

INSPECTION REPORT St Monica's Roman Catholic High School and Sixth Form Centre

Inspection date	9 th April 2014
Reporting Inspector	Sister Judith Russi Mr Kevin Hogan Mr Brendan Coyle

Inspection carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Catholic College
URN	105366
Age range of pupils	11-19 years
Number on roll	1180
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Mr. Paul N. Singleton
Head teacher	Mrs. Andrea Letcher
Date of previous inspection	February 2009

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades 1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3 = Requires Improvement
Overall effectiveness of the school	1	
The quality of Catholic Leadership	1	
The quality of the Word of God community	1	
The quality of the Welcome community	1	
The quality of Welfare	1	
The quality of Worship	1	
The quality of Witness	1	
<i>The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements</i>		

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

St Monica's Catholic High School draws mainly from 5 feeder parishes. 100% pupils are Catholic and 75% Staff are Catholic. St Monica's has undergone many significant changes since the last inspection which have greatly enhanced and quality of its Catholic education. The school has recently been awarded Teaching School Status and is forging closer working relationships with all the Catholic Schools in Bury. St Monica's opened a vocational Sixth Form in September 2011. It currently has 83 students, many of whom are potential NEET's and have specific needs. The proportion of pupils receiving pupil premium and free school meals is lower than the national level at 16.45%. There are a smaller proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups. 73% pupils are white British. The largest minority group is our Polish children – 4.3%. The number of pupils with Special Educational Needs is below the national average although the number supported through school action + or with a statement is average. The school deprivation indicator is 0.19, and below the national 0.22. Attendance is above the national average at 95.6% (94.1%-national) in 2012-13. Persistent absence was below the national average at 2.8% (national 6.6%).

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS OUTSTANDING

St Monica's RC High School is an outstanding school which radiates a call to excellence for all challenging each one to *'be the very best they can be'* in every area of their lives. The many excellent features offer the students a rich, dynamic faith experience which permeates all aspects of school life. The cohesive team of governors and staff have dedicated themselves to the building up of a Catholic learning community which challenges, nurtures and encourages *'everyone to develop their God given talents to the full'*. In the deliberate decision to become a Teaching School with the focus on supporting Catholic schools in Bury, St Monica's has become a source of inspiration for the whole community. The impact of the school's commitment to excellence throughout has raised standards to an exceptionally high level. The students receive a Catholic education which demonstrates Gospel values across the whole school. The daily challenges to be always aware of those in the greatest need has led the school community to a deep understanding of their place in the world which is regularly demonstrated through an exceptionally high level of fund raising activities for a range of charitable projects. Students are actively encouraged to be people who can influence, change and contribute to the common good for all people. The school has many national and international awards celebrating St Monica's excellent achievement.

KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- The leadership and vision of the school at all levels is both prophetic and inspirational.
- The Catholic life, relationships, behaviour and care for those in the greatest need is excellent.
- The quality of Catholic education is outstanding.

THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

St Monica's is an inspirational learning community. The governors, head teacher and leadership team lead the school with a clear vision and sense of purpose recognising the dignity and value of every member of the community. The distributive leadership model across the school has clearly ignited a much higher level of ownership, risk taking and enthusiasm throughout. The school's outreach to those in the greatest need, passion for learning and emphasis on personal development which recognises the unique gifts of the individual ensures that all pupils receive an integrated Gospel based formation and education in a learning community which insists on *'nothing but the best possible learning for each one'*.

The governors and leadership team are not afraid to take risks and think differently in order to best serve the many complex needs of the students. The specialised vocational 6th Form provision is an outstanding example of the leaderships response to those at risk of being pushed to the margins of society. Pupil leadership has been developed in a wide variety of ways both in focus areas as well as whole school. The Pupil Chaplaincy Team meet regularly and the impact of the students on the decision making process of the school is significant. Pupils were found to be confident and enthusiastic about taking on responsibility. The Governing Body and leadership team of the school were found to be secure in their knowledge and understanding of the strengths and areas for development due to the challenging and highly effective strategy for self- evaluation, early intervention strategies when needed, extensive personalised staff development and succession planning. The wide ranging and numerous tributes and awards which the college has received are all testimony to the outstanding leadership.

