

**SALFORD DIOCESE  
INSPECTION REPORT**



**SS. JOHN FISHER AND THOMAS MORE  
ROMAN CATHOLIC HUMANITIES COLLEGE**

**Gibfeld Road Colne Lancashire BB8 8JT**

Inspection date April 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 119785

Age range of pupils 11-16

Number on roll 751

Appropriate authority The governing body

Chair of Governors Mrs. M. Thomas

Headteacher Mr. C. Bohills

Head of Religious Education Mrs. J. Thompson

Date of previous inspection January 2004

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

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

Ss. John Fisher and Thomas More Roman Catholic Humanities College is an 11-16 voluntary aided high school serving the parishes of Sacred Heart (Colne), Holy Saviour and St John Southworth (Nelson), Holy Trinity (Brierfield), St. Joseph (Barnoldswick, St. Patrick (Earby) and Ss. Peter and Paul (Barrowford). The ability range of pupils on intake is slightly below the national average. The planned admission number is 150 and there are 751 pupils on roll. 514 of the learners (69%) are Roman Catholics. 9.3% of pupils qualify for free school meals and this is slightly below the national average. 102 (13.6%) are identified as having special educational needs and 38 have a statutory statement of special educational need. 22 of the 44 teachers (45%) are Catholics

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL**

Ss. John Fisher and Thomas More is a good Catholic school with some outstanding features. A major reason for this is the manner in which its Mission Statement is integral to the Catholic life of the school. The Mission Statement states that the school seeks *“to recognise the worth and dignity of all people, deliver a challenging high quality education....offer young people a reason for living and hoping”*. This is underlined in the school prayer, written by two pupils, which asks God to *‘help us in forming a community in which all our bright colours can shine.’* The Mission Statement is a cohesive force within the school especially in regard to policies and their implementation. The headteacher and senior staff provide good professional and personal leadership, and in turn they are supported by the active and informed support of the governors. They all work to ensure that the religious life of the school and the teaching of Religious Education are as good as possible.

### **Improvement since the last inspection**

The last Section 23 inspection in January 2004 raised no key issues but it had been agreed that three matters would be addressed: the monitoring and assessment of targets and achievements as well as the planning and auditing of PHSE and Citizenship. The latter has been fully addressed. The other two are part of an active and on-going process.

### **Capacity to improve**

The school's self-evaluation is outstanding. Plans for the school in general and the Religious Education department in particular are based on a realistic assessment of the current situation, an awareness of what needs to be improved and sound suggestions and methodology to effect the improvements. Underpinning these plans is a clear determination to drive forward the school in general and its religious dimensions in particular.

### **What the college should do to improve further**

- Maintain and develop the processes for determining levels of performance and targets for improvements, particularly at Key Stage 3, along with their use in order to improve pupil performance.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL**

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding. Maintaining the ethos of the school as set out in the Mission Statement is a clear priority. The Statement is the source of coherence in the school's plans and policies and is subject to regular review. Those policies which have a bearing on the school as a Catholic institution clearly reflect Catholic teaching and practice. They have a significant application in the pastoral welfare of pupils which is a special strength of the school and to which there is a financial, physical and moral commitment. Relationships in the school are outstanding; resulting in what staff and pupils agree is a good community atmosphere. The head and senior staff, well supported by the governors, provide effective leadership and example. The priority given to Catholic life and the Religious Education department is seen in the staffing structure, a new suite of rooms, good resources, a chapel and above all the appointment of a lay chaplain. An Ethos Day is planned for 2009 and a school Mission for 2010. There is a commitment to inclusion. Pupils and staff of other faiths are welcomed and there are links with a local girls' Islamic school. There is widespread use of "*Building Bridges*", a local plan to enhance inter-faith relationships. Pupils are encouraged to adopt responsibility in the Crossroads and Rainbow schemes, the latter having a special relevance after recent tragic events. The governors give active and informed support, particularly through their regular involvement in the chaplaincy group and formal contacts.

## **THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

The quality of collective worship is outstanding. This is because there is a comprehensive range of prayers and liturgies which cover everything from daily prayers to Feast Days and liturgical seasons. A voluntary Mass is celebrated weekly and there are Masses for each class by rota as well as on special occasions and Feast Days. Services of Reconciliation are held at appropriate times. These services are stimulated by the dynamic lay chaplain and the chaplaincy team which consists of staff, parish clergy and several governors. The year assembly on the theme of communication was observed during inspection kept the full attention of pupils because it was highly relevant to them. The class Mass observed was a very prayerful and reverent experience with the participation of pupils including non-Catholics. There is cross-curricular involvement with music, art, drama and technology playing their part. Pupils commented that the assemblies and Masses invariably arouse their interest and enthusiasm. This ethos is supported by a well-furnished chapel which pupils can also visit for quiet reflection. The chaplain plays an active and valued role in this and in the pastoral life of the school. "*You can go to talk to her and she's a good talker and listener*" as one pupil remarked. She offers her services to local primary schools and has developed web pages with prayers and suggestions. Pupils in Year 7 have been able to attend a residential retreat at Ampleforth. Years 8 and 11 go to Castlerigg Manor, Keswick. There are "days with a difference" where the whole school looks at issues such as the Holocaust and CAFOD. These are very popular and much appreciated. "*You feel close to God*" was the comment of one pupil. Many remarked about the opportunity that the retreats gave for bonding and getting to know others. It is intended that pupils in all years have an opportunity to have a retreat experience.

