



INSPECTION REPORT

St. Augustine's Catholic College

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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

Date of inspection: 1st-2nd May 2007
Date of previous inspection: 12th-16th Feb 2001
Reporting Inspector: Mr A Dowle

Description of School

St Augustine's Catholic school became an 11-18 specialist technology college in 1998 with additional sports college status (2006) serving the Catholic communities of Trowbridge, Corsham, Devizes and Warminster. There are 960 pupils on roll including a Sixth Form of 200. Over recent years a number of new specialist buildings have been added and this has led to the development of a very attractive learning environment. Of the pupils on roll over 90% are baptised Catholics and the existing links between the College and the Deanery are very strong. The Sixth Form attracts a wide range of pupils from other schools and standards on entry across the College are above national averages with the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals well below the national average. The majority of pupils are of White British ethnicity and the proportion of pupils with English as a second language remains well below national averages at present.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

St Augustine's Catholic college is an exceptional example of a highly successful Christian community rooted in its Catholic tradition. The Catholic life is at the very heart of all aspects of the College and is used to nourish the work being done and the people who work here. It has an outstanding capacity to evaluate its own strengths and weaknesses and develop appropriate strategies for improvement. The overwhelming support of parents Governors and the local parishes is reflected in the genuine pride of the students and their own desire to do their very best. There is a sense of ownership and cohesion throughout the college and a strong vision for the way forward.

Grade 1

Improvement since the last inspection

There is clear evidence of high standards being maintained within a transitional period for the RE Department with changes in staffing and a maternity leave. National and Diocesan initiatives for learning are part of everyday practice within RE.

Provision for year 13 RE has been addressed and a new nationally accredited course for General RE in the sixth form is currently being piloted.

The college focus on Spirituality is already embedded and Chaplaincy provision is beginning to permeate the college on all levels.

Grade 1

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The College has a realistic, detailed and objective understanding of its own strengths and weaknesses and a clear vision of how it wishes to move forward. The strategies for improvement and development in RE are part of the rigorous self evaluation process and target setting across the whole college. Clear provision has been made to strategically develop 'Spirituality' throughout the College Improvement plan which is directly monitored by the Head and a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Developments in Chaplaincy provision are allowing a far greater variety of 'spiritual' experiences for the pupils and the RE department continues to support and nourish it with its expertise. The Catholic life of the College permeates all levels of the daily life of the community and has a clear impact on the quality of provision and pupil attitudes to learning in RE.

Grade 1

What the College should do to improve further

- Use the planned curriculum review (07/08) to re-evaluate the effective use of curriculum RE time and its contribution to the wider life of the college.
- Continue to develop the focus of teaching to promote deeper learning in RE.
- Continue to ensure that Chaplaincy provision allows all pupils opportunities to live out their Faith

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

The leadership of the Catholic life of the College is outstanding at all levels. It is inspirational and consistent and is owned by pupils and staff. The ethos it creates gives a sense of welcome and inclusion which in turn creates a climate where success is possible and pupils feel valued and supported. The pastoral support offered particularly within the tutorial system is a real strength repeatedly cited by pupils as they progress through the College. The focus on Spirituality is a core component of the school development plan and teacher development days ensure that the ethos of the college is specifically developed.

The leadership of the Head inspires others to strive for and achieve their very best. He empowers others to take ownership of what they do and he uses the ethos of the College to consistently challenge others to move forward. Pupils want to be here. His performance is monitored by the governing body who incorporate clear spiritual directives as part of the annual performance review process. There is a clear sense of the pupils, staff, parents, governors and local clergy supporting the Head at all times in order to maintain the high standards expected. The Governors feel part of the daily life of the college and a vision for the future is shared. Pupils within the college report that their voices are heard through either the student committee or by directly approaching the Head or members of staff.

The efficient use of resources has led to significant developments in Chaplaincy provision and the creation of an educational environment offering excellent facilities. It is a very attractive campus where careful landscaping and absence of litter make it very conducive for learning.

