



INSPECTION REPORT OF DENOMINATIONAL CHARACTER AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

ST GREGORY'S VOLUNTARY AIDED CATHOLIC MIDDLE SCHOOL

Biddenham Turn, Bedford, MK40 4AT

DfE School No: 820/4601

URN: 139547

Head Teacher: Mrs F Topa

Chair of Governors: Mr C Donnellan

Reporting Inspectors: Mrs Rosemarie Jones and
Mrs J Crow

Date of Inspection: 7 October 2015

Date Report Issued: 19 October 2015

Date of previous Inspection: June 2010

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

Description of the School

St Gregory's Middle School is the only school in the Diocese catering for pupils aged 9-13. The school serves four parishes and is part of the St Francis of Assisi Academy Trust in Bedford. Currently there are 337 pupils on roll of whom 41% are Catholic. The school is culturally diverse. Nearly two thirds of pupils speak English as an additional language. Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. 34% of the pupils qualify for pupil premium. 36% of staff are Catholic.

Key for Inspection Grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 2

St Gregory's Middle School is a good Catholic school with outstanding practice in prayer and chaplaincy provision. The headteacher is effective in promoting a strong ethos rooted in Catholic values. The well-being and personal development of individual pupils is at the heart of the school's vision. This reflected in the school's strong pastoral care system. Pupils are confident and articulate and know what it means to belong to a Catholic community. Their behaviour is excellent. The school provides a good Catholic education. The quality of teaching is consistently good and pupils make good progress. Formal and informal monitoring of the Catholic life of the school has ensured previous areas for development have been addressed. Governors are regular visitors and fully involved in the life of the school, discharging their responsibilities very well.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 1

There is much to celebrate about the school. The leadership of the headteacher and governors effectively promotes a strong Catholic identity. The whole staff share this vision, wanting the best for each pupil. The senior leadership team and RE co-ordinator have worked hard to address the recommendations made in the last inspection report. Parents and pupils are proud of their school and value the strong 'family' atmosphere. The school has an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- dedicate more curriculum time to religious education to ensure full coverage of the RE syllabus
- improve the quality and quantity of work in pupils' books
- offer greater challenge to the more able pupils
- ensure a consistency in standards of presentation across the school thus raising staff and pupil expectations.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 1

Overall outcomes for pupils are outstanding. They make a good contribution to the Catholic life of the school and benefit from it greatly. Many take on responsibilities and are able to articulate how their actions and behaviour put gospel values into action in their daily lives. Pupils are able to refer to the teaching of Jesus and value and respect the Catholic tradition of the school.

Prayer forms an important part of the everyday life. Pupils are given time for spontaneous prayer and personal reflection. They are respectful and reverent. All classrooms have a prayer focus and pupils have access to the school chapel throughout the day. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about their retreat experiences.

Chaplaincy is highly valued by pupils. Pupils know that staff care about them and are approachable should the need arise. Pupils benefit from the excellent communication between those working in chaplaincy and all other areas of school life. The parish priest is a regular visitor to the school. Chaplaincy provision makes a significant contribution to the well-being of pupils and to their lives as part of the wider community. Pupils are aware of the needs of others and take pride in their fund raising activities which include CAFOD, Operation Christmas Child, the Lenten Soup Kitchen and links with El Salvador.

Pupils learning in religious education is good. They enjoy lessons, demonstrating engagement and enjoyment. Pupils' knowledge and skills in religious education are developing well. Their behaviour is excellent and they work calmly and collaboratively. From a below average starting point on entry to the school the majority of pupils make good progress.

Leaders and managers

Grade 2

Leaders demonstrate a deep commitment to the Catholic life of the school which is given a high priority. The pupils' spiritual and moral development is promoted well. "Living, Learning and Growing Together with Jesus" - the school mission statement - is known and lived out by the whole community. A commitment to staff training and induction contributes to the strong Catholic ethos. A strength of the school is the pastoral care of the pupils. This is a result of the dedicated commitment of the whole staff and the outstanding work of the chaplaincy team. There are good links between school, parents and parish. Many opportunities exist for pupils to be involved in parish events. Governors are highly committed and have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and of necessary future developments.

The RE co-ordinator is knowledgeable, hardworking and enthusiastic. She is responsible for delivering more than 75% of the RE curriculum across the school. There is a range of monitoring activities including lesson observation, work and planning scrutiny and moderation. Assessment and tracking systems are in place. However, the impact of these activities is not fully evident in teaching and in the outcomes for pupils. Leaders and managers are successful at developing partnerships; there are excellent links with other Catholic schools, the diocese, parish and local organisations. These opportunities enable pupils and staff to develop further. The school is a highly inclusive community with a clear shared vision. All respect difference and value diversity.

Provision

Grade 2

The quality of collective worship is good and central to the life of the school. It is a key part of every celebration, fully inclusive and well planned enabling all pupils to take an active part and in turn develop their own spirituality. There are a growing number of opportunities for pupils to lead prayer throughout the year including prayer groups and at special moments in the life of the school.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall with the majority of pupils making good progress. However there is not enough challenge and support for more able pupils to achieve higher levels of attainment. Each class has two lessons of RE a week; this does not sufficiently allow for extended written work. Pupils' books do not always reflect a high standard of presentation nor quality of work. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and support staff are deployed effectively. Pupils appeared keen to learn and are well behaved. Tracking systems for RE have been successfully incorporated into the whole school assessment system. Staff have a growing understanding of how to get pupils to where they should be. Resources are used well to support learning and the school allocates funding to ensure RE is appropriately resourced. The RE curriculum impacts positively on pupils spiritual and moral development.

The inspectors would like to thank both members of staff and pupils for the very warm welcome and hospitality accorded to them throughout the visit.