

DIOCESE OF LEEDS DBI



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

ST. MARY'S, MENSTON

Bradford Rd, West Yorkshire, LS29 6AE

Inspection date	November 2008
Reporting Inspector	Mr. A. Slade
Inspection carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005	

Type of School	Catholic Secondary
URN	108094
Age range of pupils	11-18
Number on roll	1168
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of Governors	Mr R. Lavery
Headteacher	Mr. M. Pyle
Religious Education Subject Leader	Mr K. Albrow
Date of previous inspection	February 2006

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades 1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3 = Satisfactory 4 = Inadequate
Overall effectiveness of the school	2	
Leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school	2	
The quality of Collective Worship	1	
Achievement and standards in Religious Education	1	
The quality of provision: teaching and learning in Religious Education	1	
The quality of provision: the Religious Education curriculum	2	
Leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education	2	
<i>The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements</i>		

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Mary's, Menston is an 11-18 voluntary aided school serving the parishes of Addingham, Burley in Wharfedale, Horsforth, Ilkley, Otley, Pudsey and Yeadon. Although pupils come from the full spectrum of social and economic backgrounds, their social and economic background is generally above average. The planned admission number is 180. The school is oversubscribed and there are 1168 pupils on roll of whom 1124 are Roman Catholics. The proportion of pupils qualifying for free school meals is well below the national average as is the percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs. The percentage of pupils with English as second language (0.8%) is below the national average. 42 of the 83 teachers are Catholics.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St Mary's is a good Catholic school with some outstanding features. At its heart is the Mission Statement which states that the work of the school "*is the spiritual, moral, intellectual, aesthetic and physical development of each pupil. It seeks to put Christ at the centre of every activity.*" The school seeks to implement the Statement at every opportunity and it is a dynamic thread informing policies, planning and activities. More significantly, it is a living ideal which permeates the daily life and ethos of the school. Following on from the determined Christian leadership of the head, supported by senior leadership and the governors the school is blessed with high quality and effective provision for Religious Education and collective worship.

Improvement since the last inspection

The six specifically religious issues arising from the last Section 48 report in February 2006 have been addressed but not all of them completely so. Departmental monitoring and evaluation procedures are well embedded, the use of Information Communication Technology is now a major strength of the department, the lay chaplain's role is being developed and understood. School-parish links have been strengthened as seen especially in the appointment of a parish youth worker. However, there has been no development of an appropriate General RE course for Years 12 and 13, and the future structure of leadership for the RE department is still under review.

Capacity to improve

The school's self-evaluation is outstanding. There is a clear awareness of what the school is doing, what needs to be done for even further improvements and a realistic strategy in order to achieve this. This applies both to the school as a whole and to the work of the Religious Education department

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue planning for the appointment of a head of Religious Education department on a par with other major subjects.
- Plan the introduction of a specific programme of Religious Education for all students in Key Stage 5.
- In Years 7 and 8, implement the directives of the Bishops and England and Wales that 10% of curriculum time be allocated to RE.
- Formulate and clarify a strategy for the work of the Chaplaincy team

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are good with outstanding features. There is a total personal and professional commitment to the widely known Mission Statement and its implementation. The Statement, supported by objectives which are reviewed annually, gives cohesion and purpose: policies are linked and co-ordinated and this ensures that this is a Catholic community of very high calibre. The aim that the school “*seeks to put Christ at the centre of every activity*” is consciously adopted. The leadership team’s commitment ensures that all matters pertaining to the school as a Catholic community are fully in place: staffing, resources, chaplaincy, extra time for religious activities and in the provision of high quality pastoral care which includes the employment of a Catholic Care Worker. This care feeds into academic success. Prayers with a meditation are said at staff briefings. Mentoring is a valued aspect of school life. There are outstanding standards of behaviour, relationships and widespread concern for others. Standards of inclusion are very high with a very low number of exclusions. The result of this is a community and family atmosphere and a genuinely Christian ethos – as frequently commented upon during the inspection and as one pupil stated “*At this school you are recognised.*” To develop this further, a recent in-service training day was devoted entirely to “Catholic Ethos.” This was attended by all staff, teaching and non-teaching as well as governors. The governors, especially the very active chairman, give active and informed support to the school and its religious aims.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Provision for collective worship is outstanding. The school provides a wide range of liturgical services and opportunities which reflect the liturgical life of the Church as well as the school’s own year. There is a good and relevant programme of year and form assemblies and these is great respect shown by pupils during them. Pupils’ Planners contain varied prayers for use in form time. The school is fortunate to have the services of a priest chaplain, two lay chaplains and support from local priests. Their work, covering liturgical, pastoral and RE matters, is widely appreciated but it would be useful to formulate an information and policy strategy. Most significantly, there is a beautiful chapel, with the Blessed Sacrament reserved and it provides a haven of peace for prayer and reflection. It is used for form Masses and various prayer services. In addition, there are a Welcome Mass and Leavers’ Mass which are deeply appreciated. There are services of Reconciliation in Advent and Lent. Many departments, especially music, art and drama make a contribution to the quality of the religious services. There is an excellent programme of retreats: Year 7 have a day of Welcome, Year 10 have days of recollection; Year 9 pupils have a day retreat at Myddleton Grange and Year 11 have the opportunity to have a 2-day residential retreat there. Year 12 are encouraged to go to Holy Island for a 2 day retreat: they are accompanied by the priest chaplain. They spoke highly of its value, as one stated: “*I learnt to find beauty in things I had previously considered boring, dull or worthless.*” A group of 34 pilgrims from years 10 and 12 make an annual pilgrimage to Lourdes. There was a recent day trip to Walsingham. There is a great deal of work and planning by staff and the chaplaincy team to ensure that these events are successful.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are outstanding. Pupils’ work and progress is well monitored and they make good progress relative to their ability. The high standards in Key Stage 3 are on a par with other subjects. The GCSE results are outstanding. In 2006, 86% of candidates obtained Grades A* to C. In 2007, this figure was 88% and in 2008 was 87%. All candidates obtained grades A* to G. and almost all pupils are entered. These results are well above the national average and amongst the best results in the school. All the AS and A2 Theology students passed with a significant number of Grade As. These results stem from effective teaching and the well stimulated enthusiasm of pupils. There are additional strategies including a revision programme for GCSE and the use of revision books devised by teachers - thanks to teachers’ commitment to provide extra time. Generous donations are made to many charities with a particular emphasis on five: CAFOD, Catholic Care, St Gemma’s Hospice, Martin House and a South African school as part of the Bambisanani partnership. Pupils fully understand the work of these charities and there are many cases of personal involvement such as the recent visit by nine students to the poverty stricken Nkandia region of Kwa Zulu Natal with reciprocal visits from government Ministers. There is an outward looking, Christian ethos pervading the Sixth Form: one special initiative relates to CAFOD. Students not only raise money but visit classes to explain the work of CAFOD and have devised and implemented a programme of visits to feeder primary schools. Such is the quality of this programme that it has now become a blueprint for national use. A group of sixth formers have also started