Grade 1

Collective Worship

The daily work of the College is enriched by a culture of prayer. This reflective climate is evident throughout the day and serves as a continuous reminder of Gospel values. Students and staff enrich the quality of worship by their involvement. Sixth form students for example lead a worship group for younger pupils for assemblies and Masses and the use of pupil work by staff within their own prayerful reflection time in the chapel was very reflective. There is a quiet simplicity about the chapel which is centrally located and used regularly. Staff who are not Catholic speak highly of the atmosphere that prayer has created and feel very much included as part of the community. The planning of worship including Liturgical celebrations is appropriate to the age and development of the pupils and specifically celebrates the life and successes of the College. The recent 40th anniversary Mass with the Bishop was an important moment in the life of the college.

Student behaviour during the worship observed was exemplary and showed a genuine level of respect. There is a greater potential, here to encourage even more opportunities for staff and pupils to share voluntary prayer experiences together following the recent initiative involving year 10 pupils preparing such a service.

Chaplaincy is beginning to permeate the different levels of the college and is a significant strength as part of the pastoral support offered. The Lasallian Mission in Bristol (LAMB) have recently (06/07) been invited to work for one day each week which has allowed for some creative experiences of spirituality for pupils in key stage three. The Sixth Form are supported by a Lay-Chaplain who gives considerable time to the senior students and his presence is deeply valued by them. He has been provided with an excellent office which is well located for the pastoral and spiritual support offered from within it. Senior pupils are challenged to get involved with a number of outreach activities which further raises the profile of the college.

Pupils involved in the residential retreat experiences offered at St Cassian's centre, Kintbury, were animated in their praise of the quality of spiritual experience they had received there and feel able to contribute towards Masses and services within the college.

The provision for Chaplaincy has clearly been addressed but should remain an area for careful development so that all initiatives are co-ordinated and that every pupil and member of staff has equal access to the benefits already being offered.

Grade 1

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

Student achievement at examination level is in the main good and compares well with similar schools. Issues of underachievement of high ability girls (2005/06) have been decisively addressed and appropriate strategies have been put in place to improve this. The department

does benefit from being part of the whole school drive to improve standards and needs to ensure that close monitoring of standards is maintained. Learners are gaining good levels of knowledge and understanding but the development of skills for independent learning through more focused teaching is an area for further development.

Monitoring of pupil performance at KS3 is good and considerable effort has been put into the formulation of attainment levels in the absence of national guidelines and pupil data will shortly be available on-line to allow for a visual record of KS3 progress. The Assessment For Learning (AFL) initiative is in the process of being embedded, but more effective use of the strategies by teachers could increase the level of challenge further for the pupils, especially at examination level. For example the provision of marking schemes and clearer reference to the specific skills and concepts being developed or assessed would help to direct pupils more effectively.

The analysis of data using the Hedger data analysis package enables a very clear identification of performance within the department at KS4 across the college and with other schools within the county. This gives a wide basis of reference for discussion and is reflected in the Departmental development plan. GCSE A*-C grades in RE at 69% was below the college average but above national levels. The Hedger data clearly suggests that a focus on high achieving girls should be a priority. The increase in the number of pupils taking RE last year is likely to have had an affect on the overall pass rate as students with a full range of ability had been entered. Therefore the introduction of the OCR certificate course for less able students this year is a positive decision to ensure some level of success for all pupils and the number of students entered for this course may need to be increased.

The 2006 A/S & A/2 results were in line with departmental expectations. A contributory factor in the results of pupils who did not achieve their full potential last year was the preparation of pupils for the 'Synoptic/connections' paper. (This is the final A2 paper which requires a high level of academic skill to draw together the key components of the whole course) Strategies have been put in place to address this and were comprehensively demonstrated in a revision class observed. 'A' Level group sizes are typically around 11 at A/S and 9 at A/2. The higher proportion of A/S 'A' grades (44%) last year is a positive indicator for this present cohort. The impact of curriculum changes at GCSE in preparation for 'A' level have yet to be fully assessed.

The quality of the marking of pupil work across the Department was not always consistent but examples of outstanding practice were noted. At its best it showed evidence of informed and supportive comments and clearly directed the pupils towards improvement. Evidence of pupil and self assessment was seen in most lessons but a greater use of this across the department could help pupils to be more fully aware of the specific skills being developed. Pupils talk confidently about their own work with a sense of pride and the display of pupil work and achievement throughout the college is a tribute to the value placed on it for the pupils.

