

**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION
REPORT (Section 48)**

on

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

School: Carmel RC Technology College

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School URN: 114324

Principal: Mr James O'Neill

Chair of Governors: Dr Alan Mitchell

Lead Inspector Mr Barry Parkin
Team Inspector Mr Nick Bowen

Date of Inspection: 22nd and 23rd April 2009

This Inspection Report is produced for the Rt. Reverend Seamus Cunningham the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle Diocese, (c.f. Code Canon Law, 804, 806), and for the Governing Body of the school (Education Act 2005, Section 48). The inspection reviews, evaluates and plans further improvements in the school's witness to the Catholic faith and Curriculum Religious Education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation.

The inspection schedule follows criteria set by the National Board of Advisers and Inspectors.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Carmel RC Technology College is an 11-19 comprehensive which serves the Catholic community of Darlington and the surrounding areas. Students come from a wide range of backgrounds. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average. The majority of students are White British. There are few students from minority ethnic backgrounds. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average as is the number who have a statement of special education needs. The number of students on roll continues to rise in both the main school and the sixth form.

The College attained Technology College status in 1995 and gained a second specialism in Applied Learning in 2005. It is also a Training School for PGCE students across Darlington as well as being accredited as an ITT provider.

FACTUAL INFORMATION

Pupil Catchment:

Number of pupils on roll: **1154**

Planned Admission Number of Pupils: **180**

Percentage of pupils baptised RC: **67%**

Percentage of pupils from other Christian denominations: **30%**

Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths: **1%**

Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation: **2%**

Percentage of pupils from ethnic groups: **8%**

Percentage of pupils with special needs: **12%**

Staffing

Full-time teachers: **71**

Part-time teachers: **6**

Percentage of Catholic teachers : **70%**

RE Department Staffing:

Number of full-time RE teachers: **6**

Number of part-time RE teachers: **1**

Percentage of Catholic teachers: **100%**

Percentage of teachers with CCRS: **5%**

Percentage of learning time given to RE:

Yr7 **10%**

Yr 10 **12%**

Yr8 **10%**

Yr 11 **12%**

Yr9 **10%**

6th Form **6%**

Parishes served by the school:

St Augustine's, Darlington
Holy Family, Darlington
St Teresa's, Darlington
St William's and St Anne's, Darlington
St Thomas Aquinas, Darlington
St Thomas Fisher, Sedgefield
St Mary's, Barnard Castle
St Joseph's, Newton Aycliffe
St Mary's, Newton Aycliffe
St Oswald's, Gainford

Overall Effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

1

MAIN FINDINGS

Carmel is an outstanding College where all members of the community are valued and feel they belong. The mission of the College is lived out in reality. The constant drive for excellence is evident in all aspects of College life. This is a truly inclusive community. The Principal and senior staff have created a strong sense of purpose for the College. High standards and expectations are an explicit and distinctive feature of daily life. A calm, welcoming atmosphere is evident from the moment you enter the building. Mutual respect and the living out of gospel values ensures a joyful atmosphere which allows both students and staff to develop in the image and likeness of God.

Outcomes for students are now outstanding across all key stages. Current and secure data provide a particularly positive picture of where students are now and where they are predicted to be by the end of the year. Students value and benefit from the Catholic character of the College. Prayer is central to the daily experience of all members of this Christian community. Whole school liturgical celebration is valued, and for many is the high point of their year. Areas highlighted in the last inspection have been successfully addressed.

Provision for Catholic education is outstanding overall. The College takes care to appoint key staff capable of delivering high standards of teaching and learning and is committed to their ongoing development. Assessment practices are well documented and rigorously implemented in line with College policy and this has a positive impact on student achievement. Sound evaluation of student needs has led to appropriate changes in curriculum, especially at KS4. Innovative curriculum development in the form of 'Human Wholeness Days', with learning outcomes linked to the Religious Education programme, enhance provision in this area. There is outstanding provision for collective worship. Year assemblies are well prepared and incorporate some student involvement.

