



**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION
REPORT**
(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

on

**THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL
AND
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

School: St. John Houghton Catholic Voluntary Academy

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School URN: 137908

Headteacher: Mrs Joan McCarthy

Chair of Governors: Mr David Boott

Inspectors: Mr Paul Martin
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Date of Inspection: 14 October 2013

INTRODUCTION

The inspection of this school was carried out on behalf of the Bishop of Nottingham under Canon 806 of Canon Law and Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in accordance with the Diocese of Nottingham Schedule for Section 48 Inspections. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. The process begins with the school's own self-evaluation and the inspection schedule is in line with the criteria set by the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers (NBRIA).

During the inspection, the inspectors observed 6 Religious Education lessons and 4 Acts of Collective Worship. Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher (data), the head of the Religious Education department, the lay chaplain, the assistant headteacher (teaching and learning), the assistant headteacher (pastoral), the leader of Year 11, the special educational needs co-ordinator, the chair of governors, the parish priest, pupils and parents.

The inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including school and departmental documentation including school improvement plans, policies, planning and assessment files, minutes of meetings. Inspectors also examined the pupils' written work, teacher assessment and written feedback.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school converted to become an academy in March 2012 and is part of the Saint Robert Lawrence Catholic Academy Trust. A new headteacher was appointed from September 2012. It is much smaller than an average-sized secondary school and serves the parishes of Our Lady and St. Thomas of Hereford (Ilkeston), St Francis of Assisi (Long Eaton), Our Lady of Good Counsel (Eastwood), St. John the Evangelist (Stapleford). 73% of pupils are baptised Catholics, with a slightly lower percentage of 68% in Key Stage 3. There are 39 teachers, 34 full time and 5 part-time. 50% of them are baptised Catholics. 2 teachers have the CCRS or equivalent.

Almost all students are from White British backgrounds. A below average proportion of students are eligible for pupil premium funding and the proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average.

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

1

CATHOLIC LIFE

1

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

1

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

2

KEY FINDINGS

- This is an outstanding Catholic school.
- The headteacher is skilfully driving the school towards further improvement.
- The Catholic Life is at the centre of this school and it is all pervading. It is to the credit of all concerned that the continuing developments of the school's mission have constantly been *the number one priority* at all times.
- Praying together is central to the daily experience of staff and pupils.
- Pupils take full advantage of the outstanding opportunities that the school provides.
- Pupils are very proud of their school and show this through their exemplary behaviour, witnessed throughout the day both in classrooms and around the school.
- Religious Education is improving and monitoring and evaluation is now more focused.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Develop further opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for leading on shaping the Catholic Life of the school and Collective Worship.
 - Improve pupil outcomes in Religious Education at Key Stage 4 by continuing to develop regular monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning.
 - Ensure that all pupils are effectively challenged and supported by continuing to embed data/ tracking / assessment systems for Religious Education in an even more rigorous and robust way.
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CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

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- The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.
- The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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Pupils enthusiastically embrace the leadership opportunities afforded to them through membership of the Chaplaincy, Justice and Peace group, Student Council and the Oasis Team. The Oasis Team, set up to support pupils new to the school, is very popular with pupils and there is great pride in being a member of this group with opportunities to lead on many issues. Through their various roles, pupils promote the school ethos both within the school and the wider community. The chair of the Justice and Peace group, a Year 11 pupil, spoke about the 'Day for CAFOD' that she helped to organise and lead for Year 7 pupils based around the 'If' campaign. Pupils are happy to discuss their religious beliefs. Those from other faith backgrounds are equally at ease and feel included in all aspects of the Catholic Life of the school. Pupils are involved in some parishes but not all and further work is needed to build on the good practice that already exists in some areas.

Pupils are very proud of their school and show this through their exemplary behaviour, witnessed throughout the day both in classrooms and around the school. Relationships between teaching and support staff and pupils are characterised by mutual respect, courtesy and support. Pupils speak passionately about their sense of belonging, expressed in terms of a strong community, 'supporting each other', and being 'like a family'. The Friday newsletter, similar to the usual parish bulletin and initiated by the headteacher, keeps everyone connected with the school informed as to what is happening as well as the range of opportunities that exist both within the school and beyond the school to be witnesses to the faith including Mass times in the various parishes.

The gifted lay chaplain plays a key role in leading on developments and activities within the school, working closely with the headteacher and other equally talented staff in developing an outstanding provision of the Catholic Life of the school. She meets weekly with the headteacher and liaises with other key personnel both within the school and at diocesan level. Relevant leaders within the school's pastoral / SEN structure meet regularly and work very effectively as a team in ensuring that the school supports all pupils especially those with greatest need. One pupil commented that he had 'a poor year behaviour wise, but school always gives you a second opportunity and I have been very grateful'. An example of the commitment of staff is the 'go for it' initiative where pupils meet after school to develop life skills around a range of staff led activities, including gardening and knitting. The school employs a 'Faith in Families' social worker to help remove barriers to learning. The overall contribution by support staff, both within the school and through external agencies, is

outstanding. No one at this school is overlooked. Parents talk very positively about the school's Catholic mission. They are very grateful for the many opportunities provided by the school to support their children's spiritual development and believe that the school is a very caring community. They know what is going on at school and how their children are progressing through regular communication as well as information on the school's website.

