



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ARCHBISHOP ILSLEY CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Victoria Road, Acocks Green, Birmingham, B27 7XY

Inspection dates	8 th -9 th October 2014
Reporting Inspector	Janet Mellor
Assisting Inspector	Louisa Craig

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11-18 years
Number on roll	1153
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Mrs Mary Mills
Telephone number	0121 706 4200
Email address	enquiry@ilsley.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	September 2009
DFE School Number	330/4804
Unique Reference Number	103541

Headteacher	Mr Glen Alexander
--------------------	--------------------------

Previous inspection:	2
----------------------	---

This inspection:	2
------------------	---

DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two diocesan inspectors. The focus of the inspection was on the effectiveness and use of the school's self evaluation of Catholic life and religious education (RE). To consider validation of the school's self evaluation of teaching and learning, the inspectors observed ten part RE lessons, completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils and sixth form students to evaluate the impact of teaching on their learning over time. They held meetings with senior staff, the priest chaplain, the teaching assistant working with the RE faculty, pupils and governors. They observed a Mass, tutor group worship, three assemblies and a visit to the local war memorial for an act of remembrance. They looked at a range of evidence related to the school's self evaluation such as RAISEonline, the whole school self evaluation, its review and the development plan, the faculty self evaluation and development plan, surveys and teachers' planning. Alongside work to consider the validation of the school's self evaluation, the inspectors gathered evidence about the development of spiritual and moral, social and cultural aspects of the curriculum and their impact.

Information about the school

Archbishop Ilsey is an above average sized Catholic secondary school serving parishes in south east Birmingham, an area of well above average levels of social and economic deprivation. The proportion of baptised Catholic pupils is currently 80% but this is declining. 53% of the staff are Catholics. Most pupils are of white British heritage. A significant number have an Irish cultural background. There is an above average and increasing number of pupils from ethnic minority homes. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is below average but also gradually increasing. There is an above average number of pupils eligible for additional financial support for their education and free school meals eligibility is almost twice the national average. The proportion of those with special needs is about average though this has grown significantly. There is a considerably larger proportion of boys to girls.

Main Finding

Archbishop Ilsey Catholic School judges itself to be outstanding in its provision and outcomes for RE and in its Catholic life. Although there are aspects in which that judgement is sound, and there is a clear and determined target to work rapidly towards that level, it has not yet been fully achieved. The headteacher and his staff are totally committed to improvement which has been invigorated by key decisions in structures and appointments over the last year. Classroom teaching in RE was seen to be at least good and often outstanding. Staff know the school and its pupils well. Recent innovations stemming from detailed planning have not yet been fully embedded. Planning for a comprehensive cycle of monitoring and evaluation of Catholic life is not yet in place. Planning for the introduction of the new whole school assessment system to the RE faculty to replace the national levels has not fully embraced the need to keep all pupils aware of the new strategies for monitoring their progress and helping them to improve.

School Self Evaluation

The school has chosen to make a single judgement of outstanding for its RE and Catholic life, rather than recording judgements for separate aspects of its work in these areas. The rationale for this is that the school shows in the self evaluation that it knows where it has shortcomings. On the basis of successes and the capacity to improve it judges overall effectiveness to be outstanding. The RE and Catholic life self evaluation document, in line

with the school's overall self evaluation, identifies strengths and areas for development, some of which are incorporated into the RE development plan for the coming year. Whole school requirements determine that this is a single page with a maximum number of targets in order to enable a strong focus on specific aspects of the faculty's work. The improvement plan states the targets but does not identify actions which will be taken to achieve them. Cross-referencing the department's self evaluation provides some information about the actions, but there is no indication of time scales, success criteria, or how actions will be monitored. A detailed analysis of the attainment and progress of all year groups is clearly presented in the form of a 'data dashboard' following publication of examination results and this includes a commentary and actions to be taken arising from the analysis. How this relates to the improvement plan is not clear.

The impact of forensic analysis of RE GCSE results has led to the development of strategies which in turn have enabled a rise in attainment to bring the school in line with diocesan averages. It has identified ways in which it can enable the lower ability band to improve attainment and progress, especially the boys. What is lacking is how the proposed introduction of an alternative examination board will be monitored. Expectations for outcomes throughout the faculty are ambitious though the school recognises the need to bridge the gap between professional predictions and actual results. At A level attention to analysis of strategies and outcomes is clearly leading to higher grades. Data showing a comparison of progress of pupils in years 7 to 9 over the last two years is presented with less confidence, but the school considers that it has reliable data for benchmarking progress from the end of the academic year 2013-14 and it has identified pupils for a particular focus in raising achievement as they move forward to GCSE.

The data dashboard is also used by the faculty to record the quality of teaching and this analysis has clearly enabled the school to focus on work in the classroom and assessment. Records from last year indicate performance of current teachers at either very good or outstanding levels, and the commentary shows that the faculty is by no means complacent. Action is in place to develop the new team including non-specialists through the sharing of resources and teaching strategies, and this has been seen to be highly successful, with new teachers performing at the same level. Therefore the school is fully justified in its judgement that teaching is 'improving and going from strength to strength'. Pupils' opinions have also been researched and they overwhelmingly consider themselves to be well taught in RE.

The RE faculty's self evaluation of pupils' work and teachers' marking and feedback over the past year indicates that there has been improvement in terms of feedback and consistency. The current focus on presentation, extended writing and response to feedback has not yet been fully monitored in Years 7 to 9. The whole school decision to move towards a new system of assessment involving the concepts of mastery, banding and back planning the GCSE is in the process of implementation and as yet it is too early to carry out detailed monitoring of its impact.