THE QUALITY OF WORD IS OUTSTANDING

The Mission Statement *'Jesus Christ is central to our school'* is clearly lived and evidenced throughout and seen as the starting point for all staff interviews, new pupils to the school, policies and guidelines. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education across all key stages has been significantly developed and is now clearly setting the context for learning. Observations across a range of lessons found SMSC education to be innovative, challenging, creative and clearly fun for the pupils. Religious Education is at the core of the curriculum and meets the RECD requirement for 10% at KS3 and 4 with 5% at KS5. Staffing and resources are of excellent quality and the quality of teaching in RE was found to be at least good and mostly outstanding over time. The quality of the leadership of the department is reflected in the quality of learning being consistently outstanding. Expectations are high and higher order questioning, discussion, group work and peer assessment are strong features of the teaching in the department. Personalised targets are set for each pupil, which were reflected in the marking. In discussion with pupils they clearly knew what they needed to do to improve and said that they enjoyed their learning because *'It makes you think about things that really matter'*. The wide range of teaching and learning activities provides a rich learning experience which challenges pupils to think, reflect, and engage in debate. Attainment and progress are consistently high. The school is continuing to address any underachieving areas or groups of pupils through regular rigorous monitoring and action which is resulting in the reversal of any downward trends. Pupils were clearly enjoying their lessons and the relationships between staff and pupils were excellent. Throughout behaviour for learning was found to be outstanding.

THE QUALITY OF WELCOME IS OUTSTANDING

The joy of the Gospel is at the very centre of the community of St Monica's and clearly defines the overall atmosphere of the school. Governors, parents, pupils and staff new to St Monica's all spoke of the care and attention that they personally received when new to the school. One parent spoke movingly of how their child had been especially welcomed as she had not come from one of the 5 partner primary schools. Transition from the main partner schools is clearly outstanding with great care being taken to find out as much as possible from the primary school to ensure that everyone feels at home in St Monica's. Staff induction under the title of *"This is what it means to work and learn in our community"* outlines both the high expectations and the extensive support for each one's needs. St Monica's catholicity is demonstrated in its commitment to embracing and celebrating diversity. The schools model diversity programme serves the wider community though

conference work in the North West, with staff and pupils showcasing the practice at St Monica's to other schools. Pupils are encouraged to welcome visitors by being given responsibility as clerical assistants, prefects, and ambassadors of the school. Parents are always welcomed into school and play a significant role in the life of the school and development of the mission. The Year 7 Welcome Mass, Year 11 leavers Mass, (95% + parents attend the Welcome Mass and Leavers Mass) being good examples. Past pupils or pupils wishing to return to the 6th Form having been elsewhere for a time talked about how they knew that the door to St Monica's would never be closed to them.

THE QUALITY OF WELFARE IS OUTSTANDING

The welfare and care of all at St Monica's exceeds outstanding. Parents spoke at length of the times when they had received personal phone calls, letters or visits from the head teacher in times of need often going way beyond what they would expect. The strong pastoral care team consistently go the extra mile to ensure all pupils are safe, happy, and able to achieve and prepare for life after St Monica's. The development of a multi-agency approach is having a significant impact on those in need. The Family Support Worker, who works with the Local Authority combining the role of EWO and Pastoral support for troubled and hard to reach families, has greatly enhanced the care of pupils from hard to reach families. There is also close liaison with parishes, Social Services, CAMHS, Connexions, Early Break, Bury Anti - Bullying and Equality teams, Fairbridge, PLC, Mill Town and lately the addition of the schools full time Lay Chaplain all serve to provide a holistic approach to care. Specific policies are in place to support the pastoral needs of staff. The creation of a Staff Wellbeing forum and the provision for staff counselling in difficult times has all served to ensure the wellbeing of staff. Parents and staff spoke of their appreciation of the Parents/Carers – "Working in partnership" initiative which ensures that parents and carers know where they can turn to for advice and support. Sex and Relationship Education has been thoroughly revisited and set within the teaching of the Church. Staff are confident in dealing with 21st century issues. Outreach to the wider community both nationally and globally through funding raising was particularly impressive. In 2012-2013 £13,000 was raised for Caritas, CAFOD, Francis House, MacMillan. This academic year over £4000 has been raised for Ben's Charity, in remembrance of a deceased pupil. Safeguarding procedures are outstanding, well known and monitored closely.

THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

A wide range of opportunities for prayer and worship have been developed across the school for both pupils and staff. Staff briefings and meetings always start with a prayer as do pupil form times. The appointment of the school Lay Chaplain and the Pupil Chaplaincy team are having a significant impact on the building up of the prayer life of the school. The confidence and willingness of pupils to 'step up' and lead prayer and worship showed a maturity beyond their years. An outstanding pupil led Year 9 assembly was seen where the theme of 'Life' was explored in depth through the living testimony of three members of staff. Prayer is further enhanced through the 'Wednesday Worship' lunch time activity as well as the weekly 'Theme for the Week' which is accompanied by a prayerful reflection sent out to all in the Newsletter. The celebration of the Eucharist and Reconciliation are available to all during term times which are well attended by pupils, parents, governors and staff. The school chapel is a focal point for the whole school and is used extensively for prayer and worship. Pupils clearly value the opportunity to be in the chapel and the evidence of the art work including the pupils own interpretations of the Stations of the Cross are all testimony to their ownership of the Chapel as an important part of their life. The 'Special intentions' board demonstrated the confidence the community has in the importance of prayer in the school. There

are a wide range of opportunities offered for the staff to have their own dedicated times for prayer and worship nurturing their personal spiritual well being. All Forms have a dedicated Form Saint and prayer which is clearly displayed along with the SMSC displays in the classrooms and corridors which serve as a constant reminder of the centrality of the schools identity.

THE QUALITY OF WITNESS IS OUTSTANDING

The confidence and ease with which pupils and staff spoke about their faith and their willingness to witness to it was mature, confident and natural. Witness to Jesus Christ in the community was clearly seen as the norm. Witness to Christian values of justice, compassion, forgiveness, love and mercy were threaded through the teaching, and lived experience of the whole school community. The willingness of staff to 'go the extra mile' for their pupils in a spirit of generous availability and compassion, was remarkable. Relationships between pupils were found to be calm, sensitive, particularly to pupils needing extra help, and warm. Relationships between staff and pupils were outstanding. Witness to the gospel option for the poor was outstanding as seen in the results from the ongoing fund raising, SVP Group work in parishes, primary schools and Nazareth House. Pupils and staff visit the elderly, completing art projects with them and organising an annual Christmas party. Pupils also deliver hampers to the older members of the parishes during Advent. The senior pupils also assist younger children with their studies in the after school clubs. Staff and pupils from the school join the annual pilgrimage to Lourdes with Salford Diocese. The new Lay Chaplain is fast becoming integral to all aspects of school and parish life, developing pupil leadership and outreach into the parish. The involvement of the parish priest is much appreciated by the school and ensures an important partnership for development and the building up of young leadership in the community.

AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

- Continue to further develop the teaching of RE so that it is confidently the lead area of learning for the school
- Continue the development of the Chaplaincy team to further the already high level of pupil engagement in the Leadership of the Catholic life of the school into the parish.
- Continue to develop the role of Catholic Teaching School to act as a catalyst and beacon of excellent practice for other Diocesan Catholic schools

April 14th 2014

Dear Students

Thank you so much for the wonderful welcome you gave us when we came to visit you. Your school is an outstanding school and in many instances excellent. This is because you and your teachers are focused on the fact that 'only the best' is good enough.

Together you have done so much to make your school a welcoming and beautiful place to be. We looked at length at your learning and achievement and found it to be outstanding. A special word of thanks to those students who came to discuss their work with us. Your insights and contributions all contributed to our final assessment of St Monica's as an outstanding place of learning. Your creative ideas are very good and we could see that you can make connections between what you are learning in RE with other areas of the curriculum through the spiritual, moral, social and cultural interventions in your lessons. Thank you for letting us share so much of what you are doing.

Many congratulations on your amazing fund raising efforts.

Your teachers are keen to help you develop the Catholic life of your school even further and to do this they will be working to develop the Pupil Chaplaincy team to take up leadership roles in the parish as well as the school.

St Monica's excellent standards and achievements have been nationally recognised and as a result you will now be helping other schools to develop and raise their standards of Catholic education. This means that your learning in RE must be the lead area of learning. You are well on the way to this very high level and I am confident you will reach it quickly.

God bless you all and I hope the rest of the school year goes well.

Yours sincerely

Sr Judith Russi

(Section 48 Inspector)

Summary Report to Parents

On 9th April 2014 the school was inspected in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The full report has been made available to the school and can also be accessed via both the school website and the Education section on the website of the Diocese of Salford.

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