

**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION  
REPORT (Section 48)**

**on**

**THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE  
SCHOOL AND RELIGIOUS  
EDUCATION**

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**School:** Our Lady's Catholic College

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**School URN:** 119798

**Headteacher:** Brendan Conboy

**Chair of Governors:** Frank Rycroft

**Inspectors:** David Lewis and Elizabeth Dolan

**Date of Inspection:** 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> February 2013

This Inspection Report is produced for the Rt. Reverend Michael Campbell O.S.A., the Bishop of Lancaster, and for the Governing Body of the school (Education Act 2005, Section 48). The inspection reviews, evaluates and plans further improvements in the school's witness to the Catholic faith and Curriculum Religious Education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation.

The inspection schedule follows criteria set by the National Board of Advisers and Inspectors.

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Our Lady's Catholic College is a co-educational comprehensive school for young people from 11-18 with 841 pupils on roll. It is a Specialist Sports College. Students are drawn from an area where several schools operate selective admission policies. Students are from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, and the school deprivation indicator is above average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for pupil premium is above the national average. The proportion of students supported through college action is above the national average. There is an average proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average. The Education Youth Service provides alternative provision for a small number of students in Year 11. A group of Year 11 students takes part in off-site work-related activities every other week. These are organised by college staff through a variety of partnerships. The college works in collaboration with three local schools to extend the sixth form provision. The college meets current government floor standards, which set the minimum standards expected for attainment and progress.

## **FACTUAL INFORMATION**

### **Pupil Catchment:**

Number of pupils on roll:	841
Planned Admission Number of pupils:	1000 (11-16) + Sixth Form
Percentage of pupils baptised RC:	45.7%
Percentage of pupils from other Christian denominations:	40.5%
Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths:	0.3%
Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation:	3.7%
Percentage of pupils with special needs:	13.3%

### **Staffing**

Full time teachers:	51
Part time teachers:	14
Percentage of Catholic teachers:	35%

### **RE Department Staffing:**

Number of full time RE teachers:	3
Number of part time RE teachers:	6
Percentage of Catholic teachers:	44%
Percentage of teachers with CCRS:	11%

### **Percentage of learning time given to RE:**

Yr 7	8%	Yr 10	8%
Yr 8	8%	Yr 11	8%
Yr 9	9%		

**Parishes served by the school:**

St Bernadette's and St Elizabeth's

St Mary's

St Joseph's

St Patrick's

St Peter's Cathedral

Our Lady of Lourdes

St Thomas More

St Mary of the Angels

**Overall Effectiveness**

**1**

**Capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

**MAIN FINDINGS**

Our Lady’s Catholic College is an outstanding Catholic school where prayer, liturgy and worship are central to the school’s mission and where the development of faith is given the highest priority. Standards in Religious Education have risen significantly since the last inspection and are now good. Pupils speak effusively of the Catholic life of the school, their enjoyment of RE lessons, the positive impact of retreats, of fund raising for CAFOD and other charities. The Religious Education Department is ably led by the outstanding Head of Department whose inspirational leadership is informed by a high level of expertise and vision which focuses relentlessly on improving teaching and learning in Religious Education. Well targeted actions and planning by the school have resulted in the outstanding understanding of the school’s mission by staff and pupils. As a result, Religious Education has a very high profile in the life of the school, having a profound impact on the moral and spiritual development of pupils.

The school’s capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding. The Headteacher and Governors have worked tirelessly to develop the school to become a shining example of distinctive Catholic education. The Governors hold the Headteacher in high regard and recognise his personal commitment, drive and energy in shaping the school where each pupil and member of staff is valued and cared for, and where every member of the community contributes to the Catholic life of the school. The Headteacher provides excellent leadership in leading and developing the school. The commitment and dedication of the teaching staff and the quality of resources combine with determined leadership to provide continued sustained improvement.

The school is a haven for the pupils it serves. Care and guidance are of the highest order and pupils pay tribute to the support they receive. They are articulate and enthusiastic about their school, its caring community, and the belief that each is valued and supported to achieve their best in a Christian environment.

## **What the school needs to do to improve further**

In order to raise standards further the governors should seek to:

- Ensure 10% of curriculum time is allocated to the teaching of Religious Education.
- Develop marking and assessment to become diagnostic and formative.
- Work towards specialist RE teachers in the department as soon as finances allow.

