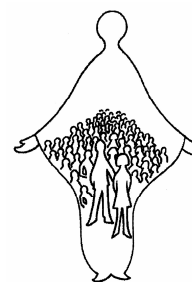


SALFORD DIOCESE
INSPECTION REPORT



MOUNT CARMEL ROMAN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL AND SPECIALIST SCIENCE COLLEGE

Wordsworth Rd. Accrington Lancashire BB5 0LU

Inspection date July 2009

Reporting Inspector Mr. A. Slade

Inspection carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Catholic Secondary
URN	119804
Age range of pupils	11-16
Number on roll	784
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of Governors	Mr. D. Ford
Headteacher	Miss K. Ryan
Head of Religious Education	Mrs. C. Lutman
Date of previous inspection	November 2005

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	3	
The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education	2	
The quality of 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

Mount Carmel Roman Catholic High School and Specialist Science College is an 11-16 voluntary aided school serving the Accrington parishes of St. Anne and St. Joseph as well as St. Mary, Oswaldtwistle and St. Mary, Clayton-le-Moors. A high proportion of students have a social and economic background of high deprivation. The planned admission number is 162 and there are 784 pupils on roll of whom 522 Catholics. The proportion of pupils qualifying for free school meals is 13.7%. 241 are identified as having special educational needs and 18 have a statutory statement of special educational need. The majority of pupils have English as their first language but up to one fifth are of Asian heritage and there are 30 non-English speaking Polish children. Attainment on entry is below average. 23 of the 49 teachers (46%) are Catholics.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

Mount Carmel is a good Catholic school. This is because its Mission Statement, which states that “With Christ at the heart of our community, we believe in the dignity and worth of each individual,” clearly permeates the school’s policies and actions. This applies especially to those policies which make important contributions to the school as a Catholic community. These cover worship, commitment to Religious Education, moral teaching, anti-bullying and links with the local community. These policies and ideals have a clear impact on the daily activities and ethos of the school. Thanks to the dynamic and determined leadership of the headteacher, supported enthusiastically by senior leadership and the governors, the Mission Statement’s aim to “nurture pupils’ gifts... and encourage them to witness Christ’s teaching” is actively implemented. Consequently the school has high quality and effective provision for Religious Education and collective worship.

Improvement since the last inspection

The three issues arising from the last in Section 48 in November 2005 have been addressed but not yet fully implemented. Steps have been taken to increase in-service training relating to the spiritual life of the school, including a day devoted to the distinctiveness of the Catholic school, and the provision of high quality resources to support collective worship in form time and assemblies. The provision of a prayer room has proved to be very difficult because of lack of space but the issue is under constant review and is a central feature of the plans for the new building as part of Building Schools for the Future. The Key Stage 4 Religious Education syllabus is kept under detailed review and analysis and results have shown a steady improvement in pupil attainment.

Capacity to improve

The school’s self-evaluation is outstanding. The development plans of the school as a whole and of the Religious Education department in particular demonstrate a clear awareness of what the school is doing, what needs to be done to make effective improvements and a realistic strategy in order to achieve these. The school’s self-evaluation form is a high quality document.

