Religious Education and Spiritual Formation are doing great work to inspire the young people and staff of the school to live out its mission.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement
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1

The quality of the current leadership, management and governance of St Bernard's is such that its effectiveness as a Catholic school is likely not only to be sustained but to develop still further. They are ambitious to share their vision of its distinctive ethos and to lift still higher the standards of teaching and learning in Religious Education. Self evaluation at all levels is grounded in sophisticated and accurate self analysis. Morale at the school is high. Staff have been given the confidence to push both their own performance and that of the students.

Each of the four recommendations set out in the previous S48 inspection of 2007 have been addressed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Review the number of students who are following a short GCSE Religious Education course in order to see if some might more profitably, follow the full course
- Examine the structure of House assemblies to see whether formal prayers might always be part of the liturgy and whether hymn singing could be introduced as students join St Bernard's from primary schools where it takes place as a matter of routine
- Continue to develop the induction of new staff in the Catholic ethos of the school

PUPILS

How good outcomes are for pupils taking particular account of variations between different groups
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1

Standards in Religious Education over the last five years have been consistently very high and with the exception of 2011, achievement has been outstanding. Religious Education is a beacon Department and KS4 results are generally well above the National Average. This includes the performance of boys who over a two year period have been 14% above the national figure. KS4 results in 2011 were lower than previous years, but were in keeping with an expected slight fall in overall school performance. The decision to change to a modular examination also had an impact. Projections however for the next two years indicate a return to the significantly high standards previously achieved. At KS3 most students make two levels progress. This is in line with results in English which is a high performing Department both in the context of the school and nationally.

Target setting is aspirational and rigorous. The Department have developed their own 'Going for Gold' system that complements the existing school system and aims to push students further. Student progress is tracked effectively and a range of interventions are employed where necessary if students are in danger of underachieving. This has a very positive impact on progress.

The students show high levels of interest, enthusiasm and engagement in Religious Education. Lessons are frequently student led. They support and challenge students of all abilities and cater for different learning styles. This along with outstanding relationships in the classroom enables students to make excellent progress in lessons.

The Learning environment is stimulating as well as challenging. Students are willing to share their ideas and contribute in lessons. They are keen to learn and one of the most impressive features of lessons is the way that students are expected to (and do) learn independently.

It is clear that students are religiously literate. They have knowledge, understanding and skills appropriate to their age to think spiritually, ethically and theologically and are aware of the demands of religious commitments in everyday life.

PROVISION:

How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic education

1

Of the ten lessons observed, six were judged to be 'outstanding' and four 'good'. The quality of Teaching and Learning at St Bernard's is of a very high standard. Teaching is consistently highly effective. The staff are very aware of the abilities of their students and understand how to plan effectively to build on prior learning. The teachers' excellent subject knowledge consistently challenges and inspires the students to progress as learners in Religious Education. High quality resources, including technology are used very effectively. The support provided by other adults is very good indeed. The students are highly motivated and concentrate well on their work and enjoy the subject. The quality of questioning is excellent. Students receive good feedback

both verbally and through marking. They know how well they have done and what they need to do to make further progress.

The way that the Department have developed the curriculum at all Key Stages to meet the needs and interests of learners is inspirational. The requirements of the Bishops' Conference are fully met without any loss to creativity, innovation or the engagement and enjoyment of learners.

The Department are committed to developing and using cutting edge resources. The variety of teaching methods employed help to remove barriers to learning and to provide students with skills for life. The curriculum in Religious Education provides an excellent range of enrichment opportunities which enable students to develop spiritually, morally, culturally and socially. A particularly impressive example of this is the very successful linking project with two local community secondary schools with the focus on raising awareness of students from other faith traditions.

Students are regularly asked for feedback on the curriculum and whether it is meeting their interests and needs. Students are overwhelmingly positive about Religious Education and when necessary staff are keen to incorporate suggestions made by learners.

NBRIA levels are fully embedded and underpin very effectively the learning at KS3. The levels are communicated to students in language they understand and are used very effectively in lessons to focus students on learning.