## **PUPILS**

### **How good are outcomes for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups?**

<b>1</b>
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Outcomes for pupils have improved significantly since the last inspection and are consistently good overall. Learning and progress in Religious Education have improved significantly since the last inspection and are now outstanding. Attainment is above average and there is firm evidence that outcomes for GCSE Religious Education this summer are projected to rise significantly. The very large majority of lessons observed were outstanding and were characterised by excellent pace, well organised resources, excellent relationships between pupils and staff, and a demonstrable eagerness by pupils to acquire knowledge and develop interest and understanding. Pupils really enjoy Religious Education at Our Lady's Catholic College. However, the curriculum time allocated to Religious Studies is 8% in Y7 and Y8, 9% in Y9, and 8% in Y10 and Y11, which is below the Bishops' Conference recommendation of 10%.

Progress across all key stages is outstanding. Pupils begin their secondary school with significantly below average attainment. Outcomes at the end of KS4 in Religious Education are good and improving. Almost all pupils concentrate very well and are rarely off task. In all lessons observed, pupils showed determination to succeed at the tasks set. Lessons are characterised by pupils' keenness to succeed and grasp opportunities to extend and improve their learning. At KS3, attainment has risen from 69% L5+ in 2009 to 82% L5+ in 2012. Tracking and intervention programmes are well developed, and tracking indicates that progress should be sustained by current Y9 and Y8 pupils.

At KS4, all students make outstanding progress. Standards have risen from 53% A\*-C since the last inspection to the 2011-12 two year average

GCSE A\*-C of 63%. 27% of pupils achieved A\*-A in 2012. This rate of improvement is expected to continue.

At KS5, Religious Studies is a very popular subject and uptake is high. Students have a great deal of confidence in the Religious Education Department with several students combining A level Religious Studies as their only A level with their Vocational BTEC courses. The AS pass rate is now 95% - 3% above the national pass rate. ALPS analysis confirms good progress, improving from an ALPS grade 7 in 2009 ALPS grade 5 in 2012. At A2, ALPS analysis indicates an improvement from grade 9 in 2009 to grade 2 in 2011. A slight dip in performance in 2012 is being tackled rigorously by the department.

The contribution of pupils to the Catholic life of Our Lady's Catholic College is outstanding and is a real strength of the school. Pupils have genuine confidence in expressing their own views and beliefs and are able to refer to the teachings of Jesus and other key religious figures. They are very committed to Our Lady's Catholic College as a Catholic school, its aims and mission to the Church and communities. Pupils are effusive about the work of the Chaplaincy Team, which consists of a Priest Chaplain, a Chaplaincy Co-ordinator and a student Chaplaincy Support Worker. They highly value the personal support for each individual by every member of the Chaplaincy Team including non-Catholic pupils asking to be received into the Church, individual support for faith development, and whole school faith-based activities, liturgies and services. A recently introduced Rainbow Bereavement Support Group is another example of the excellent work of the Chaplaincy Team. The development of retreats to Castlerigg and 'Days with a Difference' are highly valued by pupils. Pupils treat others with high levels of respect. Care and mutual support are palpable. Pupils demonstrate their faith in action by showing a real concern for the world community by raising large amounts of money for both local and world communities. For example, in 2011-12, over £7500 was raised for CAFOD, partner schools in South Africa, LEPR, St John's Hospice, a regular Fair-Trade stall, and the special care baby unit of the local hospital. The School Council is well developed and gives pupils an opportunity to develop their leadership within the school. The Year of Faith is integral to the school during this academic year with, for example, full involvement in the regional Year of Faith Mass with the Bishop, a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady and the Martyrs at Ladyewell, the annual Martyrs' Walk in Lancaster, and the development of a visual programme 'Heroes of Faith' from various walks of life and disciplines.

Prayer and worship are central to the life of the school and have developed significantly since the last inspection. Morning Prayer is characterized by the sign of the cross, pupil participation in leading prayer, readily available online resources for each day, based on a weekly theme, prepared by each member of staff, available through an interactive whiteboard and used in all classrooms. The voluntary Ash Wednesday Mass was very well

attended, led by the Chaplain and Chaplaincy team with students leading and participating in readings, prayers, singing and instrumental music. Pupils behave respectfully during times of prayer and in religious services; they are quiet and attentive. Pupils are aware of the liturgical year through the programme of assemblies and liturgical events. The school has revised the Collective Worship Policy working with the Chaplaincy Support Team, the Priest Chaplain, Chaplaincy Coordinator and the Senior Leadership Team. Pupils' response to Collective Worship is good. They generally engage well in prayer and respond appropriately with respect and reverence. Provision for Collective Worship is excellent. Assemblies focus on the Liturgical Year, and liturgical events include Advent Services, Holy Week Services, the Advent Carol Service with partner Primary Schools, Lenten Reconciliation Services, the Year 7 Introductory Visits to the Chapel, Friday lunchtime Mass, Tuesday lunchtime quiet prayer and reflection in the Chapel, and informal prayer and praise for staff each Thursday lunchtime.

