

Catholic Diocese of Northampton



INSPECTION REPORT OF DENOMINATIONAL CHARACTER AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

CARDINAL NEWMAN CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL

Warden Hill Lane, Luton LU2 7AE

DfE School No: 821/4606
URN: 109699

Head Teacher: Mrs J Crow
Chair of Governors: Mr A Morgan

Reporting Inspector: Mr J Welsh
Associate Inspector: Mrs M Shinkwin

Date of Inspection: 27/28 June 2011
Date Report Issued: 19 July 2011

Date of previous Inspection: January 2008

The School is in the Trusteeship of the Diocese and in partnership with
Luton Local Authority

Information about the school

Cardinal Newman School is an 11-19 Catholic co-educational comprehensive school in the diocese of Northampton. There are 1405 pupils on roll of which 1359 are Catholic. There are 81 full-time members of teaching staff of which 25 are Catholic. There are in total 184 teaching and support staff, 64 of whom are Catholic. The school was part of the BSF [Building Schools for the Future] programme and is, at the date of publication, waiting for the outcome of a judicial review that will decide if the work is to continue. The RE department occupies a suite of rooms in a modern part of the school. The school's catchment area is the whole of Luton and Dunstable though some students travel from mid-Bedfordshire. In 2004 the school was awarded specialist science with maths status. All year groups have a higher percentage of boys than girls.

Key grades for inspection

1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Satisfactory 4: Unsatisfactory

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

Cardinal Newman School is an outstanding Catholic school. It is led by an outstanding head teacher who demonstrates her commitment to Catholic education by consistently placing the distinctive Catholic identity of this school at the centre of strategic planning and the daily life of the community. She is totally supported in this by her senior leadership team, the head of the RE department and the governing body. One governor described the school as 'the best Church in the diocese!' Governors provide very strong and stable support to the head teacher and the staff. Provision for the spiritual and moral development of pupils is excellent. The quality of teaching in RE is outstanding. The mission statement is lived out daily by the whole school community and modelled by a dedicated staff. There is a very strong sense of service and commitment to gospel values in the school.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding. The Chaplaincy is now a particular strength of the school which has committed resources to employ 1.5 staff exclusively for chaplaincy work. The chaplaincy team is committed to developing 'spiritual literacy' among pupils. Links have been established with all departments to explore the spirituality present in their subject areas.

A regular characteristic of inset is the development of the spiritual life of the school, giving time to reflect on the school's mission and Christian ethos. Each day begins with five minutes of prayer time. Similarly, all RE lessons begin with prayer and reflection. Prayer resources are offered to all staff by the Chaplaincy team. The prayer book provided includes suitable prayers from other religions, allowing students experience different forms of spirituality. Students respond confidently and enthusiastically to these opportunities and are encouraged to create and offer their own prayers.

The school has undertaken a review of RE provision at KS5 and works closely with the diocese to make suitable provision. Numbers opting for Advanced level RE are broadly in line with other schools in the diocese. As part of the core RE provision in Sixth Form, students either study Critical Thinking AS or follow the NOCN [National Open College Network] course. The department is constantly reviewing the content and delivery of the core RE programme.

The SEF-RE is very carefully and thoroughly completed and the inspection team agreed with its judgments. It is a very honest, accurate and comprehensive document reflecting well the school's capacity to self evaluate. The senior leadership is effective and proactive in its support of the RE department.

What the school should do to further improve:

- continue to review provision for KS5 religious education
- develop further consistency in assessment procedures

Outcomes for pupils

Students' contribution to, and benefit from, the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The opportunities offered to the students are wide-ranging and diverse. Students are confident to take full advantage of these and want to take part in the whole life of the school. They are very proud of their school and have a clear understanding of its mission. The Catholic life of the school is greatly valued and students are protective of it. They understand the importance of links with the parishes in the local St Alban's Pastoral Area and with their feeder schools. These are sometimes referred to in lessons and give students a sense of continuity and belonging to the larger diocesan and global church.

Students take a very active part in the prayer and liturgical life of the school. A survey in 2011 (LCET) taken by all students indicated that school is a very important place for them to 'reflect on God and the big questions in life'. During an excellent year 8 assembly observed by inspectors on the theme of 'Love', the staff member leading skilfully teased out secular definitions then proceeded to explain Christian love and the symbols used in the Church to reflect this. Students are at ease when praying and can use a variety of ways to support their prayer life. They can write their own prayers and are confident to pray them publicly.

Chaplaincy provision is excellent and is greatly appreciated by all staff and students. A governor said, 'Chaplaincy is how the school is different.' The two chaplaincy team members are very experienced and dedicated. They make chaplaincy very visible throughout the whole school community and for different stakeholders. Chaplaincy begins in transitional work with feeder schools, establishing relationships whilst students are still in year 6. This is built on as students join the school in September. Students can visit the chaplains and discuss their concerns in a non-judgmental environment knowing that they will be treated with respect and dignity. Chaplaincy is a powerful force for good in the school.

Students enjoy RE lessons and achieve well. The department is staffed by 7 specialists who work very hard and are dedicated to caring for their students, raising attainment, and 'bringing Christ to them'. Students observed were focused, enthusiastic and confident learners. They enjoyed their lessons and were active in their own learning. Behaviour in RE lessons was outstanding; students know that they are loved in their RE lessons. Most students make impressive progress against their target grades. Progress between KS 2 and 4 is greater in RE than Mathematics and English. At KS4, 71% of students gained A* - C in RE in 2010. GCSE results have been significantly better than the national average for six years. Boys' achievement is constantly reviewed. In 2010 68% of boys met or exceeded their targets. At KS5, 5 students sat A2 RE. 100% gained A-E, 40% meeting or exceeding their targets. At AS, 8 students sat RE. 75% gained A-E. 64% met or exceeded their targets. The school offers the OCR Religious Studies course in Philosophy and Ethics at KS5. It is very well taught

and well resourced. The department is already developing strategies to recruit gifted students to opt for the course. In 2010, 34 students were entered for Critical Thinking. 82% gained A-E. The department encountered some timetable and grouping issues. Progress and attainment is outstanding at KS's 3 and 4. At KS5 it is satisfactory with many good features.

