



INSPECTION REPORT

St Peter's High School and Sixth Form Centre
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DfES Number: 115729

Headteacher: Mr. L Montagu
Chair of Governors: Mr. J Stenson

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Clifton
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of inspection: 29th-30th January 2013
Date of previous inspection: 16th-17th November 2009

Reporting Inspector: Mr T Dillon

Description of School

St Peter's Catholic High School is a larger than average 11-18 mixed comprehensive school. It draws pupils from a wide catchment area, including Gloucester, the Forest of Dean and Stroud. The school converted to academy status in 2011. The majority of pupils are of white British heritage and about a third are from a range of multi ethnic groups, some of whom have English as a second language (EAL). The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is close to the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) is above the national average, particularly in the sixth form where there are well above average pupils with SEND. Just over 80 per cent of pupils in main school and just over 50 per cent in the sixth form are baptized Catholics.

The school's mission is to provide a high quality education within the context of a Christian environment, where pupils have an understanding of the Roman Catholic faith in line with the Gospel message.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1: Outstanding; Grade 2: Good; Grade 3: Satisfactory; Grade 4: unsatisfactory

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

St Peter's is an outstanding Catholic school. It has a strong Catholic ethos into which pupils from different faiths and ethnic backgrounds fit comfortably. Pupils achieve well above the national average in religious education (RE) in Years 7 to 11, which is reflected in their GCSE results. In the sixth form, standards are good. Teaching is mainly of high quality, and curricular provision suits the needs of the pupils well. Pupils have excellent attitudes to the school, its ethos and what they believe they gain from it. They are extremely conscientious in their studies and in their approach to matters of faith.

Leadership and management in the school are outstanding. The governing body is industrious and effective and supports the school well. The headmaster has a clear vision of the school's mission and shares it with the rest of the staff. He is very well supported by the senior management team. The whole staff display a commitment to the school's Catholicity which is impressive. The head of RE provides sensitive and expert leadership. He has created a strong team ethic among RE staff. Provision for collective worship is outstanding, led and supported by the lay chaplain and visiting parish priests. Pupils show commitment during times of prayer. Their experience is enhanced by a good range of liturgical celebrations, retreats and opportunities for prayer, all of which contribute strongly to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The school is entering a period of transition. The governors are in the process of appointing a new headteacher. With its current headteacher, senior management, governors and head of RE, all the evidence indicates that the school could continue to strengthen. The new head of RE, for instance, has already introduced a number of innovations that have benefited the department and his strategic development plan promises more.

Much will depend on the appointment made by the governors as to whether the school will continue to progress as it has done under the present leadership.

Grade 1

What the school should do to improve further

- Further develop assessment for learning strategies, making effective use of peer and self assessment, so that they are consistent across the RE department and help pupils to improve their own learning.
- Build on the very good assistant teacher support for pupils of different abilities by providing tasks appropriate to the different needs and by making more use of ICT.
- Begin planning to ensure the requirements of the new Curriculum Directory are fully implemented

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

Grade 1

1. The school has a very positive Catholic ethos into which different faiths and backgrounds fit comfortably. Pupils are positive in their approach to what the school has to offer, whether they have been in the school since Year 7 or have recently joined, as many do in Year 12. They treat each other with respect and show concern for everything around them. Their conduct in lessons and about the school is exemplary, not because it is enforced, but because they see it as the proper thing to do. They develop an excellent sense of what is right and wrong behaviour. This is reflected in their discussions in class, their written work, and their interviews with inspectors. The school council plays an important part in the school, gathering, discussing, and presenting the views of pupils to management. In interviews with inspectors they spoke of the strong commitment to prayer and social awareness, as well as the support that pupils can get from many different areas of the school.
2. As a result of the support and encouragement of the school chaplain, the pupils contribute willingly to a range of opportunities for prayer and spiritual celebration. They talk eagerly about the opportunities offered and the positive contributions they make. In a sixth form assembly observed during the inspection a group of pupils gave witness to their faith, with references to Kintbury, World Youth Day, Lourdes and the St Paul's group. Two pupils led prayers. The whole experience was one which clearly had a positive impact on the rest of the pupils. A Year 8 assembly based on young carers helped pupils consider Christian responses to tragedies, responses that were evident in the way pupils have reacted to the recent death of a member of staff. Prayer is seen as an important aspect of daily life and pupils respond devoutly in class prayers, the daily Angelus and end of school prayers. The Wednesday morning pre-school prayers led by the chaplain were attended by about thirty pupils and demonstrated a commitment not only to their own needs but to others for whom they prayed. The parish priest who was interviewed also spoke highly of the pupils' response in the regular Masses, Reconciliation and their contribution to the liturgy.
3. The overall quality of attainment in the main school is outstanding, which is in line with the school's own assessment. This reflects the mainly high quality of teaching observed and curricular provision.
4. Pupils were able to understand the concept of free will and its implications, as observed in Year 8 lesson, and an ability to interpret moral and spiritual outcomes from evidence

with which they were presented. This was observed in a Year 9 lesson where they linked effectively a pair of shoes with the Holocaust. By the time they reach the sixth form they make perceptive comments on the arguments for design in the universe and develop a sound understanding of the five proofs of St Thomas Aquinas.

