

THE DIOCESES OF SHREWSBURY & CHESTER



**St Chad's Catholic & Church of England
High School, Runcorn**

URN 135731
DfE No 876 4614

15 & 16 June 2011

**Report on the
Inspection of Denominational Education**
(under Section 48 of the School Inspections Act 2005)

Inspectors :
Mrs P Barker – Roman Catholic Diocese of Shrewsbury
Rev J Brooke - Anglican Diocese of Chester

The inspection of the denominational education of St Chad's Catholic & Church of England High School, Runcorn, was carried out at the request of the Governors of the School in fulfilment of their obligation under the requirements, and according to the directives of, the School Inspections Act 2005. The school was inspected within the framework approved by the Bishop of Shrewsbury and the Bishop of Chester for the conduct of inspection of the denominational education of Catholic and Church of England Secondary Schools within the Dioceses.

Key for Inspection Grades

Grade 1: Outstanding

Grade 2: Good

Grade 3: Satisfactory

Grade 4: Inadequate

DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL

St. Chad's Catholic and Church of England High School, Runcorn is an 11-19 voluntary aided, coeducational comprehensive school. The school is under the trusteeship of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Shrewsbury and Church of England Diocese of Chester in Halton Local Authority. The College has specialist status in languages. Students are drawn in the main from the parishes of All Saints, Holy Spirit, Our Lady's, St Augustine's, St Berteline's, St Edward's, St Martin's, St Mary's, 5 Catholic partner primary schools and 3 Church of England partner primary schools that the school serves. There are 1024 students on roll of whom 113 are in the Sixth Form. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average and there are 14 students with a statement to support their special educational needs. The proportion of students known to be entitled to free school meals (30.2%) is significantly above the national average. The school serves areas of high social, income, and employment deprivation. There are 151 staff - 76 teachers (Including 4 part-time) and 75 support staff.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

GRADE 1

St. Chad's is an outstanding joint denominational School which is seen within the local community and beyond, as committed to living out its mission as a joint church school. Since the last inspection the school has maintained its capacity for continued improvement in all areas. This is reflected in aspects of the Leadership and Management of the Christian Life and Ethos, and in Collective Worship. Teaching and learning in Religious Education is good with many outstanding features. The leadership and management of the Religious Education department is outstanding.

IMPROVEMENT SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION

GRADE 2

The recommendations for improvement were made before the school became a joint church school.

1. That the school and the communities of the parishes/pastoral area undertake fruitful dialogue to ensure greater mutual understanding and cooperation in meeting the religious, spiritual and moral needs of the students in a way that recognizes certain constraints.

Very good progress has been made here because greater links have been forged with all local parishes. This is enhanced by the appointment of an Anglican Chaplain who is a local parish priest. Pupils and staff have attended services in local parishes and parishioners are invited to attend services in school.

2. That the Chaplaincy Management Team include a number of students who will be actively involved in the organization and celebration of the various services and liturgies planned.

The newly appointed Chaplains now have a significant number of KS3 students (Cornerstone) involved in planning services. They also actively involve more students in liturgy.

3. That further support should be provided for Form Tutors in ensuring they have the skills necessary to provide a wider variety of opportunities for pupils to engage in prayer and reflection.

The full time Chaplain provides weekly, succinct and relevant Powerpoint presentations to engage students in prayer during Tutor time.

4. That the RE department further develop assessment for learning strategies across key stages and to ensure that coherent intervention strategies are in place at KS4.

The RE department has been restructured to include an additional TLR with a member of the department now having responsibility for Intervention strategies which have already had an impact on pupil progress.

5. That strategies be developed to encourage pupil take up of Religious Studies at Advanced Level.

There is now student uptake for A Level Religious Studies and there has been an improvement in numbers opting for the course in recent years.

CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINED IMPROVEMENT

GRADE 1

There is the capacity for sustained development which is evident from the detailed and thorough School Improvement Plan and Religious Education Self-Evaluation Form. The school undertakes rigorous monitoring and tracking processes and is proactive in forward planning. Staff are ready to take on new initiatives that will move the school forward and to actively market Advanced Level with the students.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Whole School

1. Recently appointed governors undertake training on issues concerning the joint church status of the school
2. Staff undertake professional development to understand how to create a worshipful atmosphere for prayer during Form Tutor time.

RE Department

3. Members of the department share good practice to ensure that all RE lessons deliver rigorously the learning objectives.
4. Ensure consistency in marking across the department

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND ETHOS

GRADE 1

Leadership and management is outstanding. The Headteacher's vision for the school is that the unity that all Christians aspire to, becomes a 'living reality'. The Senior Leadership Team gives excellent support for the RE department and have ensured that Key Stage 3 students will have their entitlement of 10% curriculum time for Religious Education from September 2011. They are committed to ensuring that Key Stage 4 students also have that entitlement from September 2012.