Leaders and managers

Grade 1

The head teacher provides excellent leadership. She promotes, monitors and evaluates the provision for the Catholic life of the school ably assisted by a dedicate SLT team, chaplaincy team and a dedicated RE department. As a result outcomes for students are excellent. In making executive decisions about staffing, resources, accommodation, curriculum time and the liturgical year, the head teacher demonstrates a deep commitment to the Church's mission. This is reflected in documentation and practice. From 2011 a deputy head teacher will take responsibility for promoting and monitoring the Catholic life of the school. The SEF-RE is an authentic document that reflects accurately the religious life of the school and the structures that underpin it.

The RE department is carefully line managed with appropriate targets set and a cycle of lesson observations followed. There are rigorous quality assurance procedures in place. Link meetings between the SLT and the head of department provide further monitoring and support as do governor review meetings.

The governing body provides very effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school fulfilling their canonical and statutory duties. There is a full cohort of governors. They bring long experience, expertise, and dedication to their work. They are wholeheartedly committed to the success of the school and give freely of their time. They constantly review the work of the school and are effective at holding post holders to account. They have the confidence to address weaknesses and tackle areas for improvement. Members of the governing body do all this with discretion and out of a sense of service. 'In partnership with the head teacher and SLT, they shape the vision and direction of the school'. (SEF) The Inspection team agrees with this statement.

The promotion of Community Cohesion is central to the vision of Cardinal Newman. The School works to be fully inclusive with leaders working beyond the school to dialogue with others from the local and wider community. Within school, students work cohesively across ethnic groups and racial incidents are rare. Diversity is celebrated and cultural events throughout the school year are used to affirm different cultures. The school has links with schools in South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. Cardinal Newman has a proud record of fund raising for charities at home and abroad. The inclusive nature of school life is reflected in a prayer provision that reflects the diverse ethnic nature of the school community. Students have a strong sense of global citizenship.

Provision

Grade 1

Its prayer life is a distinctive characteristic of the school's Catholic nature. The school fulfils the statutory requirements to hold a daily act of worship through morning prayers in form rooms and assemblies. Moreover, prayer is a central part of every school celebration. Shared worship has a high profile in the school and the chaplains provide excellent resources as well as attending prayer in the classroom and in assemblies. Students experience different forms of prayer including the rosary, the Stations of the Cross, meditation and reflection. Those of other faiths are supported in their prayer. Students study prayers from other faiths in RE lessons. Chaplaincy provision in the school is excellent.

The chaplaincy team consists of a full time chaplain, an assistant, and a team of year group pastoral supporters. Chaplaincy is clearly defined, there is a job description and the post holder is line managed by the head teacher. The Chaplaincy team works closely with the bereaved and liaises with deanery clergy and feeder schools. The liturgical year is followed closely with masses, liturgies, the sacrament of reconciliation and other services deemed appropriate. Chaplaincy has overall responsibility for the chapel and its use. The chaplain is very successful in encouraging students to become involved in acts of worship and is also responsible for the monthly prayer book; an excellent resource for tutors.

The quality of teaching in RE is outstanding overall. Each key stage and every full-time teacher was observed during the inspection. RE is generously staffed by subject specialists. The department is housed in a pleasing suite of rooms in the most modern part of the school. The RE team is led by an excellent head of department. She is an excellent teacher and models high standards to all her colleagues. The ethos of the department is collaborative with an emphasis on the sharing of good practice and resources. The head of department follows a distributive model of leadership. This is highly effective. Departmental members are carefully mentored and provided with considerable support when needed. Thorough quality assurance procedures are in place. Regular lesson observations, work sampling and careful data analysis ensures that consistently high standards of teaching and learning are maintained. Classrooms are well organized with immaculate displays that both contribute to the excellent working environment and enhance the student's learning experience. Relations within the department are outstanding both amongst staff and between staff and students. The staff try to develop in the students a relationship with Christ.

The RE curriculum meets the needs of all students. At KS3, the schemes of work have been adapted from 'The Way the Truth and the Life'. It is felt that these schemes meet the needs of the students. At KS4, the OCR Philosophy and Applied Ethics syllabus has been adopted. Both key stages enjoy 10% curriculum time, meeting the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. At KS5, 7% of curriculum time is given to RE. The core RE syllabus is differentiated; the higher ability students follow the AS in Critical Thinking, whilst other students follow the NOCN course (following CES guidelines). The RE curriculum is appropriate to the needs of the school and is constantly under review.

Assessment is used to raise attainment. Accurate targets are set based on data analysis, then carefully monitored. Interventions are applied where appropriate and necessary. There is evidence of diagnostic marking, peer assessment, self-assessment and oral assessment in the classroom. There were excellent examples of question and answering in plenaries to check learning. In some lessons, this checking continued throughout the lesson. This is excellent practice. There is, however, some variation in practice and greater consistency would benefit students. The department is working collaboratively to develop assessment for learning strategies. This will further raise attainment. Students know how well they are doing, what level they are working at, and are involved in their own target setting.

The inspectors enjoyed visiting Cardinal Newman Catholic School and appreciated the hospitality extended by all members of the community.