5. The overall quality of work in pupils' exercise books is good. Books are generally well presented, showing pupils' commitment to doing well. Pupils tackle a good range of work, which includes independent work as well as tasks more closely directed by the teacher. There are some impressive extended pieces of writing throughout main school, and especially in Year 11 where some of the responses in philosophy and ethics are of high quality.
6. In the sixth form pupils show an ability to discuss effectively in their written work, but there is variation in quality. For example, is it reasonable to argue that Jesus 'probably' knows more than we do about after life? Staff work hard to ensure that pupils organise their work properly. They check pupils' folders and give clear guidance designed to help pupils have a good basis for future revision.
7. All the Year 11 pupils take GCSE. Their results, including the number of A*-B are well above the national average, which is impressive in light of the many pupils with SEND who are entered. The more able pupils in main school show high levels of capability orally as well in their writing, whilst the EAL and SEND pupils make very good progress in relation to their abilities, often as a result of the support they receive from the SEND coordinator, EAL staff and the teaching assistants.
8. At A-level, the results in 2012 were in line with the national figure. The quality of work of the current sixth form was judged by inspectors to be good. The influx into the sixth form of pupils new to the school, numbers of them not being baptised Catholics, impacts on results overall, but the school does good work in helping them to integrate successfully and make good progress. Pupils following the general RE course in the sixth form were very positive in interview with inspectors about the support they received and how their understanding of different faiths and cultures, discrimination, and the essence of Catholicism, was developing.
9. Pupils approach their studies conscientiously. In all the lessons observed they were attentive and applied themselves well to tasks. They are keen to contribute to question and answer sessions in lessons and this enables them to make good progress. Most express themselves well and listen attentively. They show good ability to identify the purpose of a question and provide a relevant answer. The excellent relationships between pupils and between pupils and their teachers make a positive contribution to their learning. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is not based solely on one of the national RE schemes but is extracted from different sources. The approach works well.

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

Grade 1

10. Leadership and management in the school are outstanding.
11. The governing body is highly committed to the school's success and operates effectively in support of the school. Its members are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds, and this serves the school well. The structure of committees is appropriate and ensures that full governors' meetings can be well informed and constructive. All the committees and the full governing body meet at regular and appropriate intervals. The recent change to academy status has been well managed and has given the governors the opportunity to

establish strong links with local Catholic primary schools. Two governors from such schools are now on the St. Peter's governing body.

12. The Chair of Governors is in contact with headmaster frequently and the RE link-governor seeks to keep abreast of developments in the department. The weekly sessions that the headteacher has with groups of governors to update them on the school's work are invaluable. The presence of two parish priests on the governing body ensures that the Catholic nature of the school is not forgotten. A combination of governors, senior staff and the chaplain form the strategic management group that works positively towards achieving the school's mission. Although the school has a brief development plan it is not structured as a three or five year strategic plan which includes responsibilities, times of evaluation and costs.
13. The headmaster has a clear vision of the school's mission and expresses it passionately. It is shared throughout the school and it is impressive to hear pupils talk about the ethos as linking everyone in the school community, young and older pupils, as well as staff. The whole staff display a commitment to the school's Catholicity which is impressive. The effectiveness of pupil commitment to the ethos is mirrored in the numbers of pupils seeking entry to the school, many on the recommendation of current pupils. Those who are not Catholic, whether staff or pupils, say they are perfectly comfortable in the school. New staff are properly inducted and along with the rest of the staff have the benefit of in-service training (INSET) on what it means to be in a Catholic school from the chaplain. Newly qualified teachers also benefit from a thorough induction system.
14. The head of RE monitors the department's work through book trawls and lesson observations effectively. Useful records of the findings are kept. A member of the senior management team is his line manager, and her recent experience as temporary leader of the department gives her a good insight into what is required. Together, they are having a positive influence on attitudes in the RE department. There is a strong feeling of teamwork amongst the staff. The RE staff have the opportunity for professional development through in-school INSET, as well as external INSET.
15. The head of RE is a recent appointment. He took over a department that had been experiencing some difficulties and is working hard to ensure that it now fulfils its mission. He provides sensitive and expert leadership, and meets with the staff to discuss the department's work regularly. He sees the subject as a core subject and has worked with success to establish it as such in terms of curriculum time and resourcing. His work is ably supported by the school chaplain.