For Catholic life including collective worship there is no specific overall planning document, though the school has evaluated through surveys aspects of its provision including the newly developed vertical tutoring structure and house system. These have been introduced following analysis of how the school can combine more effectively structures for behaviour management and its Catholic ethos, including the allocation of sufficient time for collective worship. As this has been introduced recently, only initial evaluation is available. The school judges its Catholic life as outstanding based largely on wide provision and feedback from parents and pupils, as well as on the impact and the commitment to areas for development. Documentation to indicate clearly why targets have been chosen, the time frames and the success criteria are gaps in the management of an otherwise exemplary provision. Self evaluation rightly judges spiritual and moral development as a real strength of the school

and there is evidence of its role throughout the curriculum, and of its impact on pupils. The school has recognised the need to consolidate and extend already promising work on vocational awareness.

The governing body is seen as a strength in terms of commitment to the school, including to Catholic life meetings. This is fully evident in the challenge and support which they offer. They take a full part in the evaluation of the school.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

Outcomes for pupils at Advanced Level in Theology rose in 2014 and the proportion of higher grades well exceeded diocesan averages. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and teaching and learning are of a consistently high standard. The subject is popular and attracts students entering the school at sixth form level without a background of GCSE RE. The Core RE course is in the process of reorganisation focusing on faith in practice and students speak positively about their opportunities for community outreach.

Results at GCSE improved in 2014 to a level marginally above the diocesan average and exceeding the provisional national average. RE enjoyed the highest achievement of top grades in the school. The faculty is now ambitious to enter the whole cohort of Year 11 for GCSE. Pupils in the sixth form and at GCSE make particularly good progress, and data shows that the gap between attainment of those with and without extra financial support for their education is narrowing. In Year 7 pupils begin straightaway to develop thinking skills and the ability to present an argument. Progress in Year 7 is tracked from the new initial baseline assessments, and Years 8 and 9 are in the process of transferring from the national levels to a banding system which gives smaller steps for progress, breaking down the levels into a number of statements for mastery. The faculty works in response to the range of ability through the whole school grouping of pupils and through differentiation, which was seen to be often through outcome and through the excellent support provided by teaching assistants, and where appropriate the St Patrick's Centre where pupils access lessons online.

Teaching in RE is at least good and often outstanding. Lessons are very well planned with a variety of tasks, many of which are creative. Pupils are challenged by the teachers' skilful extended questioning and enjoy expressing their views and developing arguments. Examination classes for GCSE and A level proceed at a stimulating pace. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to the learning are outstanding. They enjoy reading aloud in class, contributing to discussion and they are able to use the Bible for reference. Pupils consider that they are well taught and enjoy discussing life's big questions and gaining respect for their views. The work of Year 10 and above is well assessed with very good feedback. For younger pupils there is some inconsistency and some pupils are unclear about how their work is now being assessed.

Curriculum provision has developed partly in response to pupil feedback and also through the desire to challenge and offer pupils a GCSE style approach. Lessons are titled in question form rather than lesson objectives and the impact of this can be seen in the mature way in which pupils examine issues. They develop enquiring minds. The inclusion of teaching about the major world faiths into the Catholic curriculum is much appreciated by them, and they recognise how this prepares them for life in 21st century Britain. The faculty is making a sound contribution to the improvement in levels of literacy which is a focus for the whole school. It is also raising aspirations for example in the occasional use of Latin. Curriculum provision for sex and relationship education is currently being redeveloped.

¹ As the quality of the school self evaluation has been affirmed, the judgements in this section of the report conform to those of the school.

Pupils are proud of the Catholic ethos of their school and willing to contribute to it. They participate well in assemblies and show commitment to the school's innovation of vertical tutoring with a new house system which they judge to be a way of making friends outside their year groups and improving behaviour. The former head of the faculty of religious studies now holds the key appointment of head of Catholic life as well as head of sixth form, ensuring that the school's ethos permeates particularly the experience of the most senior students. Sixth formers are proud to act as leaders of Catholic life within tutor groups and have earned the respect of younger pupils. The allocation of a longer period of time for the tutor period or assembly emphasises its importance. Pupil participation in collective worship is developing well and the Gospel message is unequivocal. A greater use of music is planned following the recent appointment of a director of music. Tutor groups each have access to a mini altar with cloth and crucifix which is set up for prayer and each faculty has developed its own prayer. That for the physical education faculty is said before each fixture. Faith is seen in action in the many fundraising events, for example the Big Bandage appeal for Birmingham Children's Hospital. The proposed pilgrimage to Lourdes next spring is open to all the pupils and involves fundraising at the local parish with which there are many strong links. The school benefits greatly from the work and commitment of the priest chaplain who has initiated, for example, drop-in opportunities for pupils at lunch time and taken a lead in refurbishing the chapel, as well as oversight of the room for prayer for pupils of other faiths. He is very well supported by the teaching assistant in the religious studies faculty.

Archbishop Ilsey School is improving rapidly. It is a good school with an abundance of outstanding features. Innovations of recent months now need to be embedded, monitored and evaluated so that progress towards outstanding in Catholic life and RE becomes secure.

Recommendations

- Ensure that the new band system for tracking pupil progress is fully integrated into teaching and assessment, and that pupils are clear about their current achievement and how that can move forward in order to maximise attainment.
- Consolidate the monitoring and evaluation of the Catholic life of the school in order to inform comprehensive and secure future planning.
- With careful attention to provision for monitoring and evaluation implement all planning to embed:
 - a. Core RE in the sixth form so that the 5% stipulated by the Bishops' Conference is easily quantifiable
 - b. the proposed policy and curriculum for sex and relationship education.