Grade 2

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

The Religious Education Department is at present in a stage of transition and is beginning to make effective improvements. The quality of teaching was never less than satisfactory and was mostly good with some outstanding teaching observed within the department. There was evidence of the use of the AFL strategies to improve learning but a more effective development of the teaching skills used in its deployment would serve to extend pupil learning further. Teachers showed a good level of subject knowledge and a variety of resources and teaching strategies including the use of ICT were used effectively. Teaching styles in a few lessons

observed did not challenge the more able pupils to fully deploy the necessary skills of independent learning though their prior learning was good.

Classroom climate in all lessons was very good creating a positive atmosphere of open enquiry in most lessons. Pupils have a high regard for their teachers and an atmosphere of mutual respect was seen throughout the college.

The focus on teaching across the department has led to a number of improvements using national and college strategies but this focus needs to be further extended to ensure that pupils are empowered to become more independent in their learning by having a greater knowledge of the Skills, attitudes, concepts and knowledge being developed in each unit of study. This in turn will be further enhanced by the strategies for assessment already being undertaken by the department and a better use of marking for all students.

The expertise of the department has understandably been focused on the examination classes with some outstanding A2 teaching observed that combined challenge and a skilful use of resources and pace allowing the full engagement and extension of the pupils involved. The expressed wish for a further specialist in the team would certainly ensure that Key Stage Three pupils are effectively inducted into the Religious curriculum and prepared for the examination years.

Grade 2

Quality of the Curriculum

The RE curriculum fulfils the requirements of the *Curriculum Directory for Religious Education* with a clear focus on the person and life of Jesus; the life of the Church and its teachings. The curriculum itself is accessible to pupils of all ages and abilities with appropriate strategies for differentiation observed in lessons. Progress in pupil knowledge, skills and understanding was in the main good and in some cases in key stage five, outstanding.

The requirement of the Bishop's of England and Wales to specifically include the teaching of other Faith traditions within the Religious Education programme needs to be positively addressed so as to enhance pupil appreciation of the wider world of Faith and culture. The present inclusion of aspects of the college career programme and the effective use of PSHE also need to be carefully reviewed as part of the planned curriculum review (07/08) so as to maximise the quality of pupil learning in RE and the impact of their work across the college.

The decision to adjust the Key Stage Four GCSE course with the introduction of a scriptural study of Mark's gospel is part of a deliberate strategy to improve the link with the Key Stage Five 'A' Level. The planned curriculum review (07/08) would do well also to consider the implications of this decision in Key Stage three with a creative focus on the use of scripture and the necessary skills required to study it

The 16-19 General RE programme is a new pilot of the Edexcel RE course which is an accredited course with the possibility of UCAS points being awarded as part of the process. The pupils involved speak highly of the course and the way in which the college has adapted it to allow for positive pupil engagement with the material.

Grade 2

Leadership and management of Religious Education

Leadership of the RE department is outstanding. The department is been led forward through a difficult period of transition in recent years and is making very good progress. The Head of RE is

passionate about the value of the subject in nourishing not only the pupils but the life of the college. The example of the quality of her teaching is enthusiastic and challenging. Pupils and staff are very positive in response to her leadership and she takes a pride in reflecting the vision and ethos of the college in what she does.

Analysis of pupil performance is thorough and realistic and relates well to the context of the pupils. Her development of KS3 Level assessment is a good example of leading her team to focus on monitoring progress. Areas for development and improvement have been quickly identified and decisively addressed in KS4 and KS5.

The development plan for the department is clear and she has an accurate insight as to the strength and depth of her own team. The profile of RE is high across the college and the interdependence with Chaplaincy has remained as a strength. The vision for the future which may involve a further specialist and possibly a full- time chaplain is based on a sound awareness of the needs of the pupils. The leadership of RE is directly monitored by the Head who ensures that accountability remains high but also that the profile of RE is appreciated across the college.

Grade 1