



## **INSPECTION REPORT**

St Augustine's Catholic College  
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D/E Number: 865/5400

Headteacher: Mr J Alsop  
Chair of Governors: Mr M Stevenson

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Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Clifton  
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Date of inspection: 18-19 September 2014  
Date of previous inspection: May 2007

Reporting Inspector: Mrs P Landers  
Additional Inspector Mrs A Barrett

## **Description of School**

St Augustine's is a mixed sex 11 to 19 academy in the Clifton Diocese. The school has 946 pupils on roll, including 180 in the sixth form. The majority of pupils live in West Wiltshire but because of the denominational nature of the school, some pupils travel from outside that area. Most of the pupils come from an area which is not considered deprived; the social deprivation indicator is below the national average. The College is predominantly white British however; there is a small but growing number of students from minority ethnic groups, particularly, Poland, Portugal, the Philippines and African states. The figure for EAL is lower than the national average but growing at a rate which is faster than the national average. The number of pupils receiving free school meals and pupils with a statement of SEN is below the national average.

### **Key for inspection grades**

Grade 1: Outstanding; Grade 2: Good; Grade 3: Requires improvement in order to be good;  
Grade 4: Inadequate

## **Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)**

### **Grade 1**

- The vibrant Catholic ethos permeates every area of school life. The Catholic life of the school is given high priority which has positive outcomes for all pupils.
- Pupils' spiritual needs are met through a series of appropriately planned liturgies, retreats, pilgrimages, charity work and other activities.
- The school is well led and managed by the headteacher, senior leaders and governors who are fully committed to Catholic education.
- The Religious Education department is dedicated and effective, and at the forefront of pedagogical developments in the school.
- Pupils make outstanding progress at all key stages.
- The quality of teaching in the Religious Education department is good with much outstanding practice.
- The well-being of each child is a high priority and the school has a very effective pastoral care system.
- Partnerships with parents, feeder primary schools, other secondary schools, parishes and other agencies are fully developed.
- There is excellent support from parish priests.
- Pupil behaviour is outstanding and a very strong feature of the school.
- All recommendations from the previous inspection have been met.

## **The capacity of the school community to improve and develop**

The following factors all contribute to the school's capacity to improve and develop:

- The excellent leadership of the headteacher, the leadership team and the governing body who have robust systems for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing performance at the school.
- The school's self-evaluation document which is an accurate reflection of the school's strengths and where areas of further development have already been identified.
- The highly effective head of the Religious Education department who has a clear understanding of what is needed to further develop the department and continue to raise standards.
- A team of well experienced and committed teachers who are willing and able to work with him to drive the department forward.
- Excellent support for liturgy, prayer and pastoral care which is provided by an enthusiastic and inspirational chaplain.
- The distinctive Catholic ethos of the school, which recognises and nurtures each individual as being made in the image of God.
- The strong parental support.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Further develop pedagogy in the department to raise the performance of all teachers to the standard of the best.
- Further embed assessment for learning strategies so that it empowers all pupils to improve their own learning and is consistent across the department.
- Provide support and opportunities to enable pupils to further develop their skills for planning, writing and leading their own liturgies.
- Consider ways of further developing chaplaincy provision by involving more staff and pupils.

## How good are outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups?

### Grade 1

- Pupil attitudes towards their school and what it provides for them is outstanding. They are proud to be part of the St Augustine's community and were very positive about the school in their interviews with inspectors.
- Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school. They are able to articulate the mission of the school to explain how this translates into their normal lives. The ethos of the school is based on living out the Lasallian values. This ethos is demonstrated by the exemplary conduct of the pupils, their respect and care for one another and their outreach to those less fortunate. An example of this is the sixth form sponsored sleep out where monies raised will go to the homeless. They generously support local, national and international charities and raise considerable sums for CAFOD and Barnardos.
- Pupils' response to prayer and worship is outstanding. They participate in prayer with maturity and reverence. Lunchtime opportunities for prayer in the chapel are valued by pupils and well attended. Whole school, tutor group and house Masses are supported by pupils who act as readers and provide music. Every pupil has an opportunity to participate in the class Mass and assembly. The well-developed prayer life makes a significant contribution to the pupils' spiritual and moral development.
- The staff meets to pray together on a Tuesday morning. Prayer is led by the Chaplain and well attended by staff who appreciate this opportunity for prayer and reflection.
- Pupils clearly enjoy their RE lessons. They have excellent relationships with their teachers and each other and are keen to do well. They are able to articulate the teachings, beliefs and values of the church and can discuss their ideas with confidence. Responses in lessons showed that the pupils are becoming religiously literate and reflective about their lives.
- Pupils apply themselves to their lessons conscientiously. In most lessons observed, they were attentive and applied themselves well to their tasks. They are keen to participate in question and answer sessions and this helps them make progress.
- In lessons observed, year 10 students were able to discuss different views about homosexuality and contraception but were very clear about the teachings of the Catholic Church. In year 8, lessons were characterised by calmness and good order which enabled pupils to make good progress. Teaching was engaging with clear evidence of good subject knowledge. The overall quality of work in exercise books is outstanding.
- In Key Stage 3, standards are generally good, though there is some inconsistency in teaching and marking. At GCSE, results are very good with 42% of entries gaining A\*/A and 88% awarded A\* to C. The percentage of students entered has increased in recent years. At A level, results are good and an increasing number of pupils are achieving the highest grades. General RE is well regarded by sixth form students who can see the relevance of it to their lives.
- Different groups of pupils are enabled to do well through differentiation, in class support and a variety of tasks that cater for all types of learners.
- Pupils feel that their voice is heard and where appropriate acted upon. The school council is led by the head boy and head girl and is made up of two representatives of each year group. Pupils feel that they can also make their concerns known through their form tutor, the chaplain and sixth form students.

