INSPECTION REPORT

School: St Peter's High School and Sixth Form Centre
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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: 16th -17th November 2009
Date of previous inspection: June 2006
Reporting Inspector: Mrs A Barrett

Information about the school

St Peter's Catholic High School is a large 11-18 mixed comprehensive school which serves the Catholic community for a large catchment area from Gloucester, the Forest of Dean and Stroud. The school has specialist status for mathematics and computing, is designated as a high performing specialist school and is also a training school and a lead member of the Gloucestershire Initial Teacher Training Educational Partnership.
The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is close to the national average. The majority of pupils are white British, although the proportion from minority ethnic groups is increasing as is the proportion of pupils with English as an additional language. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly below the national average.

Overall Effectiveness

Grade 1

Capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 1

St Peter's is a caring and inclusive school, where all are valued. The headteacher, governors, chaplaincy and RE team have been very effective in creating a strong sense of purpose for the school, in relation to its Catholic mission. Together they have been successful in developing and promoting a shared vision which is understood and supported by all, resulting in excellent pastoral care, guidance and support within a culture of continuous improvement.

Pupils are proud to belong to this strong Catholic community with its close parish links. They have a heightened understanding of the Catholic ethos of the school and benefit greatly from all that it has to offer. Prayer and reflection are integral to the life of the school. Pupils enthusiastically respond to, and are hugely appreciative of the wealth of opportunities to participate in the prayer life provided by the chaplaincy team. This rich chaplaincy provision has made a significant impact on pupils' overall spiritual development.

Pupils enjoy their learning and make good progress, responding positively to the recently updated curriculum provision. Current data provides a positive picture of where pupils are now and where they are predicted to be by the end of the year.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding. Governors, senior leaders and other leaders and managers work effectively together to sustain and promote a shared, well articulated vision. There is a real sense of all staff working together to promote, with commitment and pride, the Catholic life of the school.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- Significantly improve achievement at RE GCSE to match that of other core subjects
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to be involved in the planning and delivery of year group assemblies.
- Update the sex and relationship programme in line with Diocesan guidelines
- Develop more formal processes for monitoring the Catholic life of the College and collective worship in particular.

PUPILS

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

Grade 1

Pupils are proud to belong to this strong Catholic community and are enthusiastic participants in the very special ethos it provides. Behaviour across the school is excellent, with pupils treating each other with great respect.
The viewpoints of those from other faith traditions is respected and valued. Pupils benefit hugely from all that the school has to offer and are confident in expressing and sharing their views and beliefs with others. Pupils treat others with respect, have a strong sense of responsibility for those less fortunate than themselves and have a heightened sense of justice. They are keen to participate in charity and social events and their involvement in service to the community - local, national and global - is an important part of school life. They take full advantage of the wide range of opportunities provided by the chaplaincy team and are especially responsive to the wealth of opportunities to participate in the prayer life of the school. These include whole school Masses, liturgies, assemblies and daily prayers. These celebrations are effective in encouraging pupils to participate in a variety of ways, including music and drama. Whole school masses, reconciliation services and Easter and Christmas liturgies are joyful, engaging and participatory, enabling pupils to develop an understanding of liturgy as they progress throughout the school. Pupils value opportunities to pray for themselves and for others, especially in times of need. In particular, they respond well to voluntary acts of worship, especially those which are prepared as a response to local, national and international situations. Daily opportunities are provided at midday each day to pray for friends and families within the community, who are experiencing hardship and suffering. Pupils readily participate in prayer in lessons, volunteering thoughtful contributions of their own.

The overwhelming majority of pupils are respectful of the three daily opportunities to engage with the school's prayer life at morning, midday and afternoon prayer. However, even greater impact would result from more regular pupil involvement in the planning and delivery of year group assemblies. Overall, pupils readily connect prayer to their everyday lives, valuing opportunities to pray for themselves and for others, especially in times of need.

Pupils have a positive attitude to sex and relationship education and have a good understanding of the Catholic viewpoint but would benefit from a more updated curriculum provision.

RE is clearly embedded into the whole school culture and central to its Catholic mission. The school's Catholic ethos is hugely effective in enhancing, developing and supporting pupils' beliefs, regardless of faith perspective. This ethos is articulated through the many and varied activities pupils enjoy within RE, and which enhance and develop their understanding of their faith. Pupils enjoy their learning as shown by their interest, enthusiasm and engagement in the classroom and they speak with confidence about our faith story in relation to their own lives and show empathy and respect on the faith story of others.

Pupil learning and progress throughout all key stages is good. Most groups of pupils make at least good progress and some make outstanding progress. The school recognises that achievement in RE at GCSE is unsatisfactory, given that it is a high performing school in other areas. However clear systems are now in place to address this, and current GCSE pupils are making good progress. This bodes well for the future. It is particularly encouraging to note the progress made by low attaining groups at GCSE as a result of effective teaching which is carefully tailored to their needs. Results at AS and A2 are impressive, with very good value added, and numbers are steadily increasing.