Actions to improve to the Catholic Life provision of the school are clearly identified within improvement plans. Governors are very committed and are becoming more effective in working even more closely with the leaders of the school.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

1

- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.
- The quality of provision for Collective Worship.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

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The centrality of Collective Worship at St John Houghton coupled with the importance that all leaders, including governors, place on ensuring *high quality* daily worship is outstanding. Frequent monitoring by the headteacher and other leaders, including the lay chaplain, ensures that Collective Worship is effectively managed and well resourced. 4 out of 5 year groups congregate daily for Collective Worship. This provision is uniquely outstanding and is seen by pupils as one reason why they think that their school is special. Their response to this provision is outstanding. Pupils commented on how much they enjoyed the school's provision. All members of the school are welcome to lead or assist in the delivery and senior leaders play their part acting as excellent role models. Outside speakers are frequent and are well supported by pupils and staff alike.

An extremely engaging and inspiring Act of Collective Worship was observed with over 25 pupils leading on the theme of 'wake up to faith', appropriately linked to the weekend's Gospel of the Good Samaritan. Most, if not all, of the gathering of approximately 450 pupils were seen to be spontaneously joining in the singing and enjoying every minute. In the 4 Year 11 registration groups observed, high quality Collective Worship was seen by staff and pupils as the main reason for gathering in form groups. All pupils showed reverence during the prayer, led on this occasion by the teacher, and they were fully engaged in the follow up activity.

The views of parents, pupils and staff are important to the school and frequent questionnaires ensure that leaders are aware of any improvements that can be made. The lay chaplain, for example, seeks the views of pupils through formal and informal methods: written evaluations, comment boxes around the school and feedback from form groups via members of the chaplaincy team. A Year 7 pupil followed through her feedback suggestion

of raising awareness of Justice and Peace by organising a whole week of activities beginning with Collective Worship involving all year groups. Pupils are beginning to take a more active role in organising and leading worship, both in whole school liturgy and form time. They talk with confidence about their involvement in Collective Worship and how they are beginning to take the lead in prayer and worship within tutor groups. Parents and parishioners are welcome to attend Mass and liturgies and they willingly take advantage of the range of opportunities to support and contribute to the Catholic Life of the school. Over half of Year 11 had just returned from a week's residential retreat at the Briars: pupils and staff were enthused to talk about their positive experiences gained from their time there. Praying together is central to the daily experience of staff and pupils. Morning Prayer for staff, based on the scriptures, is held in the well-resourced chapel and staff briefing begins with the school prayer. Currently, much of form prayer is prepared by the chaplain, although increasingly staff and pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for planning and delivering quality worship.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

2

- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.
- The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.
- How well leaders and managers (including governors) monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

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Behaviour for learning was exemplary with pupils demonstrating clear ability to reflect, evaluate and engage with religious ideas and incorporate them into their lives. This was especially the case with Year 11 pupils who were able to relate the Church's teachings with ethical issues in today's world. Pupils are developing independence through the range of learning activities in Religious Education and they speak positively of the learning experiences they have in their lessons. As a result of a consistent approach to assessment, marking and tracking across the department, all pupils know their targets for Religious Education and can articulate the steps needed to improve. Pupils are now supported in analysing their progress across all subjects during regular tutor group sessions. Pupils' learning is at least good in all year groups and pupils enjoy their learning. Outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups, are good overall and are improving. Overall, Key Stage 4 results in 2013 compared well with other subjects but lag behind English. Tracking of GCSE Grade C/D borderline pupils during Year 11 with a range of intervention strategies had positive results with increased progress seen last year. Some boys' underachievement still needs to be addressed.

Teachers have a high level of confidence and expertise in their specialist knowledge and understanding of effective learning in Religious Education. All teaching was at least good. Planning takes into consideration the needs of learners, with prompt sheets and accessible activities for the less able and, increasingly, challenge tasks being developed for the more

able. Pupils confirmed the range of support and challenge, with one Year 11 pupil citing being given relevant A' Level work to stretch her. Teachers communicate high expectations, enthusiasm and a clear understanding of the value of Religious Education. Written feedback is regular and of a high quality, with opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own learning. The Religious Education curriculum makes a significant contribution to the spiritual and moral development of pupils, as does the school's citizenship, sex and health education programmes and policies which are effectively implemented in accordance with Catholic teaching.

The head of department has put in place a Religious Education curriculum which effectively meets a range of learning abilities, ensures continuity and progression across the key stages and meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. Assessments at Key Stage 3 are based on the 5 NBRIA strands and at Key Stage 4 on ensuring that all pupils have the skills, knowledge and understanding required. All members of the department are involved in moderation of assessments to ensure standardisation. Due to the head of department's leadership, staff within the department share a common purpose and there is a real sense of team spirit. Monitoring and evaluation at departmental level is now more focused with scheduled weekly meetings and departmental reviews covering all aspects of work are undertaken by the headteacher and other senior leaders. The school should consider, however, increasing the frequency of such reviews to enable a more rapid movement towards outstanding provision in this area. Governors are becoming more involved in challenging and supporting the headteacher, who in turn line manages the Religious Education department. Links with subject areas, including Religious Education, are becoming more embedded and governors are beginning to develop the relevant skills and knowledge required to undertake their role more effectively. Leaders have responded to various requests by staff in the Religious Education department including, for example, the move to a more appropriate spread of lessons throughout Key Stage 4. Similarly, the department now has the opportunity to arrange its own pupil groupings independent of other subjects. Analysis of data suggests that these arrangements are now having a positive impact on progress and overall attainment in Religious Education.

WHAT INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS MEAN

Within the report, the following grades are used:

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

In the context of the whole school, the overall effectiveness grades have the following meaning:

Grade 1	Outstanding	The school is a highly effective Catholic school. Pupils' needs are exceptionally well met.
Grade 2	Good	The school is an effective Catholic school. Pupils' needs are met well.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	The school is not yet a good Catholic school, it is not inadequate however, there are aspects that require improvement.
Grade 4	Inadequate	There are features in need of urgent and immediate attention. The school is not meeting the basic minimum requirement for adequacy. The school will receive a monitoring visit within twelve months.
