



Diocese of Arundel and Brighton

INSPECTION REPORT

St Andrew's Catholic School

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DfES Number: **125275**

Headteacher: Mr A. Mitchell

Chair of Governors: Mrs M Kiero-Watson

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Bishop of Arundel & Brighton
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of inspection: 17-18 January 2013
Date of previous inspection: 23-24 November 2010

Lead Inspector: Mr P Ward
Associate Inspector: Dr J Lydon

Description of School

St Andrew's Catholic School is voluntary aided. It is situated in the Epsom Deanery of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. It is maintained by Surrey LA. The school serves the parishes of Epsom, Ashted, Banstead, Leatherhead, Dorking, Effingham with Fetcham, Ewell and Tadworth. The proportion of Catholics is rising and is currently 49%. The percentage of Catholics is rising year on year. The average weekly proportion of the curriculum time given to Religious Education is 8.33% at KS3 and KS4 and 5% at KS5.

The school takes students from 11-18 years. The number of students currently on roll is 861. The attainment of students entering the school is broadly average. The percentage of students eligible for Free School Meals is well below average. Approximately 14% of students receive extra in-class support. 79% of students identify themselves as 'White British' or Irish, while 5% are Asian and the remaining 16% from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students from homes where English is an additional language is 6%.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

St Andrew's is an outstanding Catholic school. The exceptional leadership of the headteacher, fully supported by the leadership team and governors, is driving notable improvement. A relentless striving for academic achievement is matched by a strong focus on promoting the Catholic life and pastoral care of students. As a result students flourish in a harmonious learning community that deliberately provides opportunities to promote academic, personal and religious development. Staff development has included a focus on leading prayer and worship, which is a particular feature of the school. Behaviour of students is of a very high order which, coupled with the courtesy between staff and students, contributes to a harmonious community that promotes learning. The attractive school environment, enhanced by notable Christian artwork, celebrates students and their achievements and so contributes to learning. An extensive extra-curricular programme complements the pastoral care provision in supporting students' personal development. Since the last inspection in 2010 academic standards have improved across the school, with the rapid rise in achievement in Religious Education being particularly noteworthy. The school actively seeks to engage with parents and with local Catholic schools and parishes. Parents in turn are very supportive of the school and appreciative of the distinctive Catholic education it provides.

Grade 1

Improvement since the last inspection

The progress made by the school since the last inspection is outstanding. Not only have all the specific points identified in the last Section 48 inspection been addressed but there has been sustained development in the Catholic life of the school and significant improvement in standards in Religious Education.

Grade 1

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase curriculum time for Religious Education in years 7-11 in order to meet the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and reflect the fact that it is the core subject in a Catholic school.
- Develop a sustainable model of chaplaincy and seek to increase the frequency that Mass is celebrated in the school

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

The leadership and management of this Catholic school are outstanding. The headteacher and staff, supported by governors, are committed to promote the full flourishing of each student in line with the Catholic vision of education. A manifest culture of respect is reflected in a very high standard of student behaviour and their concern for any fellow student in straightened circumstances. Great care is taken to promote a consistently high standard of daily acts of collective worship and reflection on the theme for the week. This contributes to the spiritual and moral development of students. Mass is celebrated for the whole school twice a year. Mass is also celebrated in the school chapel for each form in Years 7-9 along with a voluntary Mass, currently monthly, thanks to the priests of the deanery. Links with parishes, which are particularly strong with two nearby parishes, are being developed across the deanery. The Latin American crosses that are a feature of every classroom were donated by the deanery. A programme of retreats is currently being expanded to embrace all year groups. The religious life of the school is directed by an assistant headteacher who works with a group of staff, students and governors. The school is actively exploring various models of chaplaincy including the appointment of a school chaplain. Excellent pastoral care stems from attention to student wellbeing by staff, any concerns being reported and action taken when appropriate. Personal development is encouraged through the Footprints programme which recognizes and rewards participation in extra-curricular and enrichment activities. There is also a significant programme of fundraising and voluntary service. Students interviewed by the inspectors knew the name of the Child Protection Officer.

Grade 1

The Prayer Life of the School

The school's liturgical calendar is a key element of the school calendar and includes an exemplary integrated pattern of weekly prayer and reflection. The theme for the week is explored at the weekly assembly, supported by a powerpoint display which is then used during Friday tutor period to stimulate discussion. A booklet of prayers and resources linked to the liturgical season and themes is produced to support morning prayer, which is led by students or staff in form groups, while a candle burns, or as part of assembly. Whole-school Mass is celebrated on key occasions, including St Andrew's Day. Sixth form students contributed significantly to planning and celebrating Mass marking the beginning of the school year. Almost all parents attended the Year 7 Mass of Welcome. Students, staff and governors contribute to the evaluation of all key liturgical events. Currently voluntary Mass is celebrated monthly on Friday morning in the school chapel situated adjacent to the school entrance but it is hoped frequency will increase as links with the local deanery develop still further. Year 7-9 form groups celebrate Mass in the Autumn term, the Sacrament of Reconciliation in the Spring term and a Celebration Liturgy in the summer term. Confirmation candidates are supported and celebrated by the school. A programme of retreats for all students is in place. Students interviewed by the inspectors said that they appreciated the retreat they had attended. Staff events begin with prayer and INSET days begin with a liturgy led by a middle manager. A staff retreat is planned for the summer term. Prayer and worship make an excellent contribution to the spiritual and moral development of students.

