



INSPECTION REPORT

ST. PETER'S R.C. HIGH SCHOOL AND SIXTH FORM CENTRE

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DfES Number: 115729

Headteacher: Mr Lawrence Montagu
Chair of Governors: Mr Peter Baker

**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: 28th – 29th June 2006
Date of previous inspection: 16th – 17th January 2001

Reporting Inspector: Mr Frank Toner

Description of School

St. Peter's Catholic High School is a large 11-18 mixed comprehensive school. The school has Mathematics and Computer Specialist School status and is a lead Teacher Education Institution in Gloucestershire. The school serves the Catholic Community for a large catchment area from Gloucester, the Forest of Dean and Stroud. With seven grammar schools in the catchment area, the number of the highest achieving students on entry is lower than average.

The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is low. The proportion of students with special educational needs is below average and growing. The relative number of students from ethnic minority groups is in line with the national average and from a variety of backgrounds.

Key for Inspection Grades

Grade 1: Outstanding

Grade 2: Good

Grade 3: Satisfactory

Grade 4: Unsatisfactory

Overall Effectiveness of this Catholic School

This is an exemplary Catholic school which has a thorough understanding of its mission and a clear agenda for continued improvement. The leadership ensures that the religious life of the school is central to its work. The school is inclusive and the more vulnerable members of its community receive exceptional support reflecting the school's commitment to gospel values.

The RE department is well led and levels of achievement are sound as a result of excellent planning and high levels of commitment from teachers and support staff. The quality of provision is a strength of the department. Students show respect for staff and for each other in lessons and outside the classroom.

The school is highly regarded by parents and the local community. Students are understandably proud to be part of the school.

Grade 1

Improvement since last Inspection

Since the last inspection the school has maintained its thorough review procedures for progress and performance. The time allocation for RE at Key Stage 4 has increased to 10% of curriculum time, allowing all students to undertake the full course at GCSE. The general Sixth Form RE course, now accredited by the National Board, is timetabled to enable it to be studied by almost all students. The Head of RE has responsibility for developing and monitoring the Catholic life of the school. A full time chaplain was appointed at the beginning of the academic year who leads a highly valued volunteer chaplaincy team. The school is committed to an annual INSET day focussing on spirituality.

Grade 1

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The school knows itself well and understands its strengths and areas for development. Improvement plans are clear and coherent, serving to pursue excellence in a Catholic environment. The school has a strong sense of commitment and purpose. Changes to management and structures are made to enhance the quality of support for students. In RE curriculum design and schemes of work are excellent. Analysis of examination results are systematic and effective. The school benefits from its close links with the Diocese, charities and parishes.

Grade 1

What the school should do to improve further.

1. Consideration of the effect on the school's Catholic ethos by the increase in applications of non-Catholics to Years 7 and 12. An additional SLT responsibility for spirituality may help respond to this new challenge for the school.
2. Consider opportunities to enable students to participate more frequently in collective acts of worship, possibly through Year Groups.
3. To provide additional opportunities, as appropriate, for independent learning in RE in Key Stage 3 and 4.

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

Leadership of the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The Headteacher has a clear vision of the educational mission of the church and the role played by the school. This is communicated effectively to the wider school community and is understood and shared by all. The Headteacher is well supported by a Governing Body of considerable experience who play a full role in the religious life of the school. The Senior Leadership Team, Chaplaincy and RE department all contribute to the school's spiritual purpose and development.

The increase in numbers of students from other countries and cultures has been embraced to develop opportunities for celebrating diversity. Strong links exist between the school, parents and outside agencies which help maintain the excellent standard of guidance, support and care.

Grade 1

The Prayer Life of the School

Prayer is central to the life of the school. The day begins with a prayer in registration led by the Form Tutor. The Angelus at mid-day and end of school prayers are led by the Headteacher by Tannoy. This arrangement is appreciated by students who acknowledge that it provides a sense of belonging and connection to the wider school community. Whole school Masses are celebrated on feast days and voluntary Masses at lunchtime on Fridays. The Patron's Mass conveys the importance of the Eucharist to the school and provides the opportunity for the wider community to participate and to celebrate talents and achievements. Students are respectful of the liturgy, whatever their faith background.