The welcome that everyone receives, adults and students alike as they walk through the doors lives out the words displayed in glass above the door: "Christ is the reason for this school." The school is clean, bright, with spacious corridors allowing for calm and orderly movement around the school environment and students consequently exhibit mature behaviour. Christian symbols, displays and Biblical quotations around the school support the Christian ethos of the school.

The mission statement, agreed with governors defines the Christian nature of the school. The Catholic Chair of Governors comments upon the very good support of both Dioceses throughout the journey to joint faith status and the total commitment of the Headteacher who has led the school to make a successful transition.

The new governing body, representative of both Dioceses is highly supportive of the joint church status. Governors work hard for the school but recently appointed governors would benefit from opportunities for training to fully comprehend the joint church nature of the school. There is no link governor to the Religious Education department to keep the governors well informed concerning departmental issues. The governors support staff and students by being high profile in their attendance at school events. The Headteacher's commitment to the joint church nature of the school is indicated in his attendance at the Head's and Chairs of Governor of Anglican schools meetings in the locality. Succession planning is good with all current members of the Senior Leadership Team having achieved the National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH).

Regular parent questionnaires indicate strong support and appreciation of the school in all areas, "St Chad's provides a good Christian foundation with family values, caring for other people and is all inclusive." St Chad's is oversubscribed due to its success in achievement and caring for the spiritual and social needs of the students. Pupils feel valued and comment that they are treated with respect and courtesy by all staff, that they enjoy coming to school and that, 'one of the best things about the school is that there is no bullying'.

Awareness of the needs of others is evident in the number of charities the school supports such as, the Good Shepherd Fund, CAFOD, and Operation Christmas Child: this encourages students' spiritual development. The local community needs are also considered with the distribution of food hampers at Christmas. Moral and spiritual development of students is encouraged in the raising of funds for the partner school, St Mary's in Kenya, and there are opportunities too for small groups of students to visit

the school and engage in projects there.

Community Cohesion is outstanding, locally and internationally. There are plans also to link with a school in Kent and a Liverpool school which has a high ethnic intake. Polish parents are supported in dealing with local issues and the English as an Additional Language programme is highly effective. The school is used daily by the local community for evening classes and 'Churches Together' meet in the building which is another sign of the school's support for ecumenism. The Anglican Chaplain's parish hall is now transformed by collaboration between local primary schools and St Chad's Art department who painted pictures to cover the boarded windows. The student voice indicated that it was important to learn about the views and beliefs of others because it helps to understand, 'what it is like to be in someone else's shoes' and especially because there are diverse cultures within school.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

GRADE 2

The quality of Collective Worship is good and developing well under the new inspired leadership of the recently appointed Chaplains who are well supported by the Senior Line Manager. The chaplaincy is well resourced financially.

The Collective Worship policy outlines the nature and aims of worship at St Chad's with practical details for its implementation and there are weekly themes focused on the Liturgical Calendar to ensure an understanding of the church's year. Year group prayer and worship takes place once each week and Tutor groups experience daily prayer using brief, effective power points which are prepared by one of the Chaplains and emailed weekly. Form Tutors are encouraged to take ownership and develop their own worship ideas based on the weekly theme. Whilst the power points are a useful tool to assist teachers in enabling meaningful prayer to take place, at times there may be a more effective worshipful atmosphere. The relevance of the content is evident in students' comments which indicate that they clearly listen and retain what they hear. Eucharistic and other liturgical services take place at designated times with students seeing no issue over some students receiving a blessing and others receiving the sacrament.

The Chaplaincy Team led by a full time Catholic Chaplain and part time Church of England Chaplain are an asset to the school in providing spiritual and pastoral care for staff and students. They are developing an effective working relationship with each other, which is supported by the recent refurbishment of the Chaplain's office where they are both based. Both are newly in post this year and their priority is to encourage more student involvement in Chaplaincy work. The Anglican Chaplain is very keen to establish a "Youth Church" as a development for Christian discipleship. This would give students confidence in their Christian mission in order to challenge secular values in society. Both Chaplains are involved in the Year 6 induction programme which creates positive Christian links with the Primary schools.

Students speak very positively about the role of the Chaplains and their availability for them to talk to and engage with over spiritual matters. The school recognises the need to upgrade the current small chapel in order to deepen students' spirituality and is currently considering plans for expansion. A successful voluntary retreat programme is in place and is open to all to support student spiritual development.