What the school should do to improve further

- Maintain the efforts and policies to improve the Religious Studies GCSE results even further including an increase in the proportion of students taking GCSE.
- Maintain and develop strategies to ensure the removal of discrepancies in the results between boys and girls.
- Review the curriculum time allocated to Religious Education in Key Stage 3 to bring it up to 10% in line with the recommendations of the Bishops’ Conference.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are good. Inspiration is clearly in evidence from the staff's personal and professional commitment to the school's Mission Statement and its implementation. It states that, "With Christ at the heart of our community... our aim is to nurture individuals' gifts by providing a caring environment....We encourage students to witness Christ's teaching." As a result, this is a high quality Catholic institution. Key policies stem from a clear determination to implement them within a Christian context. The policies relating to behaviour, anti-bullying and sex education reflect this although it would be helpful to tie them more explicitly to the Mission Statement. The governors and headteacher share a determination to ensure that all matters pertaining to the school as a Catholic institution are fully in place. Illustrations of this include the appointment of Religious Education specialists, a suite of dedicated rooms with good teaching resources, additional time for religious activities and services and of high quality pastoral care. The Catholic ethos is reflected in school development planning and the determination to create an inclusive structure within which all are welcomed and their gifts appreciated. The links with the Polish and Asian communities are good examples of the school's contribution to community cohesion. The governors, particular the chair and the link governor for Religious Education, give active and informed support to the school and its religious aims. Three local priests are also governors and their support to governance and the worshipping life of the school is much appreciated.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Provision for collective worship is outstanding. This is because the school provides high quality liturgical services and opportunities covering the whole the liturgical year and the life of the school. Form tutors have an excellent prayer booklet and use a programme devised by "Just Youth" along with a worship resource on CD and the school network. Prayers are said at staff briefings. Three local priests are very actively involved in providing a range of services including school Masses, class Masses and the much appreciated Welcome and Leavers' Masses. There are whole school celebrations for Advent, Christmas and Lent. One highlight is the Holy Week Walk "up the Coppice" when the Stations of the Cross, in conjunction with local parishes, are said on a local hillside. During the inspection an exceptionally high quality year assembly involved many pupils. This included music, drama and the use of IT to reinforce the message which was fully religious, cultural and social. Pupils were fully involved and attentive. It was a genuine religious experience. Many departments, especially music, art and drama, contribute to the worshipping life of the school. The one deficiency is the absence of a room or space dedicated to prayer but there are plans for a chapel in the school's building programme. The needs of Muslim students are met through visits to local mosques and the school has links with the local Asian community. Pupils in Year 11 can attend a residential retreat at Brettagh Holt. This is greatly valued as a means of developing moral awareness and a local priest is actively involved. Pilgrimages are organised to visit Ladyewell Shrine.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are satisfactory with some good features. In Key Stage 3 pupils make progress relative to their ability. However, whilst many pupils make good progress in Key Stage 4 there is an overall picture of minus Value Added. The GCSE results in Religious Education show that in 2007 63% of candidates obtained Grades A* to C, rising to 70% in 2008 and 100% obtaining grades A* to G, amongst the best in the school. One candidate gained full marks in both GCSE papers. However, these positive results disguise the fact that a significant number of Year 11 pupils did not take the GCSE full course. Also, the results obtained by boys were much lower than those obtained by girls. The situation was exacerbated by some discontinuity in staffing. On the positive side, nearly all the remaining pupils were entered for Entry level and over half of these obtained a distinction or merit. As a result almost every pupil left with a formal qualification in Religious Education. There is a need to increase the numbers taking the full GCSE course and to remove the discrepancy in results obtained between boys and girls. Since the 2008 results the stability of staffing and the adoption of several new measures, including a new approach in Year 9, are genuine reasons for optimism and belief that results will improve. There is imaginative and generous support for a wide range of charities such as the Diocesan Rescue Society, Christmas hampers distributed by the Knights of St Columba, CAFOD, Operation Christmas Child (sending parcels to children affected by war, natural disasters and extreme poverty) Macmillan Nurses and Cancer Support and Mary's Meals. These actions make a significant contribution towards community cohesion and the cultural development of pupils.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The inspector agrees with the school's judgement that the quality of teaching and learning in curriculum Religious Education is good but there are some outstanding features. The department is systematically line-managed. The planning for lessons is very good and teaching is well paced, purposeful, demanding and effective. The lessons observed during the inspection were outstanding because of the enthusiasm and the successful treatment of difficult topics such as "Religion and Politics", "The problem of evil" and "Homelessness." The atmosphere in the lessons is that of friendliness conducive to learning and progress. Teachers use a variety of styles and make good use of information communication technology. At the same time there is obvious concern for personal progress and personal welfare. All the teachers are very well qualified and demonstrate knowledge and love for the subject. There is a variety of material to suit the needs of pupils of all abilities. Marking of pupils' routine work takes place but at the end of each module grades are awarded and helpful comments made to support pupils in achieving higher standards. Pupils know and understand this system. When pupils were asked what they thought about their lessons replies included, "Teacher makes it easy for us to learn," "We're always on the go," and "Teachers are the best thing about this school." Progress is helped by pupils' co-operation and good behaviour. Postcards are sent home in recognition of good behaviour and work. There is good display work in classrooms and in public areas.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

Overall the quality of the Religious Education curriculum is good with outstanding features. This is because the Salford diocesan syllabus has been not only fully implemented and adapted in Key Stage 3 but full preparation is in progress in anticipation of a revised edition. A special strength is the work being done for this by the second in department. In Key Stage 4 the Edexcel syllabus enables pupils to explore and learn about Catholic issues, including many very sensitive ones, in depth. Whilst there is a desire that pupils perform well in their examinations there is a clear priority that they have a full understanding, and appreciation of, the personal impact of topics. Catholic teaching is not neglected in the context of encouraging pupils to think issues through for themselves. The recommendation from the bishops' of England and Wales that 10% of curriculum time be given to Religious Education is fully observed in Key Stage 4 but only 8% is allocated in Key Stage 3. Teachers share their ideas and resources - a task made easy by the suite of rooms and by their co-operative and friendly approach. The curriculum includes a study of aspects of other Christian faiths and world religions, particularly Islam, Hinduism and Judaism thus making a major contribution to community cohesion. The department makes a major input to the personal, health social and citizen Education programme as it is the main deliverer of the school's sex education programme. Thus the 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 with some outstanding features. This is because there is a very obvious determination by the headteacher, senior leaders, governors and team leader to prioritise the work and aims of the Religious Education department. The curriculum leader is enthusiastic and very well informed and the department is greatly assisted by the equally determined second in department. All teachers have great confidence in the head of department's leadership which is characterised by a cheerful style and clear ideas of what is required to raise standards. There is excellent team work and high levels of co-operation on a formal and informal level, assisted by the proximity of teaching spaces in the suite of four adjacent rooms. This suite in itself is a tribute to the determination of the headteacher to ensure that the subject is well resourced. Books and resources are up-date and technology is very well used. The headteacher and senior leadership team give active support, evidence for which is seen in the staffing structure, the appointment of specialist teachers and the provision of excellent facilities and resources. The department has an improvement plan which clearly demonstrates a determination to improve standards and to work within the priorities of the school. Departmental documentation is very thorough. The governors are fully aware of the work of the department and give active and well-informed support, especially through the link-governor and the informed, dedicated and enthusiastic chair.