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education

Grade 1

Prayer is central to the life of the school and a key part of every gathering and celebration. The school's full time lay chaplain and 'link' priest are exemplary in the rich prayer opportunities they provide for both pupils and staff. The chapel is well used by all, as it is open throughout the day for pupils for private contemplation and prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. Pupils are also able to share their prayer intentions through a prayer board which is rotated across facilities.

Assemblies, tutor and whole-school Mass, liturgies, radio assemblies combined with midday and end of day prayers make a significant contribution to defining the Catholic ethos of the school and to making the message of the Gospel relevant to everyone. The head teacher's daily mid-day and end of day prayer are seen by staff and pupils as important, unifying and inclusive. They provide an opportunity to promote pupils' moral and spiritual development by viewing topical national and international issues from the standpoint of the Catholic faith, as well as specific reference to families and friends within the school. Staff, parents and pupils are effusive in their praise of whole-school Masses which creates a special inclusive atmosphere celebrating the cultural and spiritual diversity of pupils' backgrounds

through their involvement in music, drama, reading, participation in the Offertory, and as altar servers.

Provision across the key stages is good and continues to improve. The curriculum helps pupils develop an understanding of the Catholic faith and the responses it gives to questions of meaning and purpose. Overall, the Bishops' Conference requirements and local Diocesan requirements are met but there is a need to update the sex and relationship education programme in line with recent guidance. The KS3 RE syllabus has been revised and a new GCSE introduced in Y10. This, when fully embedded, will greatly enhance existing provision. The new NOCN sixth form syllabus is enjoyed by all and valued by pupils from different backgrounds. The year 13 syllabus which has been recently introduced should be reviewed at the end of the academic year to ensure fitness for purpose.

Both the quality of the teaching and the positive response of pupils to their learning is good.Pupils benefit from good-quality planning in Religious Education which leads to effective teaching, ensuring that pupils are now making good progress**.** This should result in significantly improved outcomes at the end of key stage 4. Excellent relationships, a high level of teachers' subject knowledge and high expectations result in the majority of pupils being well-motivated. Effective use is made of ICT, which enriches pupils' learning experience and support provided by other adults is effectively deployed. However, more emphasis should be placed on enabling pupils to gain a clear understanding of what they are expected to achieve and marking which clearly explains to pupils how they can improve their work.
Assessment and academic guidance in religious education has been prioritised as a key area for development and, although still in its early stages, is being effectively implemented across the key stages and should make a significant contribution to improving standards, especially at the end of key stage 4. Well planned and challenging assessment tasks are now being implemented systematically which should ensure that pupils progress systematically and in line with expectations, through the use of appropriate levels and grades.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS
How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the School

Grade 1

Leaders and managers at all levels are strongly committed to the mission of the church. The new head of department has, in a short period of time, brought rigour and focused self-evaluation to the work of the department, and this, when fully embedded will enable teaching and learning to be outstanding across the

board. The importance of change is now an accepted feature in the faculty. Lessons are observed both formally and informally in order to ensure high quality teaching and learning. Regular work scrutiny allows the head of department to ensure that standards of work and marking are of a high quality. Evaluation of curriculum provision is now leading to radical changes in the department's drive to reach high standards.
The head teacher is unequivocal in his commitment to Catholic education. He is highly respected and valued by pupils, staff and parents and has been a key figure in enabling St Peters to become the excellent Catholic school that it is. He leads his colleagues with huge enthusiasm, commitment, and personal example.

Governors know their school very well and enjoy excellent working relationships with senior leaders. They have a real understanding of the impact of the Catholic life of the school on its community and the contribution to this of the Religious Education department and chaplaincy. Governors understand the school's performance in religious education and have a very accurate picture of how well pupils are achieving and what needs to be done to improve further. They engage very effectively with parents, pupils and staff. Their regular involvement in the life of the school has a positive effect on their ability to support and promote the Catholic dimension of the school. They ensure ongoing improvement through weekly informal meetings with the headteacher, formal governor briefings and close involvement in development planning. This combined with ongoing, informal monitoring and evaluation enables them to discharge their statutory and canonical duties very effectively. In order to improve further, more formal processes for monitoring the Catholic life of the school and collective worship in particular should be established. The link governor for RE regularly attends departmental meetings and is a highly effective 'critical friend'.

Effective community cohesion is a hallmark of the school. Leaders and managers are highly effective in the way they promote community cohesion.
Monitoring and evaluation of this area are very well developed with a specific committee of the governing body acting as a further check to the school's work. Consequently, outcomes are consistently strong for all groups of pupils.
Pupils are appreciative of the opportunities provided to be of service to others. Staff and pupils participate in a number of activities within the local, national and global communities enabling them to empathise with people who are marginalised.This includes links with an Ethiopian school (involving everyone in fund-raising), the sixth formers and staff annual pilgrimage to Lourdes with the Handicapped Pilgrimage Trust, supporting young people with physical, mental and emotional disabilities.
Pupils from other faiths and denominations speak highly of the welcome they have received within the school and the opportunities provided to enable them to become fully integrated and grow. The RE curriculum ensures that pupils learn about different beliefs and fosters within pupils respect for people of all faiths. In addition, the school works extensively and very effectively with their main Catholic primary schools (through the Federation of Catholic Schools in Gloucestershire), which was set up and is funded by them.