The chapel, located at the centre of the school, provides a welcoming environment and offers opportunities for prayer and quiet reflection. The day retreats for Years 7, 9 and 12 are valued by both staff and students. The monitoring of whole school liturgies is undertaken by the chaplaincy group.

Fundraising is a particular strength of the school with almost £21,000 collected for 24 charities over the last year. It is run in a highly professional and organised manner by a member of the RE department with the help of student volunteers. The two key charities, CAFOD and HCPT give students opportunities to develop Christian values beyond the school.

Grade 2

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in RE

Standards at Key Stage 3 and 4 are high in relation to students' prior attainment on entry to the school. Progress at both Key Stages is good. At key Stage 4 standards for students taking the full course at GCSE in 2005 was in line with the overall school performance and, excepting A*-A grades, was above the national average. Girls achieved higher standards than boys. Students who sat the short course examination performed less well and the option has been discontinued.

The level of challenge, particularly for more able students, can be limited and greater opportunities should be taken for the development of independent learning skills. Work at both Key Stages shows care and understanding but can fail to develop beyond the information provided; as a result both written and oral work can lack sufficient depth. Student participation in class discussion and in responding to questions is sound. Behaviour in lessons is exemplary.

In the Sixth Form all candidates achieved "C" grades or above in 2005 and all but one achieved similar success at A/S level. Students feel appropriately challenged and the size of the current group allows for high quality discussion and for individuals to develop their ideas fully. The general RE course is relevant to the needs of young people. It is valued by the students who feel it offers opportunities to reflect on moral and faith issues.

Grade 2

Sixth Form Grade 1

Teaching and Learning in RE

At Key Stage 3 and 4 the quality of teaching is never below satisfactory and has some outstanding features. In the Sixth Form examination group teaching is excellent. All teachers in the department are RE specialists and have secure subject knowledge. Lesson planning is very good with objectives shared with students and a range of activities employed to engage the interests of the learners. Lessons can be too teacher directed at the expense of students taking greater responsibility for their own learning. Relationships between teachers and their classes are excellent. Student performance and progress is monitored and targeted half-termly through

whole school review procedures.

Assessment for Learning is being developed and good practice is already employed at Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form. Sixth form students value the peer assessment and the opportunities to share their ideas beyond the classroom. Homework is set regularly and marking of work, though up-to-date, is variable. The best practice identifies what students need to do to improve. The learning environment in all classes is positive with colourful displays of students' work.

Grade 2

Sixth Form Grade 1

Quality of the Curriculum

The RE curriculum is broad, well structured and fulfils the requirements of the "Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools". The curriculum is kept under regular review with emphasis on developing key concepts appropriate to the age and ability of the students. The programme makes a significant contribution to students' spiritual and moral development. Relationships education is delivered through the RE schemes of work. The department works closely with PSHE and citizenship to plan the delivery of common and related themes. The mixed ability teaching groups preferred by the department is a strength reflected in the learning climate in lessons.

The support for a school in Ethiopia and "Make Poverty History" are examples of projects which challenge, inform and enlighten, promoting awareness of international issues. Students feel enriched by opportunities for prayer and reflection. Occasions like the Prinknash retreat and Advent reconciliation service are valued.

Grade 1

Leadership and Management

The leadership and management of the department are excellent. The Head of Department is focused on promoting high standards in the subject as well as contributing to the Catholic mission of the school. He is well supported by members of the department who form a strong team and have wider responsibilities for aspects of personal, spiritual and moral development across the school. Skills and expertise within the department are employed effectively. The link governor plays an active role in the department. Finance and resources are well managed and quality assurance procedures in place to monitor standards. The department's Development Plan is clear, thorough and an example of good practice. The department's commitment to inclusion, like the school, ensures that all students have equal access to the curriculum and resources. Equality of opportunity is a defining characteristic in supporting all students to achieve their potential. The impact of the department goes beyond the subject and conveys a sense of spiritual purpose to the wider school community.

Grade 1