## **LEADERS AND MANAGERS**

**How effective are leaders and managers in developing the Catholic life of the School?** 1

The school's leadership team has worked tirelessly to ensure that the enhancement and promotion of the Catholic Life of the school is central to school improvement, and where every member of staff is expected to play their part in developing the mission of the school. This cohesive team approach has had a profound impact on the development of Our Lady's Catholic College; the Catholic Life and mission of the school is shared by all pupils, students, staff and governors. The Headteacher, fully supported by the Governing Body, has ably led the Senior Leadership Team, the Head of Religious Education and staff and students at the school. This is evident in their personal witness, the Chaplaincy Review Document, half-termly Chaplaincy Team meetings, the explicit development of the spiritual life of the school in the School Improvement Plan, the work of the Headteacher with attendance at partner Catholic Primary School liturgical services, and the development of future Catholic Leaders. For example, both Deputy Headteachers are currently on the Moving Forward programme led by the National College and Dioceses.

Self evaluation is rigorous and focused. The significant improvement in progress and attainment is reflected in the detailed and honest self-evaluation for Religious Education. Whole school tracking and intervention strategies are as important for Religious Education as all other subjects, including English and Mathematics. As a result, outcomes in Religious Education are good and improving. Progress and attainment in Religious Education is tracked by class and individual pupil. The introduction of SISRA across the school should ensure even more rigorous tracking and

early interventions which should lead to a further improvement in outcomes for pupils and students. Paired lesson observations, work scrutiny, learning walks and pupil questionnaires contribute to an annual Departmental Review for the Religious Education Department. This department is keen to build on successes to date and drive improvement further.

The Governing Body make a highly significant contribution to the work and the Catholic dimension of the school. They have worked tirelessly with the Headteacher, Senior Leadership Team and Religious Education staff, including the Chaplaincy Team, to ensure the Catholic mission of the school is central to the development of Our Lady's Catholic College. Governors regularly visit the school, attend services and liturgies and are instrumental in developing the Catholic Life of the school through their involvement in the Chaplaincy Committee which monitors standards in Religious Education, seeks to improve provision, and raise outcomes across the school. The Chaplaincy Committee reports directly to the Full Governing Body. The Chaplaincy Committee holds the Senior Leaders and Head of Religious Education to account and speak highly of the work of the Headteacher in making a 'massive difference' in developing the Catholic Life of the school. They have high levels of expertise, are extremely well organised and thorough in their approach. They discharge their statutory and canonical responsibilities, and have highly robust systems for evaluating the effectiveness of their implementation, acting upon their findings. The Chair of Governors attends some Senior Leadership Team meetings and all departments have link governors who are fully aware of standards and challenges across the school.

The school has worked hard to develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and pupil well-being. The subject leader for Religious Education attends Diocesan Heads of RE meetings, the Headteacher is Chair of the Diocesan Secondary Headteacher group, and the school is a founding partner of the North Lancashire Learning Federation which has been established to widen KS5 curriculum provision for students at Our Lady's Catholic College. As a Sports College, Our Lady's provides additional sports facilities and events for partner Catholic primary schools, including an annual Sports Day for partner Catholic primary schools using the college facilities, as well as holiday sports courses for primary pupils and local Community Centre provision. The school visits and works with its partner schools in Durban, South Africa, including planting a vegetable garden at an orphanage in the township. The school has links with China – the Headteacher and Head of Modern Foreign Languages have visited China to meet with education leaders and explore culture and practice. A visit to China by students from Our Lady's was made possible in 2011 in partnership with the Confucius Institute, and Mandarin is now taught at the school. The school links well with external agencies to provide excellent support for the most vulnerable students. These include Social Services, Connexions, the school nursing

service, and the Lancaster Catholic Youth Service. Other developments have included work with the Franciscan Friars, Diocesan Lourdes Pilgrimage and members of the Cenacolo community

Community Cohesion is an outstanding feature of Our Lady's Catholic College. Leaders and managers have worked tirelessly to ensure the best possible opportunities for pupils and students to collaborate with people from different backgrounds and promote the most effective inclusion provision. For example, the Chaplaincy team regularly invite guest speakers into the school to work with the young people. 'Global Link' gives pupils and students an understanding of global issues. Parents are actively involved in the life of the school including annual Parents' Evenings, a parents' forum in order to develop the strategic direction of the school, a half-termly newsletter, a well developed website with links to the Diocesan website, and a text messaging service in order to communicate quickly with parents. Parents' questionnaires indicate a great deal of satisfaction with the school. The RE curriculum includes modules on wealth and poverty, prejudice and discrimination, multi-ethnic and multi-faith societies, conflict and equality. The school also holds an annual Christmas party for elderly parishioners.