Grade 1

How effectively does the school /college promote community cohesion?

St Andrew's School is a strong cohesive Catholic community in which all feel respected and valued, and all achieve equally, irrespective of their religious tradition, ethnicity or background. This reflects the clear priority and strong school leadership and was seen in the high standard of behaviour and courtesy consistently observed by inspectors. There is a culture of hospitality. Students say that they feel safe and all knew to whom they would turn if they or another student were in distress.

Students said they appreciated selecting the charities that their form and year group support and are happy to contribute to whole-school charities. Thus a range of local, national and international charities benefit from extensive fundraising, particularly as part of the school's St Andrew's Day celebrations. Practical support and service is promoted through the Footprints programme and includes involvement with Tadworth Court for children with multiple disabilities and with a local special school. Internationally, sixth form students have worked in an orphanage in Kosovo and serve as redshirts on the Lourdes diocesan pilgrimage. Links with local parishes are promoted with a staff or governor representative and a number of events have been organised. A sixth form art student designed a series of etchings illustrating the sacraments that are incorporated in the windows of St Michael's Church, Ashted.

Grade 1

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

Students make excellent progress throughout their school career and achieve very high standards. GCSE Religious Studies is the highest achieving core subject in the school and in 2012 88% of Year 11 students gained grades A*-C, 51% gaining grades A* or A. All GCE AS Level candidates in Year 12 and A Level in Year 13 achieved the qualification. All students irrespective of their starting point achieved above their target grade. They are gaining knowledge, skills and understanding at a very good rate across all key stages and so becoming religiously literate. This was demonstrated in a Year 7 lesson when a student used the image of the rainbow to describe his understanding of the nature of God and when Years 9-11 students engaged with inspectors in a discussion about the title *Mary, Mother of God*. Students approach the subject very positively and behaviour is outstanding. Religious Education contributes significantly to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students.

Grade 1

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

Students make excellent progress as a result of outstanding teaching. Teachers have an excellent knowledge of their students and prepare lessons carefully so that they engage and challenge them very effectively. The best lessons display an outstanding focus on supporting the learning of each student, for example by carefully focused questioning. A wide range of resources is used imaginatively. Regular use of assessment for learning in lessons and formative assessment of written work are used imaginatively to support learning. GCE Religious Studies students are supported by additional supervised study opportunities overseen by the head of department. Students said they appreciated the use of *www* (what went well) and *ebiq* (even better if) comments on written work and the requirement to write a response to the comments ensured that they were read. Carefully prepared classroom displays of students' work along with definitions of key terms and level descriptors support learning. All students questioned by inspectors knew the level at which they were working and what they needed to do to reach the next level and most had a very positive attitude towards the subject.

Grade 1

Quality of the Curriculum

The content of the curriculum reflects the requirements of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools 2012*. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is based on the Icons programme and adapted by the school to meet the particular needs of its students and Curriculum Directory. In Key Stage 4 students are prepared for the two Edexcel GCSE Religious Studies *Catholic Christianity* and *Religion and Life* based on a study of Roman Catholic Christianity specifications. In Years 12 and 13 all students follow the school-devised General Religious Education programme. In addition GCE AS and A Level Religious Studies generally attracts a significant number of students. Thus the school provides a systematic study of God, the life and teaching of Jesus and the Church, the central beliefs that Catholics hold and the relationship between faith and life. Excellent teaching encourages students to engage critically so that they develop knowledge, understanding and skills appropriate to their age and ability, enabling them to reflect spiritually and to think ethically and theologically and to become

aware of the demands of religious commitment in daily life. The curriculum time devoted to Religious Education is 8.3% in years 7-11 and 5% for General Religious Education in years 12-13. Thus curriculum time is slightly less than the Bishops' Conference requirement of 10% in years 7-11.

Grade 2

Leadership and management of Religious Education

Leadership and management in Religious Education are outstanding. The head of department has an excellent understanding of the role of the subject as part of the educational mission of the school in the local Church. She leads a team of well qualified and experienced teachers who are committed to constant improvement and work collaboratively to enable students reach the highest academic standards and develop their own faith. Excellent management is demonstrated by the comprehensive schemes of work supported by digital and print resources. There are also well-focused Religious Education guides and a varied revision programme that also includes a well-attended briefing for parents. Lessons are conducted in an attractive suite of IT-networked classrooms. Teaching supports the liturgical life of the school, for example by preparing students for class and school liturgical celebrations. The head of department has a weekly meeting with the line manager who briefs the Governors' curriculum committee on Religious Education. There is also a link governor.

Grade 1