The lecture theatre where many Acts of Worship are held is conducive to worship and enables students to engage with the music and prayer in a calm and reflective manner. Pupils commented that they liked the opportunity to reflect at the start of the day and "speak to God."

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

GRADE 2

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are at least good. Contextualised data indicates that Key Stage 4 performance is in line with similar schools nationally. Current tracking indicates recent improvement with 49% of Year 10 students and 65% of Year 11 students working at or above their target grades. In Key Stage 4 all learners are entered for short or full course GCSE.

Key Stage 3 figures for summer 2010 indicate 80% are currently achieving Level 5 and Level 6 which represents above average progress.

AS and A2 students achieve less A* - A grades than expected, though those achieving A* - C are in line with national expectations. The lower achievement does not reflect the excellent teaching and

assessment of student examination essays. Retention has been an issue from AS to A2 in 2010, but there are positive signs that this is going to improve next year and will be closely monitored within the school improvement plan as a whole school priority. The independent survey commissioned in 2009, indicated that both students and parents are positive towards Religious Education.

TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

GRADE 1

The quality of teaching and learning is good with many outstanding features. All teachers have secure subject knowledge and understanding. Lessons are well-paced and make use of excellent resources such as interactive whiteboard to support learning. Students say that RE teaches them 'how to live life to the full and look after what God has made'. Peer assessment is effectively used to facilitate assessment for learning with all students impressively knowing their current level or grade. Teachers model good answers and excellent use is made of coded criteria which enables students to give advice to peers on how to improve. Classroom management and strategies to support good behaviour are evident in all lessons. 'Life' cards are used to good effect which enable students to focus independently on their work. This allows the teacher to monitor progress of all students uninterrupted, until the student decides to use the card for teacher support. Teaching is very well planned, organised, structured, creative and skilful. Full use is made of the three-part lesson. Some lessons still require development of activities that address the learning objectives, but within the Department there is a wealth of experience and expertise that can be drawn upon to improve pedagogy. The overall quality of learning is exemplified by both interactive activities and the increasing development of independent learning. Teachers set a variety of tasks to engage and develop pupil understanding. Schemes of work have been redeveloped to incorporate the Anglican dimension across Key Stage 3. World faiths are well taught using challenging questioning and students recognise the value of understanding what others believe.

Pupils are engaged in RE lessons and the student voice confirmed that lessons are 'fun' and have a variety of activities. Procedures for assessment include formative and highly appropriate end of task activities, matched to levels of attainment in Key Stage 3 and to accredited courses in Key Stage 4 and 5.

'A' Level marking is exemplary and enables students to identify their strengths and weaknesses to improve. There are some good examples of assessment for learning in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, but it is variable across the department.

The teaching environment for RE has a dedicated suite of bright, clean rooms which are conducive to learning and spiritual development. There are informative and challenging displays in classrooms and corridors to encourage learning, raise self-esteem and the subject profile.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE RE DEPARTMENT

GRADE 1

The department is moving forwards under the dynamic leadership of the newly appointed Head of RE. The restructuring of TLRs aims to reflect the skills of individual staff and aid professional development. This has enabled Intervention strategies to improve learning in Religious Education at all Key Stages. One member of the department will have an opportunity for professional development when she becomes a facilitator in the Creative Learning Programme starting September 2011 for Year 7. The Head of Department has overseen the re-writing of Schemes of Work for General RE and is committed to developing this programme of study to the benefit of all students. Students recognise the value of General RE "If it we didn't do it here - it would definitely be something that was missing!" After reviewing the current GCSE syllabus, the Head of RE recognises the need to introduce a new specification from September 2011, which addresses the diversity of Christianity thus reflecting the joint church nature of the school. Systems for performance management are well embedded and the desire to build on the skills of individual teachers and share good practice are commendable.

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Key to judgements: Grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory and grade 4 inadequate	Judgement
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OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective is the school in providing Christian Education	1
The school's capacity for sustained improvement	1

OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS

How good outcomes are for individuals and pupils	1
How well pupils achieve in Religious Education	1
pupils standards of attainment in religious Education	2
the quality of pupils' learning and their progress in Religious Education	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Christian Life of the School	1
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	2

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

How effective the provision is for Christian Education	1/2
The quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education	1
The effectiveness of assessment in Religious Education	2
The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs	1
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	2

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Christian Life of the School	1
How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Christian Life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
The extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Christian dimension of the school so areas needing development are addressed decisively and responsibilities met	2
How effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion	1