



St Bede's Catholic College

Long Cross

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DfES Number: 109326

Principal: Ms C Hughes

Chair of Governors: Mr G Nicholas

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: 6-7th June 2007
Date of previous inspection: 1st March 2001

Reporting Inspector: Mrs A Barrett

Description of School

St Bede's is an over subscribed 11-16 mixed Catholic specialist science college. There are 913 pupils on roll, of whom 94% are baptised Catholics.

The school serves the Catholic community within a radius of 25 miles. The majority of pupils come from 11 partner primary schools in Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. The school has a higher than average percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

This is an outstanding Catholic school where Gospel values are explicitly promoted and practised and which underpin all aspects of school life. Relationships are based on respect and shared values. Outstanding leadership by the principal and governors enables the whole community to thrive within a well ordered calm environment where behaviour is excellent. The RE faculty has a leading role in the school and makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Teaching in RE is outstanding. Pupils enjoy their work, make excellent progress and have a real understanding of their faith.

Grade 1

Improvement since the last inspection

Since the last inspection the school has embedded a robust cycle of self-evaluation. This has led to improvements to schemes of work and there have been major curriculum changes which, in turn, have allowed for greater opportunities for personalising learning through the provision of different courses at Key Stage 4. Structures have been set up to measure the effectiveness of the school's work on behalf of the pupils and their families and these have been effective in enabling governors to evaluate the school's catholicity. There have also been significant improvements in GCSE results in RE, with 64% A*-C in 2006. In addition every pupil in years 7-9 now has an opportunity to participate in a day of reflection, and a number of pupils in years 10 and 11 take the opportunity to participate in a weekend retreat at Kintbury.

Grade 1

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

This is a school which has outstanding capacity to build on current success and to develop further. Leadership inspires all to achieve challenging targets. This is supported by excellent strategic planning and a culture of high expectations, with robust systems to ensure ongoing self evaluation.

Grade 1

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to focus on improving standards at GCSE
- Review the allocation of time for the teaching of RE at Key Stage 3 in line with Diocesan recommendations.
- Provide opportunities to enable pupils to take a more active part in collective acts of worship and to take ownership of them.

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

Leadership and management are outstanding and are particular strengths in this school. The outstanding leadership of the principal is rooted in a strong commitment to Gospel values. She, in turn, is supported by an extremely effective senior leadership team, governors, chaplain and head of RE. Together they provide support and direction for all members of the school and its wider community. All have a clear sense of purpose and mission and are united in their vision of being a Christian community, learning and growing together. This collective commitment is, in turn, shared by the pupils who feel secure and valued. They are enthusiastic about the opportunities offered to them to grow in their faith and develop their religious understanding.

The school is highly effective in promoting Catholic values. Strategic plans to improve and develop the Catholic life of the school are evaluated each year and are reported to governors. Governors take an active role in ensuring that staff, upon appointment, really do support the school's mission and ethos. They are well informed by the senior leadership team and are effective in their validation of the work of the religious life of the school.

The link governor for RE, who is also the school's chaplain, is very effective and is highly valued for his supportive role within the school.

The school has well established pupil support and education welfare systems which ensure that commitment to inclusion is indeed realised. The increase in numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups has been effectively embraced in order to develop opportunities for celebrating diversity.

Consideration should be given to reviewing the mission statement, involving all members of the school community.

Grade 1

The Prayer Life of the School

Prayer and liturgy are an integral part of the life of the school. There is a theme for the week which is used as the basis for daily tutor prayer and assemblies. Collective acts of worship are well planned but tend to be teacher led. Provision would be enhanced by encouraging pupils to take a more active part in leading these.

Opportunities for pupils and staff to participate in regular voluntary masses are good, with a significant number of pupils actively involved as eucharistic ministers and as helpers. Pupil participation in Easter and Christmas liturgies through music, drama and reading is high. This is effective in fostering closer links between RE and the performing arts. Services of Reconciliation are organised during Advent and Lent for pupils in years 7 and 8 and the take up for receiving the sacrament is also very high.