How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?

Grade 1

16. Provision for collective worship is outstanding. The presence in school of the lay chaplain has led to a very positive approach to the provision for the Catholic life of the school. Pupils and staff had the opportunity for private prayer in the chapel, weekly praying of the Rosary, and regular morning prayers. The liturgical year is followed so that all pupils and staff are helped to see the significance of seasons such as Advent, Lent and Easter. The annual form Masses in main school enables full participation by the pupils in prayer as well as in the creation and presentation of the liturgy. In whole school Masses, some older pupils act as Eucharistic ministers. The daily saying of the Angelus and close of school prayers, which are directed through the school's Tannoy system by the headteacher, are responded to well by the pupils and help to cement the strong community spirit that is evident.

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17. Links between the school and the wider Catholic community are excellent. Local clergy visit the school to celebrate Mass and provide opportunities for pupils of different faiths to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Pupils have an awareness of the diverse society to which they belong through what they are taught and through the nature of the school's pupil population. Pupils from very different ethnic backgrounds mix well. A very positive feature helping pupils to understand their life as Christians is the society for young carers, which provides opportunities for pupils to talk through worrying domestic issues.
 18. The school is involved in a wide range of charities, which include shoebox contributions, the creation of food banks, and donations to Cafod. Pupils often take the lead in organising charities, as was the case during the recent Children in Need appeal.
 19. The school communicates well with parents. The web site provides useful information about the school and its activities and there are regular bulletins. Parents are kept well informed about their child's progress through parents meetings, reports, and the assessment data that is regularly transmitted. If parents have concerns, they have ready access to the appropriate member of staff. Parental response to the inspection questionnaire revealed very strong support for the school. Most parents felt that the school provided an excellent Catholic education, though several parents felt they had insufficient information about the school's relationships and sex education.
 20. Pupils' achievement and progress are related to the mostly outstanding quality of the teaching. Teachers are knowledgeable and plan their lessons conscientiously. They make very good use of the interactive whiteboard, which contributes effectively to pupils' learning. They also make effective use of worksheets. The link between the teachers and the teaching support assistants, when observed, proved to be a major factor in the good progress made by the less able, though little evidence, either in lessons or pupils' books, was seen of different types of work being set for pupils of different abilities. The excellent relationships between staff and pupils encourage learning and give pupils the confidence to be involved in group work and question and answer sessions. In the best lessons, teachers have imaginative approaches and manage to draw on pupils' interest to further learning. Only occasionally is a lesson too teacher directed, leading to a general apathy among the pupils. The use of computers by pupils for research or public presentation in lessons is limited.
 21. Teachers assess pupils' progress regularly. They provide information that is used by heads of year to monitor a pupils' progress and ensure that support is provided when needed. The system of enabling pupils to have regular meetings with their tutor is also beneficial in this respect. The information is shared with parents and with pupils, the latter having a good idea as to what attainment level they are working at. Teachers mark pupils' written work regularly and most work is commented upon, though there is some inconsistency across the department in relation to assessment for learning; that is teachers' comments do not always help pupils to see how to improve their work and teachers do not always follow up to ensure that pupils have fully grasped what they need to do. There are also limited opportunities for pupils to use peer and self-assessment.
 22. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is not based solely on one of the national RE schemes but is extracted from different sources. The approach works well. Through Key Stage 3 the department has a detailed scheme which plots pupils learning in line with the Curriculum Directory. In Years 10 and 11, the school has recently changed to the Welsh Joint Board syllabus and the evidence from the most recent examination results indicates that it is more suitable for it pupils. In Key Stage 4, teachers' planning is strongly influenced by syllabus requirements. Teachers however also need to bear in mind the requirements of the new directory for RE.

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23. At A-level, the curriculum also follows closely the examination syllabus. As in Key Stage 4, planning follows the syllabus. In the sixth form, the arrangements for delivering general RE are effective and pupils of different faiths find it provides them with opportunities to discuss spiritual and moral issues.
 24. The time allowed for RE throughout the school is in line with that mandated by the Bishops' Conference. Pupils' learning about the Faith is further supplemented by positive links across the curriculum. Subjects such as art, music, drama and English, encouraged by the Chaplain, contribute to the liturgy, and in other ways add to the overall curricular experience of the pupils.
 25. The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of extra-curricular activities, which add to pupils' understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. The RE department organises one day retreats, the chaplain has an annual retreat for Years 7, 9 and 12, and there are well attended residential retreats at Alton Castle and Kintbury. All these activities help to support pupils in their Faith.