



**Department for
Christian Education**

MONITORING VISIT at St Cuthbert's Catholic High School on 7 October 2015

THESE ARE AREAS TO CELEBRATE

- Governors and school leadership are clear in their direction of Catholic life and Religious Education. This is exemplified in the clarity of the Section 48 Self Evaluation Document. It is informed and practical. There are cohesive links with the documentation already in place to support Catholic life and Collective Worship. The same high standard is embodied within the expression of the Religious Education Department Annual Review. Their contents have been produced by governors and leadership as a joint enterprise. The compilation is testimony to professional expertise and depth of spiritual understanding.
- The governors are to be commended for their voluntary and effective dedication. A skills audit has ensured a quality membership, which includes the priest chaplain whose daily ministry is highly regarded.
- The Mission Statement includes a commitment to living life in all its fullness. The content is known, owned and shared. This is expressed tangibly by the fact that members of the school know how to live as a Christian community. Care and compassion is evident in the pastoral systems and throughout the whole ethos based on mutual respect and common good.
- The pupils interviewed were a credit to the school. They feel a total sense of belonging. There were several comments about how the careful maintenance of the school site is an expression of a school that means business. They gave examples of wider ranging social involvement both in school and for the community. They were able to link both to the remit of the Mission Statement and to the associated challenges set by Religious Education.
- Collective Worship is celebrated as Sacred Time in house groups, whether in house year or form groups. Delivery is well supported by weekly themes and resources related to the Liturgical Year. There is abundant scope for creative pupil and staff leadership and involvement. This was particularly evident on the monitoring visit. Pupils rate their prayer and worship because it includes time for personal space and reflection. The content motivates their daily lives and causes involvement in Catholic life.

- Leadership and management of Religious Education has continued to grow in confidence due to management appraisal and support of ongoing developments. The departmental bar for improvement has been set high. There is leadership by example. The staffing structure has emerged from a period of serious instability which has now been rectified. Professional appraisal is entirely fit for purpose. The department is fully aware of what needs to be done. Members are spurred on by the fact that achievements to date have been celebrated. There is generous access to continued professional development.
- Achievement in Religious Education, whilst a cause for departmental concern, is developing well. The school is set upon wholesale improvement in this area. Positive signs are already evident in the rising proportions of those making three or more levels of improvement. Even so, the department recognises that much ground remains to be covered. Concerning GCSE, several mitigating factors have to be considered. Prior to the last inspection rates of performance were measured against almost 50% cohort entry. In recent years the school has entered all candidates. Whilst the performance trend has been slowly increasing, it took a serious dip in the last academic year, which coincided with staffing issues.
- Standards in teaching are improving. There is an effective process for teacher appraisal. The department is to set up a process of peer observation for the sharing of best practice. Teaching is strong overall with much evidence of best practice that reaches the highest standards. Planning is concise. There is much creativity. Pupils are clear about their own progress routes. There is effective differentiation. There is much scope for independent progress and for peer collaboration and assessment. Pupils are encouraged by skilful questioning and celebration of effort. Teaching and learning is on course, over time, to make an impact upon raising achievement.
- Marking follows the schools policy which is efficient and a motivating factor for pupils. Its process is consistent and in-depth. It ensures a meaningful dialogue between teacher and pupil, which in turn drives progress. Areas for development are in all cases tackled at an early stage. This too can only assist in raising achievement.
- Formative and end of task assessment is linked to the marking process and so equally as effective. Its benchmarks are accurately set against levels of attainment and GCSE grade boundaries.
- The curriculum fulfils diocesan and national requirements for time allocation and content. The content is well set to embrace reform in both key stages. The new

Key Stage 3 framework has been implemented. The entire content is embedded with studies of other world faiths and religions. Citizenship is implicit.

- Pupils cited the high standards of spiritual, moral, social and cultural elements readily identifiable within Religious Education. They also referred to the Gospel values of the school expressed through the everyday commitment to Mission. For these reasons they are proud to be part of St Cuthbert's Catholic High School.
- Overall there is a notable commitment throughout the school to, in its own words, "Making it better."

THESE ARE AREAS FOR CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT

- Maintain the quality of the Section 48 Self Evaluation Document as a team expression of continued development.
- In Key Stage 3 take full advantage of the rising standards in teaching and learning to drive pupils' continually increasing levels of performance. This in turn will provide solid foundation for progress at Key Stage 4.
- Continue and increase the pace towards high performance at GCSE. The target is already set to at least reach the national average benchmark for Religious Education. The process should include strategies in place and continued attendance at the diocesan workshops.
- Strengthen further the process for delivery and monitoring of Collective Worship. Ensure its provision in those few form periods where it is not currently happening. It is also recommended that in-service provision focuses upon effective use of the first-class weekly prayer resources by all staff.

Monitoring Visitor Dcn Paul Mannings