There are good opportunities for all pupils at Key Stage 3 to participate in a day of reflection and at Key Stage 4 to go on week-end retreats to Kintbury

Chaplaincy provision is rich and inclusive. The RE department, liturgy group and chaplaincy group work closely together in collaboration with the school chaplain and LAMB team to enhance the spiritual life of the school. There is a thriving SVP group which regularly visits an autistic school and a local Catholic primary school. This group is effective in enabling pupils to live out their faith and what they have learned in RE in a practical way. Numerous opportunities are provided to enable pupils and staff to participate in many local and national charitable events.

Grade 1

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

At Key Stage 3 pupils are making good progress in relation to prior attainment. They understand and apply key words with ease and, as a result of teachers' effective use of assessment for learning, have a clear understanding of what they need to do in order to improve. The use and understanding of 'levelling' by teachers continues to improve under the direction of the new head of department. At Key Stage 4 results show a

notable improvement over the last few years. This is broadly in line with other subjects. Girls, however, are achieving better results than boys. The faculty should continue to work on closing this gap. Most pupils have made appropriate progress from KS3 to KS4 with the exception of two groups who were taught by a non-specialist teacher.

An interesting development within the department is the teaching of AS Level in Philosophy and New Testament for the most able pupils in year 11. This appears to be a highly successful initiative given that 10 pupils have been awarded (subject to external moderation) a grade A and 3 awarded a grade B for coursework, representing 50% of the overall grade. This is undoubtedly an outstanding achievement, given the age and ability of these pupils. Overall, pupils demonstrate high levels of motivation and enjoyment by engaging fully and actively in their work.

Grade 2

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

Teaching and learning is outstanding overall. The department benefits from having five specialist teachers who are secure in their subject knowledge and who are passionate about the subject. Lessons are well planned and are supported by detailed schemes of work. Effective use of assessment ensures that pupils are on track. The implementation of visual, audio and kinaesthetic learning styles and of brain-based learning in schemes of work has been successful in improving pupil motivation as it caters for individual learning needs. In the best lessons, the use of thinking skills combined with well developed teacher questioning proved extremely effective in enabling pupils to move forward in their learning and make excellent progress. Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent and are further enhanced by first class behaviour management within a learning environment where all can learn. Pupils listen to each other with respect and express their viewpoints with appropriate use of religious language and key words. The use of ICT and digital projectors has increased significantly and is helping to provide more varied teaching and learning strategies.

Grade 1

Quality of the Curriculum

The quality of the taught curriculum is outstanding in spite of not fully complying with the requirement of time for RE at Key Stage 3. It is broad, balanced and fulfils the requirements of the Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools. It has been carefully devised to support the faith life and mission of the school and is highly effective in enabling pupils to think spiritually, ethically and theologically. All schemes of work are based on the Icon programme and are regularly evaluated and revised in order to meet

the needs and abilities of the pupils. At Key Stage 4 schemes of work have been carefully designed to provide pupils with a knowledge and understanding of Catholic beliefs and values and to foster a sense of theological curiosity. Additional time at Key Stage 3 would allow for more opportunities to explore the experiential dimension of RE.

The faculty makes an important contribution to sex and relationship education. The school should review and update the sex and relationships policy and programme of study in line with the new Diocesan guidelines.

Grade 1

Leadership and management of Religious Education

Leadership and management throughout RE is excellent. The RE faculty has a leading role in the school and has close working relations with the senior leadership team. In addition to the head of faculty, two other members have management responsibilities within the faculty. Prior to the appointment of the current head of faculty, these colleagues managed the faculty jointly and were instrumental in successfully reviewing and rewriting all the schemes of work and assessment at both key stages. They also enhanced chaplaincy provision by setting up the SVP group. The new head of faculty has built on these initiatives and she and her colleagues exemplify collaborative teamwork. Together they have significantly improved standards in RE across the key stages. Regular team meetings ensure effective dissemination of information and sharing of ideas. Planning and ongoing rigorous self assessment are excellent. Teaching resources are good and capitation is effectively deployed. Accommodation needs to be reviewed as it is currently insufficient for the number of teachers.

Grade 1