Vibrant acts of worship engage the students' interest. In the assembly that was observed on the day, the students gathered in a respectful manner and participated well. The liturgy was led by the Chaplaincy Co-ordinator with the help and support of a number of students who read their parts carefully and effectively. There was excellent use of projected slides and recorded music to deliver the message of ensuring that peripheral issues do not obscure the real meaning of Christmas. The appearance of "Super Faith Action Men" resplendent in army uniform injected a light-hearted moment into the assembly. The theme of homelessness and the emphasis on the Lighthouse and St Wilfrid's projects reflected very effectively the plight of Mary and Joseph. The students played a major part in preparing the worship and were at ease with the prayers. Although no formal prayers were used, the students made the sign of the cross together and joined in enthusiastically. The students explained to me later that the norm is in fact to say a formal prayer such as The Our Father or The Hail Mary. The Collective Worship, in assemblies, at form time, at the end of the day and at Mass contributes very significantly to the spiritual and moral development of the children. The innovation of "prayer pockets" in classrooms are an effective way of supporting staff to organise daily prayers at the start and end of the school day. These are prayers written by the students and are held in high esteem by both staff and students alike. The students have a good understanding of the liturgical seasons and feasts of the Church and are comfortable with others who hold different beliefs and attitudes to religion.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the school

1

The leaders and managers of St Bernard's are outstanding in their promotion, development, monitoring and evaluation of the provision for the Catholic life of the school.

They are committed to the mission of the Church and are an inspiration to the whole community. The maintenance of the distinctive ethos of the school is a priority, as is the spiritual development of both the staff and the young people. The Chaplaincy Co-ordinator is extremely dedicated and enthusiastic. Her inspirational approach has had a huge impact on the school.

The "School Improvement Plan" identifies three areas which are central for improvement: "The review of assemblies and acts of worship", "The expansion of the induction process of new staff", and, "A focus on greater opportunities for the spiritual support of the staff". Self evaluation and planning for improvement are well embedded. The targeting of more pupil involvement in liturgies has been a great success. A new quality assurance system has been introduced to monitor and evaluate the prayer life of the school, with the focus "Is it happening - Is it student led?". The Governing Body provides outstanding challenge and support for the maintenance and development of the Catholic dimension of the school. Issues are tackled decisively and the governors are a real help in shaping the direction of the school. They visit on a regular basis and have an accurate picture of how well the students are doing. The views of both the students and the parents are gathered, sometimes by questionnaire, but more frequently simply by chatting with these vital stakeholder groups. Their views are taken fully into account when planning for developments in both the Catholic life of the school and in Religious Education.

The Curriculum Leader for Religious Education is unrelenting in her vision for the department as a beacon in the school. She has extremely high expectations for both staff and students. The Department work very effectively as a team and good practice is routinely shared. This allows standards to be continually driven up and it ensures that the student's experience of Religious Education is very positive. There is an excellent system in place for monitoring and evaluating performance in Religious Education. Students are assessed in the first half term of year 7 and this, together with primary school information allows the Department to give each student an initial level and a target grade for the end of the year. Targets are realistic but challenging. The monitoring structure is accurate, robust and consistent. The progress of individuals, classes and cohorts in Religious Education are well monitored and allows for review and intervention. This leads on to well targeted planning and as a result outcomes in Religious Education for most students are very good and for some, exceptional.

Religious Education is a "Lead Department" within the school. This is a further example of the effectiveness of leadership and management in Religious Education. The quality assurance process is rigorous. It encompasses all aspects of the work of the Department and most impressively leads to genuine staff development and the sharing of good practice.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Key for inspection grades:

Grade 1 Outstanding Grade 2 Good Grade 3 Satisfactory Grade 4 Inadequate

Overall effectiveness	1
The school's capacity for sustained improvement	1
How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups	1
<input type="checkbox"/> how well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	1
<input type="checkbox"/> the quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
<input type="checkbox"/> the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
<input type="checkbox"/> pupils' attainment in Religious Education	1
<input type="checkbox"/> the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school	1
<input type="checkbox"/> how well pupils respond to and participate in the school's collective worship	1
How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic Education	1
<input type="checkbox"/> the quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education	1
<input type="checkbox"/> the effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in Religious Education	1
<input type="checkbox"/> the extent to which the Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs	1
<input type="checkbox"/> the quality of collective worship provided by the school	1
How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the school	1
<input type="checkbox"/> how well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
<input type="checkbox"/> how well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
<input type="checkbox"/> the extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimensions of the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory and canonical responsibilities are met	1
<input type="checkbox"/> how well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and well-being	1
<input type="checkbox"/> how effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion.	1

Further copies of this report are obtainable from St Bernard's Catholic High School or from the Diocese of Hallam Schools' Department, The Hallam Pastoral Centre, St Charles Street, Sheffield S9 3WU Tel: 0114 2566440