## How effective are leaders and governors in developing the Catholic Life of the school?

### Grade 1

- The Catholic life of the school is communicated by the excellent vision and leadership of the headteacher and his senior leadership team. Key to this success are the clear self-evaluating procedures, which include frequent monitoring, reviews and focussed planning. This clear direction and challenging professionalism promotes high quality care and education. The whole staff displays a commitment to Catholic education that is impressive.
- Lasallian values, rooted in the gospel, inform and underpin all aspects of the school. It is fully inclusive and all are welcome in the spirit of the gospel, with openness and respect. Pupils, parents and staff are unanimous in their wholehearted support for the school and its Catholic mission.
- The RE department has a prominent profile within the school and is highly valued. The Head of the RE Department leads his team very effectively and gives them good support. He monitors the department's work through lesson observation and work scrutiny. The department's self-evaluation report is accurate and realistic; it provides a clear agenda for future development.
- The head of RE is also responsible for the growth of RE across the curriculum. He has worked closely with the Heads of Science, English and Business Studies to produce impressive cross curricular themes and plans to involve more departments in the future.
- The Head of RE also works closely with the Chaplain who is responsible for planning and leading assemblies and liturgies, and organising retreats and pilgrimages. Both the Head of Department and the Chaplain are recent appointments and are considerable assets to the Catholic life of the school.
- The Governing body is effective and committed, and makes an outstanding contribution. They act as critical friends and enjoy good relations with staff. They are well informed about the school and bring their own expertise to the role. The Chair of Governors is dedicated to the school and is an effective leader. He is in regular contact with the headteacher and is focussed on the future growth of the school. The RE link governor plays an active role and is most supportive. The presence of a priest on the governors ensures that the Catholic nature of the school remains a priority. The Governing Body fulfils all canonical and statutory obligations.
- The school is very well supported by the priests from local parishes and has close links with the Diocese.
- Close links exist with parents through regular meetings at the school and the work of FOSTA. Response to the Diocesan questionnaire was overwhelmingly positive.
- Community cohesion is at the forefront of the school's ethos. All are welcomed with a sense of unity and respect which is very evident to visitors.

## How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?

### Grade 1

- There are six specialist teachers in the Religious Education department who all act as good role models for their pupils. Teaching is highly effective in enthusing pupils, ensuring that they learn very well and develop an understanding of the Catholic faith. Excellent subject knowledge is applied to challenge and inspire learners. Teachers

employ a range of teaching styles, and plan activities which enable pupils to work independently and collaboratively. Generally, teachers have high expectations of their pupils, who make excellent progress in most lessons. There is excellent balance between AT1 and AT2 in the teaching so pupils were clearly learning from, as well as about religion.

- The quality of work in exercise books is very good with evidence of challenging marking. Good use is made of assessment for learning strategies to empower pupils to improve their own learning. Peer and self-assessment are used to good effect.
- The curriculum meets the needs of the pupils. It is well planned and structured. It meets the needs of the Bishops' Conference.
- Provision for collective worship is excellent. Pupils are encouraged to plan and participate in class masses and assemblies. They are well supported by the chaplain who also organises whole school and house masses. Reconciliation services are also held during Lent and Advent.
- There are a variety of opportunities for prayer and reflection. The staff meet for prayer on a Tuesday; this is led by the chaplain. She also facilitates prayer for pupils in the chapel every lunchtime. The prayer session observed, "Thank God it's Friday" was well attended and provided an opportunity for reflection.
- The classroom based daily Acts of Worship observed were reverent and prayerful. They are monitored by the chaplain who provides resources during Lent and Advent.
- Every lesson begins with a prayer.
- Pupils are offered a wide range of day and residential retreats, including Glastonbury and Kintbury. Pilgrimages to Walsingham and Rome are planned and sixth form students participate in the HCPT Pilgrimage to Lourdes.
- A Catholic Ethos day is held each year for staff. This is well received. In addition, all staff have participated in three twilight sessions on Catholic Theology run by the Diocese
- The school offers pupils a wide range of opportunities for charity work and fundraising. Opportunities for Charitable outreach include CAFOD, \HCPT, the local food bank and hampers at Christmas.

## Summary of Parental Questionnaires

216 questionnaires were returned by parents/carers. This is an excellent number. Responses were overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of school life. Parents recognised the distinctive ethos of the school and felt that their children were well educated and supported in a school that had excellent standards. A small number of responses asked for more information about SRE and what is taught in Religious Education.