

Catholic Diocese of Northampton



**INSPECTION REPORT OF DENOMINATIONAL
CHARACTER AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)**

**ST PAUL'S VOLUNTARY AIDED
CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL
Phoenix Drive, Leadenhall
Milton Keynes, MK6 5EN**

**DfES School No: 826/4702
School URN: 110517**

**Head Teacher: Mr M Manley
Chair of Governors: Mr M Rhodes**

**Reporting Inspector: Mr J Welsh
Associate Inspector: Mrs B Grimley**

**Date of Inspection: 18/19 March 2014
Date Report Issued: 23 April 2014**

Date of previous Inspection: December 2008

**The School is in the Trusteeship of the Diocese and
in partnership with Milton Keynes Local Authority**

Information about the school

St Paul's school is a voluntary aided Catholic comprehensive in Milton Keynes and in the Diocese of Northampton. There are 1763 pupils on roll, of which 1234 are Catholic. The published admissions number is 270. The school has three special needs' departments; hearing impaired, visually impaired and for autism spectrum disordered [ASD] pupils. Presently, these departments cater for 48 students, hosted by the school on behalf of the local authority. In 2013 the percentage of students supported by school action was 37%. The school deprivation factor was 0.24. The percentage of students with English as an additional language [EAL] is 42%. The school works very closely with neighbouring schools including local Catholic primary schools to ensure smooth transitional arrangements are in place. St Paul's is the lead school for initial teacher training [ITT] within the Denbigh Teaching School Alliance and has applied for school centered initial teacher training [SCITT] status. St Paul's is a national support school and the head teacher is a national leader in education. There are 114 teaching staff of which 43 are Roman Catholic and 174 support staff of whom 56 are also Catholic.

Key grades for inspection

1. Outstanding 2. Good 3. Requires improvement 4. Inadequate

Overall effectiveness

Grade 1

St Paul's is an outstanding Catholic school. Provision for religious education and for the whole Catholic life of the school is excellent. The head teacher is very effective in leading and managing the school as a living faith community. He has a very strong sense of service and mission. This colours all management decisions and policy making. He is ably supported and challenged by an experienced and dedicated governing body. The leadership team, head of RE and senior chaplain provides full and appropriate support at senior and middle management level. As a result, the school has a very strong Catholic ethos with deep foundations whilst firmly looking outwards to the world. The school has a very real sense of inclusion and belonging, underpinned by respect for the individual and the need for forgiveness. The impressive chaplaincy team provides many rich opportunities to develop the spiritual life of students and staff. Students are accustomed to being actively involved in acts of collective worship and being the authors of their own prayers. Outcomes for students in RE are outstanding. The department is led by a dedicated head and is composed of committed and experienced subject specialists. Teaching and learning is at least good and often outstanding. Since the last inspection the teaching of RE has been consistently good to outstanding. The department is actively involved in sharing and modeling good practice with other departments in the school. The appointment of a large chaplaincy team and skilled subject specialists has enriched the religious experience of the students. There is a relentless pursuit of excellence within the department.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 1

The leadership of the school, the department and the chaplaincy team provide the capacity for sustained improvement. Examination results in 2013 were 78% A* - C at GCSE outperforming the 75% target. Rigorous quality assurance initiatives, lesson observations, work sampling and careful monitoring of progress with interventions where required, produce outstanding results at key stages 3, 4 and 5.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to use *assessment for learning* initiatives to raise attainment
- Further develop literacy techniques in the religious education classroom

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 1

Outcomes for students are outstanding. Students are comfortable and confident in contributing to the development of the school's Catholic character. This was evidenced in lesson observations, registrations and liturgies and discussions with stakeholders. Students are proud of their school and recognize the staff's efforts on their behalf. Students feel safe at all times. The school is a calm and harmonious working environment. Mutual respect is much in evidence. In particular, special needs' students are treated with the utmost respect by all. Students understand the place of faith and spirituality in their lives and are appreciative of the opportunities to develop these. This is illustrated by registrations lessons, assemblies, liturgies, masses, retreats and focus weeks. Students are actively involved in the planning and enthusiastic in participating in these events. All students fundraise for charity. Planning is carried out by chaplaincy and charity representatives from each tutor group who willingly take on leadership roles and work to motivate peers. Involvement in KS3 retreat days, work for Cafod world gifts, pilgrimages to Lourdes and Taize demonstrate how the students benefit from and contribute to the Catholic life of the school. Students worked through the Lenten season to support local charities such as the Willen hospice and the Chiltern air ambulance. Students respond well to emergency appeals and contribute regularly to the Milton Keynes food bank. Activities are sometimes planned for vulnerable groups in the student body to provide enrichment.

Students are offered wide and varied opportunities to participate in collective worship. Holy day masses are celebrated on school days and not referred to the nearest Sunday. Students respond respectfully and prayerfully at all times. The prayer life of the school is a strength. Students are creative and confident in writing and sharing their own prayers. This is supported and facilitated by a dedicated chaplaincy team. Both staff who are new to the school and existing tutors are offered induction into the prayer life of the community. The liturgical year is followed closely. Liturgies are offered in the chapel throughout the year. Form prayers are said daily. There are Stations of the Cross in Lent and the Rosary in May and October. Students are active in the planning of liturgies, singing, playing instruments and composing prayers. The chaplaincy team publish prayer booklets to accompany the school community throughout the year. These are greatly valued.