## **PROVISION**

### **How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?**

<b>1</b>
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Almost all the teaching observed during the inspection was outstanding. Teaching in Religious Education is characterised by excellent pace, skillful questioning and answering techniques, high levels of pupil and student involvement, excellent resources and evidence of very thorough planning. Teaching is consistently highly effective in enthusing pupils and, as a result, outcomes have risen significantly across the school and are set to rise further. Teachers demonstrate acute awareness of each individual pupil's prior learning and understanding, and use Assessment for Learning techniques to skilfully develop each pupil's understanding and ensure excellent progress in the classroom. The sheer enjoyment of pupils and their keenness to improve their learning and progress are clearly evident. Teachers demonstrate excellent subject knowledge and apply it consistently to challenge and inspire pupils and ensure they make excellent progress. Resources are designed to meet the needs of the pupils and students, are carefully prepared and of a high quality. Materials prepared for use with interactive whiteboards are used effectively to engage and motivate pupils and students. Books are thoroughly marked and demonstrate personalised learning approaches and differentiation by outcome. However, marking could be developed to become more diagnostic and formative. Pupils and students know their targets and how

to improve their work but this could be made more explicit in books and assessed pieces of work.

The quality of teaching in Religious Education is very high with the great majority of lessons across all key stages judged as outstanding, with no lessons less than satisfactory: Religious Education teaching is exemplary and a model for the whole school. All specialist teachers of Religious Education have excellent subject knowledge and display a strong commitment to teaching Catholic beliefs and values and in developing the religious literacy of their students. However, the current financial situation at the school has led to a number of non-specialist (highly committed) teachers working in the department. A return to full-time specialists across the department would support the school in making even better progress.

The school has developed rigorous assessment strategies which monitor and evaluate progress of each pupil and support intervention strategies to raise attainment. Half-termly module tests inform progress to date and identify areas of weakness to be addressed. These strategies provide an accurate, up to date picture of the achievement of all pupils and are used consistently and systematically to promote rapid improvement and sustain high levels of achievement. Assessment systems and projected outcomes are clearly understood by pupils and are regularly scrutinized by senior leaders and the governing body.

The Key Stage 3 curriculum has been redesigned to better meet the needs of pupils and prepare them effectively for their GCSE course. Bespoke resources have been designed which contribute to the excellent progress across the key stage: pupils arrive with significantly below average attainment in Year 7 and achieve good standards of attainment by the end of Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, the same rigorous approach has been adopted and is constantly under review in order to meet the needs of all learners. Key Stage 4 courses begin in Year 9 and this imaginative approach to the planning and delivery of the Religious Education curriculum has contributed significantly to the excellent progress of pupils: attainment is now good and improving. At Key Stage 5, Religious Studies A level is amongst the most popular course at Our Lady's College – an indication of the high regard for the subject and Religious Studies teachers by students at the school. All Sixth Form students study General RE once a week, exploring a number of topics including Religion in the Media, homosexuality and gay marriage, world religions, and the challenges for Catholics in our secular society.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is outstanding: prayer is central to the life of the school. Well developed resources prepared by each member of the teaching staff across the school support the shared commitment to developing Our Lady's Catholic College as a beacon of excellence in Catholic education. Prayer, liturgies and assemblies provide opportunities for reflection, meditation and a sense of belonging to a

worshipping community. The Chaplaincy team effectively prepares and leads the development of the prayer life of the school. Examples of these are: online prayer resources available to all staff, a staff training day exploring the use of prayer in the classroom, a visit to Auschwitz leading to assemblies led by Year 12 students, and the commemoration of Holocaust Memorial Day each year. Pupils speak of their appreciation of the time and support given to the prayer life of the school, its inclusive approach to include students and staff of all faiths and none, and the tangible support by the Chaplaincy Team for each member of the school community.

## SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

**Key for inspection grades:**

Grade 1 – **Outstanding**    Grade 2 – **Good**    Grade 3 - **Satisfactory**    Grade 4 - **Unsatisfactory**

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The school’s capacity for sustained improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>How good are outcomes for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups?</b>	<b>1</b>
• how well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education?	1
❖ the quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	1
❖ the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
❖ pupils’ attainment in Religious Education	2
• to what extent do pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school?	1
• how well do pupils respond to and participate in the school’s Collective Worship?	2
<b>How effective are leaders and managers in developing the Catholic life of the School?</b>	<b>1</b>
• 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
• how well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils?	1
• the extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory and canonical responsibilities met?	1
• how well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and well being?	1
• how effectively leaders and managers promote Community Cohesion?	1
<b>How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?</b>	<b>1</b>
• the quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education?	1
• the effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in Religious Education?	1
• the extent to which Religious Education curriculum meets pupils’ needs?	1
• the quality of Collective Worship provided by the school?	1