



DIOCESE OF  
SHREWSBURY

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# **REPORT ON THE MONITORING INSPECTION OF OUTSTANDING SCHOOLS**

**St Ambrose College  
Hale Barns**

**URN: 138134**

**23 April 2015**

**Inspector – Mr J Wilbraham**

The areas of focus in this monitoring inspection were:

**1. OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS** - How well students achieve and enjoy learning in Religious Education

**2. LEADERS AND MANAGERS** – How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan and implement improvement of outcomes for pupils.

**3. PROVISION** – The quality of Collective Worship

The school's most recent Self- Evaluation judges that it is **outstanding** in all areas and supports this with comprehensive evidence. This judgement is **confirmed** and the following comments summarise findings in the key areas.

## **1. OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS**

Standards of achievement in Religious Education ('Theology' is the title used by the College) are outstanding. GCSE performance indicates a sustained level of improvement with the last two cohorts achieving 56% and 48% A\*/A and 96% and 98% A\*/C compared with English Language achieving 40% and 30% A\*/A and Mathematics 50% and 50%. The value added for the Faculty in 2014 was 1002.7. Results at A2 are strong with 66% (small cohort of 9 for 2012/13) and 89% for 2013/14 (with increased numbers to 19) in achieving grades A\*-C. At key stage 3, the percentages of students achieving level 7 or above were 54% in 2013 and 72% in 2014. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is taught in years 7 and 8 and is based upon the main framework of the Diocesan scheme but with content developed to challenge the most able. A three-year GCSE course in years 9-11 allows opportunities for development and reinforcement of topics and linkage to the 'Eight Essentials' (core values of Edmund Rice Foundations). General Religious Education in the Sixth Form continues to follow the scheme originally developed for the NOCN qualification. Students in all key stages display an engaged and positive attitude to the subject, with interest and engagement in lessons and consistently high standards of content and presentation of written work. Students respond to the intellectual challenge within the curriculum and its delivery and speak positively about the subject. The students gain significant understanding of the beliefs and traditions of Catholicism while also engaging with the broader spiritual, moral, cultural and social issues of contemporary society: this is all underpinned by the many activities beyond the classroom. Marking and assessment are regular, accurate, clear, consistent and helpful to the students. The standard of teaching and learning is never less than good and often outstanding. The students themselves understand the vision and values of the school and are very supportive of them. Students speak highly of the quality and support of the staff in the Faculty.

## **2. LEADERS AND MANAGERS**

The Head Master, Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body are deeply committed to Catholic values and the Church's mission in education. The realisation of this vision is underpinned by the shared values and activities of the Edmund Rice network of schools and colleges and the values expressed as 'The Eight Essentials'. The College is recognised, within the global Christian Brother Network of Schools, as a lead school for the development of the Ricean educational charism which is expressed through the Eight Essentials. The commitment to these values in which academic and personal growth are so important is evidenced in the College's policy documents and practices and its highly effective leadership and management.

The development and management of the new building is perceived as a means of fostering a genuinely Christian environment and the atmosphere, attitudes and behaviour indicate outstanding success in this regard. There is effective analysis and monitoring of academic performance with effective intervention strategies. Similarly, the religious life of the college is under constant review. The Head Master, Governors, Leaders and the Theology team all perform analysis and evaluation. Parental opinion is sought through questionnaires which are analysed and impact upon the processes of evaluation and planning. The most recent indicates a high degree of satisfaction with the College's delivery of its Catholic mission. Classroom observations are regular, accurate and well- documented. Prayer and reflection are an integral part of the tutorial and assembly provision and are subject to monitoring and recording by Senior Leaders. Staff, Governors and students appreciate and understand the College mission and purpose and are keenly and actively involved in their implementation. There is general pride in what the College represents and the students are extremely articulate in support of this.

### **3. PROVISION**

The College's Improvement Plan and other policy documents emphasise the centrality of faith and worship in the life of the College; evidence indicates that this element of College provision is firmly integrated into the consciousness and practice of students and staff.

Collective worship and prayer are an integral part of the daily life of the school, and all lessons begin with a short prayer of affirmation. House Assemblies involve pupil ownership and participation with the 'Wednesday Word' sessions led throughout the College by Sixth Formers, all of whom are required to prepare and deliver the sessions. These activities are linked to practical experiences and challenges which enrich the students' spiritual, moral and cultural education. These activities include student visits to Sierra Leone and ongoing funding of educational projects there, a forthcoming trip to Peru, annual pilgrimages to Lourdes to assist the sick, regular and successful charitable fundraising, social events for Senior Citizens and the housebound and other practical faith-driven activities. An observed Assembly involved Eritrean refugees while another Assembly effectively linked a paraliturgy and reflection on Easter with personal responsibility. Many other activities and groups evidence the practical aspects of faith and values in the life of the College. These include the liturgical and spiritual experiences for students and staff, such as retreats, in-service sessions, celebrations of mass and opportunities for Reconciliation. The chapel occupies a central position and is available to students at all times.

### **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS**

Outcomes for pupils, the provision for Catholic Education, leadership and management in the development of the Catholic life of the College are all confirmed by this inspection as outstanding. The core values of the College are strongly evidenced throughout all areas of school life observed in terms of practice, aspiration and relationships all in the context of high academic achievement.

## **IMPROVEMENT SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION**

- Academic performance has continued to grow as indicated at Key Stage 3, GCSE and A2
- The Key Stage 3 Curriculum has been revised and is more robust and challenging
- Teaching and Learning have been enriched by greater variety of activity and use of ICT and media resources
- Use of data for self-evaluation monitoring, intervention and support processes are highly effective
- The new building reinforces community values and centrality of the faith tradition
- The Eight Essentials are central to the practical experience of College life.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**In order to maintain and enhance the progress of the college even further it is recommended that the College:**

- Undertake to plan a strategy for the development of a sustainable model for the provision of effective and appropriate chaplaincy