
The Diocese of Hallam Section 48 Report

The Catholic Life of the School and Religious Education

Diocese of Hallam



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Notre Dame Catholic High School, Sheffield

School URN	107159
Name of Chair of Governors	Dr A Cosens
Name of Head teacher	Mrs J Willis
Date of inspection	November 8 2013
Section 48 Inspector	Mr T Moore and Mrs L Oldcorn

“ An enthusiasm for the things of God”

Introduction

The Inspection of Notre Dame Catholic High School has been carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Diocese of Hallam Framework and Schedule for Section 48 Inspections as approved by the Bishop of Hallam. The process of inspection in the Diocese of Hallam has been developed as an activity of the Church to support schools in further deepening the quality of Catholic education provided.

Description of the School

Notre Dame High School is situated in the Fulwood area of Sheffield but draws its students from a wide geographical area that includes families from a range of social and economic backgrounds. There is a wide, comprehensive range of academic attainment among the students on entry, but overall the level of attainment is slightly above national average. The school has a VI form and caters for 11-18 year olds. Around 25% of the VI form cohort are students from other schools.

The Catholic character and ethos of the school are central to all the school stands for. Almost 75% of its students are Catholic and drawn from 7 feeder primary schools as well as other schools. The school admits children whose parents are not Catholics but are seeking an education that embraces Christian values for their children.

The school has recently converted to Academy status and was designated as one of the first 100 Teaching Schools nationally. The Teaching School Alliance is built around the Diocese of Hallam as well as working with schools further afield.

Type of School	Catholic Voluntary Academy
Age profile of students	11 to 18
Number on roll	1389
Number of students on Special Needs and Disabilities Register	191
Number of students with a Statement of Special Educational Needs	24
Number of Catholics on roll	1034
Number of Other Christian Denominations	273
Number of other Faiths No religious affiliation	82
School Address	Fulwood Road, Sheffield, S10 3BT
Telephone Number	0114 2302536
Fax Number	0114 2308833
Email	awright @notredame-high.co.uk
School Website	www.notredame-high.org.uk

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection in 2008 the Senior Leadership Team and the Governing Body have identified key priorities in order to further develop the distinctive Catholic nature of the school. Good work has been

done to improve age appropriate provision to support the spiritual and moral growth of the students. There has been a full review of the KS3 RE programme and it now meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. Levels of attainment as prescribed by NBRIA have been adopted and more detailed curriculum / lesson planning has allowed teachers of RE to focus more carefully on key learning outcomes.

In order to support further development as a Catholic school, in line with its mission, the school should:

- Improve student voice in order to further enhance the already high quality collective worship.

In religious education:

- Ensure all lessons within the Religious Education Department are good or better.
- Ensure the planned focus on the girls and boys achievement is addressed fully.
- Increase recruitment and retention to AS and A2 courses.
- Consider how to support and develop those teachers of RE who have no formal qualifications in the subject

SUMMARY JUDGEMENTS

OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS	1
THE PROVISION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION	1
LEADERS AND MANAGERS	1
OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS:	1

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.

The overall effectiveness judgement is based on all the evidence available.

- Outcomes for pupils,
- The provision for Catholic Education
- Leaders and Managers

Inspection Grades: 1 is Outstanding, 2 is Good, 3 requires improvement in order to be good, 4 is Inadequate

OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS

How good outcomes are for pupils, taking into account variations between groups.

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school.	1
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.	1
How well pupils respond to and participate in the schools' Collective Worship	1

The pupils at Notre Dame make an outstanding contribution to the Catholic life of the school. The exceptional quality of Collective Worship has a profound impact on the students. It is a real strength, and is the result of careful planning combined with a huge amount of hard work and dedication to detail. A very important facet of the school is the responsibility taken by the students for shaping activities with a religious character. This is done under the direction of an inspirational lay chaplain. Two major Acts of Worship were observed on the day, with year 11 and with sixth form students respectively. Both centred on the theme of Remembrance and both featured high levels of student led activities. On both occasions the student body in the hall was both respectful and involved. The playing of the Last Post by a student from the school meant that the atmosphere was charged with emotion. The benefit accrued by the pupils from being part of its distinctive overarching ethos cannot be overstated. They take advantage of the opportunities which Notre Dame provides for their personal growth and development and participate well in evaluating the Catholic Life of the school. They have a strong sense of personal worth. When questioned, they were able to comment on what it is that makes their school different and were also perceptive in praising the value and relevance of their studies about other faiths. They are confident young men and women who value and appreciate those ideals, beliefs and qualities which are at the heart of the Gospel message and are well able to speak about the seven "Hallmarks" which describe the essential characteristics of their school. The care and respect displayed by the pupils to the large number of statues and other religious objects placed around the buildings is a testament to the inclusive nature of the school. The pupils' participation in away days and retreats is excellent.

The level of attainment by the students in Religious Education, particularly at the end of Key Stage 4, is outstanding. There has been a continuous rise in the GCSE pass rate which has seen a 19% rise in the past 4 years. There is little variation in achievement between different pupil groups at GCSE, apart from the achievement gap between boys and girls. This is the same as the national trend and steps are being taken by the school to address this. By the end of KS3, students have made outstanding progress. A higher proportion of students reach their target grade than in other subjects and this indicates that they are on track to perform well at GCSE level. At A2 level, students are consistently above the school and national average, most recently by one full grade.

