



INSPECTION REPORT

St Gregory's Catholic College

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DFE Number: 800/4608

Headteacher: Mr R Friel

Chair of Governors: Mr P Gilbert

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: October 8-9 2013
Date of previous inspection: October 6-7 2008

Reporting Inspector: Mrs P Landers

Description of School

St Gregory's Catholic College is a smaller than average sized 11-18 Catholic secondary school on the southern outskirts of Bath serving a wide area. It is a specialist college for the performing arts and modern foreign languages. There are 871 pupils on roll, 67% of whom are Roman Catholic. Pupils come from a wide range of Socio-economic backgrounds and 6.65% are in receipt of free school meals. Most students are from white British heritage but there is a small but growing percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The college has recently opened a sixth form in conjunction with St Mark's School. Prior attainment on entry in religious knowledge varies but is in line with what is expected nationally. The spiritual and prayer life of the school is supported by a Chaplaincy Assistant. A Chaplain has been appointed for the sixth form. Approximately 25% of teaching staff are Catholic.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade: Outstanding

Catholic education is outstanding because:

- a vibrant Catholic ethos permeates every area of school life, due in large measure to inspiring school leadership, the strength of the RE department and the well developed Chaplaincy provision,
- pupils make outstanding progress at both key stages,
- the quality of teaching in the religious education department is very good with much outstanding practice,
- there are many excellent opportunities offered to pupils for prayer and worship,
- there are many excellent opportunities for retreats, reflection and outreach to those less fortunate,
- the highly effective pastoral support system looks after each individual's well-being,
- there is excellent support from local parish priests,
- partnership working is fruitful and highly effective.

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

Grade: Outstanding

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop is outstanding because:

- the outstanding vision of the Executive Headteacher, Head of School, the leadership team and governing body,
- the college's self-evaluation document which is an accurate reflection of the college's strengths and where areas of development have already been identified,
- the highly effective head of the Religious Education faculty has a clear understanding of what is needed to further develop the department and how to continue to raise standards,
- planning for improvement which is detailed and closely monitored, with clear measurable objectives,
- a team of well experienced, committed teachers who are willing and able to work with her to drive the department forward,
- the excellent work of the Chaplaincy assistant supporting liturgy and enabling pupils to develop the skills for planning, writing and leading their own liturgies,
- the distinctive ethos of the college which recognises and nurtures each individual as being in the image of God.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to develop pedagogy, to ensure that all groups of pupils are challenged and encouraged to become active, independent learners.
 - Increase opportunities for pupil initiated prayer, including assemblies and classroom based daily acts of worship.
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How good are outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups?

Grade: Outstanding

- The quality of attainment overall is outstanding, which is in line with the college's own assessment. Pupils have a very good attitude towards the college, its ethos and what it provides for them. They are proud to be part of the St Gregory's community and were very positive about it in their interviews with the inspector.
- Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the Catholic life of the college and benefit enormously from it. Pupils are able to articulate the mission of the school and can explain how it translates into their daily lives. The school Creed, written by the pupils, is a particularly impressive representation of the ethos. This ethos is also demonstrated by the exemplary behaviour of its pupils, their respect and care for one another, as well as their outreach to others outside the school, for example the collaborative work done with pupils from a special school. They generously support a wide variety of local, national and international charities. Pupils feel that their voice is heard, their opinions matter and where appropriate these are acted upon. Representation can be made through the School Council or as individuals to any member of staff.
- Pupils' response to prayer and worship is outstanding. They participate in opportunities for prayer with reverence and enthusiasm. Many of them are developing the skills of planning and presenting their own liturgies and tutor group reflections. Liturgies are enhanced by music, drama and dance, and pupils feel that they are encouraged to use their skills and talents in their

prayer and worship. Altar servers, readers and Eucharistic ministers also contribute to liturgical celebrations.

- The weekly voluntary Mass and break time decade of the rosary during October were both attended by prayerful, reverent young people from a variety of year groups. Tutor group prayer every morning is well resourced by the Chaplaincy Assistant. The Chapel Group assists the Chaplaincy Assistant and raises money for charity. In some classrooms, pupils have established a prayer wall. The excellent prayer life makes a highly significant contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development.
- Pupils clearly enjoy RE lessons. They have excellent relationships with their teachers and each other and are keen to do well. Learners understand and can articulate the teachings, beliefs and values of the Catholic Church. They are able to discuss debate and communicate their ideas with confidence.
- Pupils approach their studies conscientiously. In all lessons observed they were attentive and applied themselves well to the tasks. They are keen to contribute to question and answer sessions in class and this enables them to make good progress. They show a well developed ability to identify the purpose of the question and to provide a relevant answer.
- In year 8 pupils were able to understand why Amos was called the prophet of justice and were able to discuss the problems of his time and relate them to contemporary social issues. In year 10 learners gave deep, thoughtful responses to the topic of evil and suffering in the world. By the time they are in year 11, pupils are able to make perceptive comments about the need for forgiveness and reconciliation and give reasoned responses to real life scenarios where people's actions require forgiveness.
- The overall quality of work in pupils' exercise books is very good. Books are generally well presented and display a range of work including independent work as well as more closely teacher directed.
- In KS3, standards are very good and continue to improve because of careful planning and tracking of pupil progress. All pupils show a sound knowledge of the topics studied. They understand the liturgical cycle, have a good knowledge of church feasts and a clear awareness of Christian beliefs.
- At KS4, GCSE results are outstanding with over 40% of pupils achieving A/A* and 82% achieving A*-C in 2013. Results have been consistently high and above the national average. Pupils listen attentively, discuss intelligently and are confident when using thinking skills strategies.
- Different groups of pupils are enabled to do well through differentiation which was evident in all lessons observed, and interesting and challenging extension tasks for the More Able and Talented. Pupils also spoke of the willingness of all RE teachers to give extra lessons to any pupils experiencing difficulties.