Attainment in religious education is outstanding. Students enjoy learning, are independent learners and demonstrate age appropriate theological literacy. From KS2 to KS4, students make outstanding progress. This is repeated at KS5. This progress is carefully monitored through constant analysis by the department, line managers and students.

At key stage three 84% of students are making expected progress (1.7+ levels of progress) and 31% (2.7 levels of progress). This is outstanding. Groups within the cohort, for example those with English as a second language and those with special educational needs, are making expected progress. The department challenges and supports vulnerable students to excel. At key stage 4 the three year trend demonstrates that the department produces outstanding achievement against national and school averages. In 2013, 78% of students achieved A* – C at GCSE in RE (72% nationally). 30% achieved A* - A. 75% of students made 3 levels of progress. At key stage 5, using advanced level points score [ALPS] national comparisons, AS results have been outstanding, and A2 results very good (2013). 78% of A2 students gained A* - C. At AS level, 81% gained a C and above, 55% achieved A – B.

Leaders and managers

Grade 1

Leadership and management are effective in sustaining and developing the Catholic life of the school. The leadership of the head teacher is outstanding. He has a mature understanding of the distinctive nature of a Catholic school and the implications for management that this demands. His clear vision is shared with staff, students, governors and parents. He is supported by a dedicated leadership team. The governors and leadership team promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of worship, resources, curriculum and staffing of the RE department very well. The department is carefully line managed. The annual learning review is an effective diagnostic tool in evaluating provision and informing planning. A department development plan and chaplaincy report to governors ensure rigorous monitoring. The school's systems are accurate and robust. Student evaluation of the department's work, together with the views of parents sought in the Keele Survey, triangulate this evidence.

Members of the RE department work closely as a team. Each key stage has a designated coordinator. The Head of department and second in department work closely with the department through a 'dispersed leadership' model to monitor evaluate and plan for improvement. They are attentive to the views of students, parents, clergy, and colleagues and welcome collaboration. The governing body designates a link governor to the RE department, safeguarding, SEN and chaplaincy. Valued support is given to the school and its leadership in its desire to support the Catholic life of the school. Accurate self evaluation and planning have led to raised attainment, a rich liturgical life and pastoral care delivered through tutors and chaplains. Assessment is a key lever in the department to raise attainment. Diagnostic marking along with self and peer assessment involve the students in identifying where they are in their learning and how to improve. The 'green stamp' is now ubiquitous and is proving functional. Staff constantly assess learning, in lessons, through homework, during the course of a module and throughout the key stage. They are skilled at using assessment for learning initiatives and understand the importance of effective assessment in raising attainment. Data is used effectively by the department and the line manager; it aids planning, directs lessons and helps measure progress.

Provision

Grade 1

The quality of the prayer life, collective worship and chaplaincy provided by the school is outstanding. Students are given regular opportunities to pray in registration, assemblies, liturgies and masses. They are actively involved in planning of liturgies and masses. This involvement is nurtured and valued. There are masses at the beginning of the school year, Ash Wednesday, holy days and at the end of each key stage. The priest chaplain is very committed to the school and gives generously of his time. His work is greatly valued. The school works with the local community and with Catholic primary schools. The employment of eight chaplains is a testimony to the importance the school places on the spiritual life of the whole community. The school chapel is used constantly, is a valued resource and is not used as a teaching base. The retreat programme is well established and is constantly reviewed. Pilgrimages to Lourdes and Taize serve to illustrate the pupils' commitment and the staff's dedication.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Lesson observations took place in each key stage. Every RE teacher was observed at least once. Carefully planned schemes of work are very well resourced. Assessment punctuates each module and informs planning. Data is used effectively. Lessons are planned carefully with appropriate challenge and pace. Students are used to working independently, in pairs and groups. Students enjoy learning; lessons are varied, students' opinions are sought and valued and they understand the importance of RE lessons in their lives. Staff demonstrate subject expertise, and reflect constantly on learning. A range of

teaching styles are employed in lessons. These are differentiated carefully. Excellent use of technology ameliorates learning. In lessons there is a climate of trust. Opinions and views are valued and students are confident in offering and sharing their ideas. 'Building learning power' and 'learning talents' are two initiatives used by the school to assist learning and ensure progress. The RE department is used by the school to demonstrate very good classroom practice to colleagues. The curriculum is appropriate; it is broad and balanced, enabling high levels of achievement and contributing to the spiritual and moral development of all students and fostering effective links with PSHE.

At key stage 3, 10.6 % of curriculum time is dedicated to RE. At key stage 4, 9%, and at key stage 5, 5.3% of curriculum time is dedicated to the subject. The curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' conference. It is constantly reviewed. Schemes of work are carefully planned, resourced and evaluated. There are three learning pathways to enable all students to progress in their learning. The curriculum is enriched by visits (e.g. to Coventry cathedral), outside speakers, and the marking of weeks such as prison week and Holocaust Memorial Day. At key stage 4, all students are entered for the GCSE in RE. At key stage 5 all non A level RE students follow the general RE course. Staff are supported in their wish to follow the CCRS course and the MA in Catholic leadership.

The inspectors wish to thank the headteacher, staff and children for their warm welcome and for contributing to a very positive and enjoyable day.