their own charity, BASIK, (Build a School in Kenya) with a personal involvement after a visit by a student. There is a Christmas Hamper scheme for local elderly people. Justice and Peace, Fairtrade and Youth SVP also feature in the school. These actions make a significant contribution towards social cohesion and the cultural and moral development of pupils.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The quality of teaching and learning in curriculum Religious Education is outstanding. Lessons are planned with dynamism. Teaching is well paced and purposeful, delivered in a cheerful, confident and enthusiastic manner thus eliciting thoughtful responses from pupils. The tone of lessons is friendly and industrious. A variety of teaching styles is used with excellent use of information communication technology. Teachers show a real concern for pupils' academic progress and their personal welfare. The teachers are well qualified, well-informed and have a personal commitment to their subject. There are five non-specialist teachers but they are experienced and committed and thanks to exceptionally well organised support they are fully integrated into the work of the department and enhance its progress. There is a variety of material to suit the needs of pupils of all abilities. Pupils' routine work is marked in line with the school's marking policy and pupils welcome the quality of teachers' comments. Whilst the teachers have a real concern for the academic progress of pupils, this is not at the expense of concern for the pupils individually nor for appreciating the inherent value of the topics being taught. Pupils have high regard for the teachers and subject, as one pupil remarked "*In RE you can make a contribution to the lesson.*" They particularly enjoy the controversial topics and the discussions relating to them. Progress is enhanced by pupils' excellent behaviour and cooperative group work. Relationships are excellent and are an outstanding feature of the school. There is good display work, in all the classrooms and public places, with a happy blend of both pupils' and professionally produced material. The department is fortunate to have a suite of rooms and full use is made of the facilities thereby provided.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

Overall the quality of the Religious Education curriculum is good with both satisfactory and outstanding features. The National Catholic Curriculum Directory is fully implemented in Key Stage 3 and in Key Stage 4 the AQA syllabus enables pupils to study Catholic issues: for example during the inspection lessons dealt with crime and punishment, marriage and relationships. One lesson included time for personal meditation. There are constant high demands made on the pupils. The very popular Sixth Form Theology course explores issues in great depth for example one observed lesson dealt with the morality of environmental concerns. It was encouraging to notice that the emphasis was on pupils' personal understanding, not just an analysis in order to pass examinations. Whilst pupils are encouraged to think issues through for themselves, there is a clear backcloth of Catholic teaching. The directive from the bishops' of England and Wales that 10% of curriculum time be given to Religious Education is observed except in Years 7 and 8. In the Sixth Form the entitlement of all students to some formal Religious Education is not observed, even though there is a religious dimension to parts of the General Studies course. These two issues need to be addressed. The curriculum includes a study of aspects of other Christian faiths and world religions, particularly Islam and Judaism. There are strong links with other departments. The department makes a major input to the Personal, Health Social and Citizen Education programme. Thus the Religious Education department makes a significant contribution to the pupils' moral, cultural and spiritual development.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education are good. This is because there is a determination and cohesion present in the leadership from the head teacher, senior management, governors and the head of faculty which includes Religious Education. The RE department has a subject leader but the status of the RE department should be reflected in the appointment of a head of department on a par with other major subjects. Good management does exist thanks to the efforts and co-operation of the faculty head and the subject leader, including monitoring. This has resulted in confident and excellent team work and a commonality of purpose. An excellent ethos permeates the department. Books and resources are up-to-date and technology is exceptionally well used. The headteacher and senior leadership team give active support – as seen in the quality of staff appointments, and the provision of excellent

facilities and resources. The department has an excellent improvement plan and a wide range of policies which are in line with those of the school. They clearly demonstrate a determination to improve standards. Departmental documentation is quite outstanding, including the department's own Mission Statement. The governors are fully aware of the work of the department, thanks to their well informed and enthusiastic chairman.