## **ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are good overall with some satisfactory elements. At Key Stage 3 a system for assessing progress and developing target setting is in place but not yet universally applied. This requires further development but the department staff are aware of this and are taking steps to introduce a uniform system. Learners make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, almost all pupils are entered for GCSE, one fifth of whom are entered for the Short Course. GCSE results in Religious Education are good. In 2005, out of 139 candidates 119 (85%) obtained grades A\* to C. In 2006, 78% of the 110 candidates entered for the full course and 36% of the 33 entered for the short course achieved grades A\* to C. In 2007, 84% of the 110 entered for the full course and 11% of the 36 entered for the short course achieved grades A\* to C. Almost all achieved at least a G grade. These results are about the national average and are above the school's average. More significantly, they reveal a significant value-added measure. There has been some discrepancy in performance between boys and girls and this is being systematically tackled thanks to positive intervention. Pupils enthuse about their work. Generous donations are made to CAFOD, the Diocesan Rescue Society, and the HCPT in which some pupils are involved. Through the school's SVP group hampers are distributed to local elderly and to Open Door, a shelter for homeless people. Support is given to Pendleside Hospice, the Wish-upon-a-Star appeal and to a past pupil with severe disability problems. The awareness of Fairtrade and the issues promoted by CAFOD, for which a classroom in the Congo has been purchased, make a particular contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.

## **THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

The inspector agrees with the judgement of the school that the quality of teaching and learning in curriculum Religious Education is good. This is because the standard of teaching observed was at least satisfactory, with some good lessons. All lessons were well planned and paced and enabled pupils to deepen their knowledge and understanding of issues such as worship, Pentecost, euthanasia and death. Teachers clearly wanted the pupils to learn well. The teachers themselves are well qualified, aware of current developments and have a command of the use of a variety of teaching styles and the use of information communication technology. Work is monitored and in keeping with the philosophy and practices of the department. Pupils' routine work is marked and although much work has put into the production of levels and targets, they are not consistently used so some pupils are not fully aware of what standard they have reached and what targets they should adopt. The school is encouraged to address this issue. Pupils found the lessons enjoyable when the topics were interesting and when they were encouraged to justify their own ideas. *"The teachers are good at doing that"*, one pupil remarked. The atmosphere of lessons observed was relaxed and good standards of behaviour contributed to learning. Display work, inside and outside classrooms is outstanding. Some is produced by pupils with obvious care and pride and some by the chaplain with challenging ideas.

## **THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM**

Overall the quality of the Religious Education curriculum is good. This is because the Salford Diocesan syllabus is fully implemented in Key Stage 3 and in Key Stage 4 the use of the Edexcel (full course) and WJEC (short course) syllabuses cover a wide range of Catholic topics which are relevant to pupils' personal and broader religious development. Many pupils stated that they valued this relevance. It was a brave decision to use two different Exam Board providers and thus ensure that pupils follow the most suitable courses. Pupils make a sensitive study of aspects of other Christian faiths and world religions. The directive from the bishops of England and Wales that 10% of curriculum time be given to Religious Education is observed. During the inspection pupils showed an eagerness and willingness to learn and make progress. Up-to-date resources, including some produced by the teachers, support the teaching of the curriculum. The personal, welcoming attitude of the Religious Education teachers is a strength of the school and they make a deep impact thanks to the support they give, especially to those who are experiencing personal problems or difficulties. *"I have always been impressed by their care and compassion,"* a parent wrote. The department is a great stimulus in raising money for, and awareness of, various charities. It also is deeply involved in the worshipping life of the school and helps in ensuring that pupils take part in assemblies and various liturgical events. Thus the Religious Education department makes a good contribution the pupils' moral, cultural and spiritual development.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

The leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education are outstanding. During the inspection, the curriculum leader was absent on maternity leave and an acting leader was in place. However, there was an obvious continuity of ideas and practice within the department. The Religious Education department benefits from a clear strand of high quality leadership at all levels including the senior leadership team, the governors and the leadership within the department itself. Monitoring and evaluating of the department's work is systematically undertaken by the headteacher who shows a personal commitment and determination to the teaching of Religious Education in the school. There is clear cohesion within the department and its policies and plans are in accord with those of the school as a whole. There is a good team spirit, enhanced by regular informal and formal contact. There is excellent and well organised documentation covering development plans, lesson planning and a full range of policies defining the work and aims of the department. Underlying these is a determination to ensure that pupils perform to the best of their ability by means of strategies which will enable them to do so. Resources are up-date and the current arrangements to suite the teaching rooms are evidence of the determination of senior leadership and governors to give maximum support to the work of the department. The governors are exceptionally involved and informed of the work of the department.