Leaders and managers at all levels provide strong, strategic leadership and direction in order to ensure that the high standards and expectations that currently exist will be maintained in the future. The visionary Christian leadership of the current Principal, his successor, other senior leaders and the Head of Religious Education, as well as the creation of a culture where nothing but the best will do, are the driving forces behind ongoing development. Rigorous monitoring and accurate self-evaluation of all aspects of College life demonstrate that there is outstanding capacity for continued improvement.

What the College needs to do to improve further

- Develop more formal processes for monitoring the Catholic life of the College and collective worship in particular.
- Ensure that the standards and quality of learning outcomes in the 'Human Wholeness Days' are in line with those in Religious Education lessons by providing additional professional development for participating staff who are not subject specialists.
- Provide more opportunities for students to be involved in the planning and delivery of year group assemblies.

PUPILS

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

1

Student learning and progress throughout all key stages is outstanding. Secure internal and external assessments for GCSE students indicate that attainment will be outstanding for the current Y11 cohort with 87% of the entry, and 76% of the cohort predicted to achieve an A*-C grade. Current KS3 internal assessment data indicate performance is higher than English. Key Stage 3 data for 2007 and 2008 is very secure. Based upon the new levels of attainment for Religious Education, assessments show students' performance to be better than in English (88% achieving Level 5 or above) in 2008 and broadly in line in 2007.

Attainment at GCSE over the three years for the whole cohort has shown some fluctuation but has never been less than good and was outstanding in 2007. Performance at the A*/A grade level in 2008 was excellent with 41 students achieving A*/A grades. A measure of outstanding progress is the success of a fast-track group who have already achieved a full GCSE grade in 2008 and who have now gone on to study AS Ethics in Year 11.

Take-up of AS and A2 Religious Education in the sixth form is very good and students generally achieve or exceed their target grades. Students following the general Religious Education course make very good progress in terms of knowledge and skills and are successful in gaining National Open College Network accreditation.

Students make an outstanding contribution to and gain enormously from the Catholic life of the College. They are extremely proud of their College and what it represents and, as a result, they willingly participate fully in ensuring the Church's mission is lived out and is central to College life. Students benefit greatly from the nurturing atmosphere within which high standards and expectations are set and an equally high level of support is provided. Students take full advantage of the numerous opportunities the College offers them to develop spiritually and live out the values of the Gospel within the College and the wider community. Responding to the needs of others is a strong feature of everyday life.

Students respond very positively to collective worship. Invariably there is a strong sense of respect. In classes students readily participate in

prayer and make thoughtful contributions of their own. They are comfortable articulating and relating to Christian values. Students readily connect collective worship to their everyday lives. They value opportunities to pray for themselves and for others, especially in times of need. Students benefit from the atmosphere created by the use of high-impact media in assemblies and during liturgical celebrations. Even greater impact would result from more regular student involvement. Many acts of worship are vibrant. Strong student involvement in Mass is valued. The end of year Mass, where a particular strength is student engagement in live music, is regarded as a highlight.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

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

1

The mission of the Church is the central driving force behind the work of College leaders. Staff, students, parents and governors frequently refer to the vision, commitment and example of the College leaders as the inspiration behind the visibility and tangibility of the Catholic life of the College and the desire of all to share in the shaping of its future. So central to the whole community is the Catholic life of the College, that monitoring and evaluation of this is a constant and natural process, carried out in partnership with all stakeholders and leading to improved outcomes.

Tracking of student progress in Religious Education is sophisticated and is used in order to ensure that students do not slip through the net. Department evaluation is a strength and effective diagnosis is used to challenge current practice and to ensure that students receive the very best of experiences. Change is an accepted feature in this successful department. 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 has successfully led to radical changes in the department's drive to reach high standards.

Governors know the College very well and speak passionately and knowledgeably about the impact of the Catholic life of the College on its community and the contribution to this of the Religious Education department. Governors are actively involved in the Catholic life of the College and ensure continuous improvement through both informal monitoring and evaluation and more formal governor briefings and improvement planning. Governor strengths and skills are effectively deployed. They engage with staff, students, members of the wider community and other stakeholders to gather their views and use these views to inform and promote future development.