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

Grade: Outstanding

- There is a strong and effective focus by leaders on the development and nurturing of the Catholic life of the college. The mission statement is rooted in gospel values and clearly informs and underpins all policies. The ethos of the college is based on the dignity of every human being.
- The Catholic life of the college is communicated by the excellent vision and leadership of the Executive Headteacher, the Head of School and the Leadership team. They meet regularly as the Spiritual Life group. Key to this success are the rigorous self-evaluating procedures that include frequent monitoring, reviews and focused planning for the future. This clear direction and challenging level of professionalism promotes high quality care and education.
- The Religious Education faculty has a prominent profile within the school and the subject is highly valued. The Head of Faculty leads her team effectively and provides very good support for them. She also works well with the Chaplaincy Assistant. The Faculty's self evaluation is accurate and realistic. It provides a clear agenda for future growth.
- The governing body makes an outstanding contribution to the school and its Catholic life. They are committed critical friends, enjoying good relationships with both staff and pupils. They are very knowledgeable about the school and bring considerable expertise to the role of governor. They are involved in the evaluation and development of the RE department through the RE link governor, who plays a very active role. The Christian Vision group monitors the Catholic life of the school. They are very clear about the development needs. The governing body fulfils all canonical and statutory requirements.
- The school is well supported by priests from local parishes and open to advice and training from a wide variety of providers, for example, the Diocesan RE training days. There are close links with parents, who readily take up the invitation to be involved in all aspects of their children's education. The parents' questionnaire was overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of school life.
- Community cohesion is very strong. The school is fully inclusive and all are welcome in the spirit of the gospel with openness and respect for all. Pupils, parents and staff are unanimous in their wholehearted support for St Gregory's and its Catholic mission. The RE curriculum allows pupils to explore other faiths.
- The school takes the lead in a variety of partnerships and transition links are well embedded. Links with primary schools are particularly well developed and this ensures a seamless transition for pupils.

How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?

Grade: Outstanding

- The college has six specialist religious education teachers. All teachers are committed Catholics which has a positive impact on lessons, in particular, the transmission of faith. All are excellent role models. They demonstrate excellent subject knowledge and take full advantage of Diocesan and other INSET.
- Lesson planning is good and often better. All lessons observed during inspection were at least good and several were outstanding. The best lessons were dynamic and interactive, with appropriate pace and challenge and an emphasis on thinking skills. Teachers had high expectations of their pupils and Independent and peer learning were encouraged. As a result,

pupils make outstanding progress. There was an excellent balance between AT1 and AT2 objectives so pupils were clearly learning from as well as about religion.

- A purposeful atmosphere was evident in all lessons and excellent pupil teacher relationships exist. Pupil behaviour was exemplary.
- Although the inspection was very early in the academic year, there was some evidence of formative, challenging marking which set up a dialogue between pupil and teacher, showing how the pupil can improve. Assessment and tracking is well developed and data is used to plan and develop strategies for individual learning. KS4 pupils were well aware of their target grades and knew what they had to do to achieve them.
- The curriculum meets the needs of its pupils. It is carefully planned and well structured. It meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and has been adapted in the light of the new Curriculum directory.
- There are a variety of opportunities for prayer, retreats and well planned liturgical celebrations. A reflective time for staff prayer is provided every Tuesday morning, a decade of the Rosary is said at break time during October and there is a voluntary Mass on Wednesday lunchtime. The Chaplaincy Assistant provides thoughtful, liturgically relevant support and resources for classroom based prayer. The Daily Acts of Worship observed were reverent and prayerful.
- Pupils are offered a wide range of day and residential retreats including visits to Downside and Kintbury. There is a Catholic ethos day each year for all staff which is well received.
- The Chaplaincy Assistant and Head of RE make a considerable contribution to the spiritual life of the school. This will be further enhanced by the appointment of a Chaplain for the Sixth form.
- The Pastoral care system is well developed and highly effective. Pupils feel well supported and that their well-being is the prime consideration.
- The college offers pupils a wide variety of opportunities for charity work and fundraising. Opportunities for charitable outreach include CAFOD, HCPT, the local food bank and providing gifts for the homeless. It has close links with many parts of the world, including with a school in China and with young people in Bethlehem. There is an exchange of pupils with these parts of the world.
- The links with the Wellcome Trust enables Year 10 pupils to learn about issues related to medical ethics, for instance stem cell research, and to devise ways of informing other students through RE, music, dance and drama.