



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Monitoring Visit

BISHOP ULLATHORNE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Leasowes Avenue, Coventry, CV3 6BH

Inspection date	25 th February 2016
Reporting Inspector	Janet Mellor
Assisting Inspector	Ben McArdle

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11-19 years
Number on roll	916
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Mr Robert Ridley
Telephone number	02476 414515
E-mail address	admin@ullathorne.coventry.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	January 2011
DFE School Number	331/4701
Unique Reference Number	103742

Headteacher	Miss Jane Byrne
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Previous inspection:	1
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This inspection:	1
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DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



March 2016

Diocesan Education Service,
Don Bosco House,
Coventry Road,
Coleshill,
B46 3EA

Miss Jane Byrne
Headteacher
Bishop Ullathorne Catholic School
Leasowes Avenue
Coventry
CV3 6BH

Dear Miss Byrne,

Section 48 Monitoring inspection: Thursday 25th February 2016

Thank you for the warm welcome which you, your staff and students gave to the Assistant Inspector, Mr Ben McArdle, and to me, when we inspected your school on 25th February. We want to thank you too for the efficient way in which the pre-inspection information was sent to us, for the documentation made available during the inspection, and for time given by staff, the chaplain, pupils and governors.

The inspection was a "light touch" monitoring inspection because religious education (RE) and the Catholic life of your school were judged at the last inspection to be outstanding and because it is now five years since the last section 48 inspection. The purpose of the inspection was to assess the quality of the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning for RE and Catholic life. In order to be able to make this judgement we read your self-evaluation documentation, interviewed senior leaders, the chaplain, governors including parents, and groups of pupils. We studied your evidence folders and examples of the pupils' work. We completed nine observations of parts of RE lessons, two of which were with senior leaders. We attended collective worship with a tutor group, a year group assembly and the weekly Mass.

As a result of your own evaluations, you made the judgement that your school is outstanding in the quality of RE and of Catholic life. We are pleased to confirm that this judgement is accurate.

The school evaluates the quality of teaching in RE as outstanding and never less than consistently good, and this is a secure judgement. Lesson observation enables a constant analysis of teacher performance within a framework of striving always for the best. There is a strong coherence in the work of the department which is shown in the detailed and highly purposeful forward planning, stemming from vigorous and encouraging leadership. Lessons have precisely stated objectives which are pursued with an emphasis on correct use of terminology, carefully scaffolded questioning, well chosen resources and appropriate activities so that pupils make excellent progress. Differentiated work is evident, but teachers rely more particularly on supporting pupils to complete work and achieve aspirational targets. Above all planning reflects high expectations, which are evident, for instance, in sixth form work where quality scholarship and detailed explanations of text are required.

Curriculum planning means that already in Year 7 pupils meet complex philosophical ideas and quickly develop analytical skills which they apply in new situations. The school has evaluated positively the emphasis given to Biblical knowledge in its choice of examination syllabuses and schemes of work. This leads, for example, to pupils in Year 8 being able to offer supporting Gospel evidence in a discussion of the humanity and divinity of Christ. Curriculum design also takes into consideration the future requirements of GCSE through an introduction to Judaism, also in Year 8. The extensive subject knowledge and the robust experience of many of the RE teachers mean that the department's expertise in planning for GCSE and A level examination courses is exemplary. Pupils respond with excellent behaviour and a consistently high level of engagement in lessons, working very positively in pairs and in groups, which enable both support

and challenge. Surveys of pupils' attitudes to RE overwhelmingly show enjoyment of lessons and this is corroborated in surveys of parents' views. They appreciate debates and discussions and rapidly learn how to evaluate concepts and respect the views of others. In the sixth form the general RE course includes the Year of Mercy as well as current events and ethical issues. Students are confident and articulate in expressing their mission to form an active Christian community but the course has not yet been fully formalised.

Data analysis of attainment and progress is detailed and productive, particularly in terms of pupil groups. The gap between the performance of those pupils for whom the school receives extra funding and other pupils is a high priority for the school. In RE strategies have been developed which were seen to be bearing fruit but close analysis of their long-term success has not yet been determined. The last inspection raised the issue of the gap between the performance of boys and girls at GCSE. Over time there has been significant narrowing of that difference. Outcomes at A level are also rightly judged to be excellent, with a consistently high percentage of the top grades. Data analysis confirms that the vast majority of measures show positive outcomes. The school has also sought external monitoring of Year 8 and the Sixth Form, and in this RE has been singled out for particular praise. This has by no means engendered a spirit of complacency, as is shown in the response to the small percentage drop in overall A*-C grades at GCSE in 2015 from those achieved in the previous year. Robust action planning is in place also in recognition of the prior learning data of the current Year 11, and estimates for 2016 indicate that this is already effective.

Analysis of assessment procedures has led to the development of a new rigorous marking policy, focussing on enabling pupils to refine their work and engaging them more closely in an awareness of their rate of progress and target grades. Initial evaluation has rightly judged this to be successful and has identified the power of the process to raise achievement.

The Catholic life of the school has its heart in the RE department, but it is judged very firmly by all stakeholders as a vital part of the whole functioning of the school. The inspection showed that this is clearly the case. Several senior leaders are RE teachers and they have key responsibilities within the school. Forward planning for events in the Catholic life of the school are calendared and prioritised. The school's mission statement and the leadership of the headteacher are central, and her unequivocal prioritising of the spiritual life means that the school stands out not only for the quality of planning and meticulous evaluation of provision, but also for the focus on empowering pupil leadership. This is exemplified through the deployment of a committed non-exclusivist chaplaincy team of pupils whose work includes highly valued support of form tutors for collective worship, leading assemblies, fundraising and many other initiatives. Engagement of the sixth form has led to an adaptation of the school's mission, specific to their cohort, which is realised through their work with younger pupils, within the local community and in the Catholic feeder schools. Monitoring by senior staff of collective worship leads to feedback to staff and students and consideration of further support as appropriate.

The governing body has a wide range of skills and experience. It is regularly involved in the discussion of evaluation and improvement planning documentation, offering support and challenge, and seeking to find reasons for any weakness and barriers to improvement. The strength of the school's Catholic life is reflected for example in the very positive feedback from the team of priests following the opportunity for the sacrament of reconciliation. Governors and the priest chaplain evaluate Catholic life as 'natural' and 'inherent in everything', and judge it to be incorporated in the vision of educating the whole person. Evidence from this inspection showed that an evaluation of spiritual and moral development and vocational awareness across the curriculum has led to the prioritisation of on-going training for staff with an involvement of pupil perceptions. This has resulted in teachers' appreciation of how their subject contributes, for example in history in the Elizabethan settlement, in Spanish in virtues, and in maths in the wonder of creation. The priest chaplain works closely with the Music department in developing music for liturgy.

Bishop Ullathorne Catholic School's evaluation of its Catholic life is a constant focus of attention. The inspection showed that the headteacher, senior management and governors are outstanding in their planning, monitoring and evaluation, and tireless in pursuing their goals.

In order to assist the school in its excellent work, the following targets are proposed:

- Ensure that planning documentation appropriately indicates any issues that have arisen from evaluations, therefore spotlighting the reason for actions
- Formalise the sixth form General RE course so that it becomes a more structured part of provision

Yours sincerely

Janet Mellor
Diocesan Inspector