From the sixteen observations undertaken by the inspectors and from the conversations with the school council, it is evident that the pupils not only enjoy their RE lessons but they are also of the opinion that the quality of teaching which they receive in them is at least as good as that of other major departments in the school.

PROVISION

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education

The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education.	2
The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning.	1
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.	1

Overall, the quality of teaching of Religious Education at Notre Dame is good. Out of the 16 lessons observed, 9 were outstanding, 3 were good and 4 were judged to require improvement.

Where the teaching was outstanding, lesson planning was clearly linked to assessment and to pupils' prior learning. In these lessons students were very enthusiastic and made outstanding progress. The teachers' high level of subject knowledge inspired and engaged the students. Their own beliefs were challenged, their understanding revealed, and they were encouraged to reflect upon key Catholic teachings. In one outstanding lesson, students were asked to evaluate the Catholic view on women priests. Students were encouraged to question, justify and evaluate their own beliefs on the issues alongside the beliefs of others. Marking in these lessons was also of a high standard with clear feedback on how students could improve and reach their target grade/level.

In the lessons which required improvement or were good, planning was not as detailed. In some cases provision for the SEN students was inappropriate or not planned for. Students were not fully focused on the tasks given and became easily distracted which was not always addressed. Learning was not reviewed throughout the lesson and progress was not checked. In these lessons marking in books was superficial with little feedback for students who when asked were not aware of the level they were on, what level they should be on, and how to get from one to the other.

The curriculum offered at Notre Dame fully meets the Bishops' Conference requirements and contributes well to students' spiritual and moral development. The RE curriculum is relevant to student needs and enables all to achieve.

The curriculum is enriched through imaginative, well planned strategies, which, in turn, leads to learning which is both stimulating and memorable in most cases. Achievement is outstanding for all groups. The school has customised the curriculum to meet the needs of all students and as a result most students are highly motivated and enthusiastic.

The Post 16 General RE has been recently reviewed in light of the changes to the NOCN course. This new development enables students to choose from a number of options based on the theme of 'Servant Leadership'. This includes a programme of classroom based study and volunteering. Students spoke very positively about this and attendance is good. The school is looking into how this might be accredited in a formal certificate.

Collective worship is central to the life of the school. There is a range of formal and informal opportunities for prayer. All of the Acts of Worship observed by the inspectors- Year 11 & Year 12 assemblies, Year 7

hymn singing and form time – were impressive and all took the theme of Remembrance. Students gathered in a very respectful and orderly way. The students took a central role in deciding on the content and also played a major part in the delivery. There was good balance of material including music, prayers and power point presentation. The overall result was one which provided a good opportunity to support their moral and spiritual development. The students responded well to the form worship. They were encouraged to be actively involved and were reflective during throughout.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How effective the provision is for Catholic education

How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.	1
How well leaders, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement for improvement to outcomes for pupils.	1

Senior leaders and governors of Notre Dame School are assiduous in their commitment to its distinctive Catholic ethos. The Governing Body and both senior and middle leaders demonstrate a very high level of enthusiasm for, and devotion to, the promotion of the Catholic life of the school. They are engaged in a range of activities designed to monitor and evaluate the performance of the school in terms of its provision as a Catholic school and pupil outcomes in Religious Education. Self-evaluation is built into the structure at all levels. Accuracy of data and rigour of analysis have been developed over time in order that the leadership team can have confidence in their projected results and can therefore plan effectively for the future. This has led to well-targeted interventions, planned developments and improvements in provision. The quality of planning is excellent and impacts positively on both pupils and staff. A number of strategies have been developed to elicit the views of students, staff and parents as regards their views on the Catholic life of the school. These stakeholder groups agree that this distinctive and overarching element is of a very high standard and is of an appropriate range and diversity.

The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is closely monitored. The percentage of lessons graded good or better by the school has improved significantly over the last few years but there is still room for improvement in this area. The Religious Education curriculum has been carefully planned and meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. The introduction of the volunteering programme into the sixth form in order to complement the A level and NOCN courses has been very well received.

The leadership and management of Religious Education in the school are extremely good. The Department is line managed by the Headteacher. This is a signal of how serious the Leadership Team takes its role in monitoring this fundamental aspect of the life of the school.

The students at Notre Dame have a first rate understanding of the distinctive mission of the school and appreciate the high quality of that which they are given. Staff and students share the ambition of the Governors and the Senior Leadership Team in maintaining highest possible standards as a Catholic school.

Collective Worship is well monitored and the views of both staff and students are collected and fed into the planning cycle in order to inform and improve the quality of provision.

This final section draws together all the evidence and judgements made in the preceding sections

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education	1
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The outcomes for the students in Religious Education are outstanding. At KS3, the progress made by the pupils is exceptional and this paves the way for the remarkable results at GCSE. The only variation of significance between groups is that the girls outperform the boys. At A level, the results in Religious Education are regularly as good if not better than other high achieving Departments and are frequently above the national average.

The Governors, senior leaders and middle managers are extremely effective in developing the Catholic life of the school. They inspire the school community to work together towards an ambitious vision of excellence. Self-evaluation at all levels is accurate and is grounded in sophisticated tracking, monitoring, analysis and intervention. The pursuit of the highest standards in Catholic Education at Notre Dame School is clearly evident. The provision to promote Catholic education at Notre Dame is of the highest order and all connected with the school can be rightly proud of its achievements.