The College takes full advantage of the partnership opportunities presented by the Diocese, including the Youth Ministry Team. Students also take an active role in parish life through such things as confirmation preparation, music provision and the Youth St Vincent de Paul group. There are also very effective partnerships with local schools, schools abroad and other organisations which, together with the Diocesan and parish links, make an outstanding contribution to

student achievement and well-being. The active involvement of the College in The Catholic Partnership of Schools in the south of the Diocese has greatly strengthened professional development and leadership development opportunities for staff.

Inclusion is absolutely central to College life. As one member of the College community put it: 'Nobody is allowed to be left behind here!' College leaders ensure that students, staff and members of the wider College community are given a wide range of opportunities to interact with people from different backgrounds, cultures and traditions. Leaders make certain that provision for Religious Education fosters within students an attitude of respect for all people of all faiths. Staff, students and parents participate in a number of activities within the local, national and global communities enabling them to empathise with people who are marginalised.

PROVISION

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education

1

Both the quality of the teaching and the positive response of students to their learning are outstanding. The enthusiastic teaching is consistently effective across the whole department in engaging students positively and thoughtfully in their learning. Students are highly motivated and show genuine enjoyment in their learning as a result of teaching that is well-planned, well-resourced, relevant to modern life and inspirational. Teachers display a passion that brings the subject to life. Students are appropriately challenged and make exceptional progress within lessons. Assessment for Learning strategies are consistently applied across the department to great effect.

The effectiveness of assessment is outstanding. Across the College as a whole and in the Religious Education department, rigorous and well-focused strategies are in place, providing teachers and leaders with an accurate and up-to-date picture of achievement across all key stages. Thoughtful and challenging assessment tasks ensure that students progress systematically and in line with expectations through the appropriate levels and grades. Targets are discussed regularly with students and there is a clear understanding of the steps needed in order to improve. Diagnostic comments are generally detailed and focused. The opportunity for students to respond to advice is an embedded feature of excellent practice.

Every effort is made to ensure that Religious Education matches the needs of students. Courses meet the requirements of the Curriculum Directory whilst at the same time challenging the more able through the introduction of fast-track GCSE courses and the provision of AS Ethics in Y11. Sixth Form provision is generally innovative and includes the opportunity to develop transferable skills. Time-tabled Religious Education is complemented by 'Human Wholeness Days' for each key stage and incorporates appropriate AT1 and AT2 learning outcomes. Careful monitoring will be needed in order to ensure that such days maintain a strong Religious Education focus and that non-specialist teachers are competent and confident in their delivery. There are numerous opportunities within and beyond the formal curriculum for spiritual and moral development and enrichment activities which further enhance enjoyment.

The quality of Collective worship is outstanding. Assemblies, registration, form and whole-school Mass and community liturgy make a significant contribution to defining the Catholic ethos of the College and to making the message of the Gospel relevant to everyone. Prayer is central to College life and a key part of every gathering and celebration. Collective worship is extremely well prepared and is given very high prominence in the weekly and annual College calendar. Media resources and chosen themes are used effectively to ensure that collective worship is engaging and inclusive.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Key for inspection grades:

Grade 1 **Outstanding** Grade 2 **Good** Grade 3 **Satisfactory** Grade 4 **Unsatisfactory**

Overall effectiveness	1
The school's capacity for sustained improvement	1
How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups	1
• how well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	1
❖ the quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
❖ the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
❖ pupils' attainment in RE	1
• the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school	1
• how well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	1
How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the School	1
• how well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
• how well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for RE and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
• the extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory and canonical responsibilities met	1
• how well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and well being	1
• how effectively leaders and managers promote Community Cohesion.	1
How effective the provision is for Catholic Education	1
• the quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education	1
• the effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in Religious Education	1
• the extent to which Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs	1
• the quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	1