



Diocese of Westminster

INSPECTION REPORT

Bishop Douglass School

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DfE Number: 302 5408

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Headteacher: Ms Angela Murphy

Chair of Governors: Ms Christine Haugh

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of inspection: 11 November 2010
Date of previous inspection: 16 January 2008

Reporting Inspector: Mrs S Nolan

Description of School

Bishop Douglass is a smaller than average mixed comprehensive school with 770 students on roll, 219 of whom are in the sixth form. The school mainly serves families from a wide spread of parishes. The proportion of Catholic students is now 60% and increasing year-on-year. Just over a tenth of the students are from families who have non-Christian faiths. Of the 62 full and part-time teachers, 45% (27) are Catholics and 8 hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS) or other Catholic qualifications. Seven well-qualified teachers are responsible for Religious Education in the school. A much higher proportion of students than that nationally speak English as an additional language. A similarly high proportion of the students have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Of these 175 students, 10 have a statement of special educational need. Those known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. Student mobility is very high. The school strives to be a safe community in which all can 'Come to the fullness of life, academic, spiritual and moral.'

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1: Outstanding; Grade 2: Good; Grade 3: Satisfactory; Grade 4: Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Bishop Douglass is a good Catholic school with some outstanding features. The headteacher has built up a very committed staff team who want the school to be the best it can. Standards in Religious Education are rising faster than in other academic areas, other than English. Attainment is average and students' progress is good, given their starting points. The subject leader for Religious Education, well supported by senior staff, has built up a strong team of teachers who, together, with the full-time school Chaplain have put Religious education at the heart of the school. This good team work is reflected in the harmonious ethos among the pupils, many of whom opt to extend their religious studies into the sixth form. Teaching is mostly good or better and the work of the department is monitored as rigorously as that of the core areas of English, mathematics and science. The school is aware, however, that there is more work to do in meeting the diverse needs of some of its students and in improving the feedback to students on their work. Particularly striking is the excellent curriculum with its well established cross-curricular links with many subjects. Prayer and worship underpin the Catholic life of the school so that student's spiritual, moral and social development is good. They are helped to understand the Church's global mission through their support for many charities, including those related to Lourdes. The school is gradually winning the challenge to become the school of choice for many more Catholic families from the surrounding parishes.

Grade 2

Improvement since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the school was asked to improve academic results in Religious Education and evaluate its progress in improving teaching and learning. It has been very successful in both areas. Results in GCSE full course Religious Education are now average and in line with those for English. The 2010 GCSE cohort gained a far higher proportion of Grade A*/A results than English, demonstrating the determination of the subject staff to ensure students achieve as well as possible. Teaching is good overall but with elements of outstanding in some lessons, again an improvement since the last inspection. The Religious Education department is now at the forefront of good practice within the school in using information and communication technology in lessons. Students increasingly use the departmental web site to join in discussions

on religious and moral topics and themes. Much work has been done to offer students a wide range of opportunities for different forms of prayer. This area of the school is developing well, particularly as the proportion of Catholic students increases. Similarly, there is considerable good assessment practice in lessons but sometimes missed opportunities through marking. Bishop Douglass has also developed well in other ways. Religious Education is now a popular choice at post-16. The department has a stable, enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff, led by a deeply committed head of department. Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

Grade 1

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The school has a good capacity to improve further. There is a clear and shared vision of how to promote the Catholic identity of the school whilst, at the same time, including all those of other faiths, both Christian and non-Christian. Improving the spirituality of the school is a high priority. The school is in a strong position to build on its strengths, especially its success in promoting a cohesive community from its diverse student body. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate and is used well in the best interests of the students. As ever, the high mobility of the student population, the links with the local Catholic primary schools and surrounding parishes pose significant challenges. The senior staff recognise that there is much to do to increase the school roll and recruit more students from Catholic families. There are still missed opportunities in the way guidance to students on how to improve work is managed. The religious education department does not always have the scope to support and monitor major assemblies so that students are always exposed to the best practice. The school has demonstrated clearly its strong capacity to improve further.

Grade 2

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop further the feedback to students on how to improve their work in Religious Education so that it better supports individual students' progress.
- Ensure students make better use of teachers' marking by ensuring that they follow up on areas to improve.
- Extend the support of the department to other areas of the school in orchestrating year and group religious events.

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

The leadership of the school takes seriously the school's Catholic mission. This is clearly demonstrated in the way that those students from other faiths recognise that in joining Bishop Douglass, they are expected to participate in all its activities. This has been very successful. The earnestness of the school's intent is seen in the appointment of a full-time chaplain to the school. Celebrations of mass are very regular along with many opportunities for sacramental and traditional practice. The chaplain is a well-known figure to the students and a ready port of call when questions and issues arise. The chaplain and the governing body are working assiduously to raise the profile of the school in the surrounding parishes. Through events such as the international evening, the school works hard to engage parents in the Catholic life of the school and the students' education.

Grade 2

The Prayer Life of the School

The Church's liturgical cycle is well integrated into the life of the school. The provision for prayer life and collective worship is excellent. With the help of the chaplain, occasionally assisted by the parish clergy, students are regularly able to celebrate the Eucharist through class and whole-school Masses, services of reconciliation, and Lent and Advent liturgies. The chapel is a haven of peace and is currently movingly adorned with poppies of remembrance and the students' own memorials to those they have lost. Students are increasingly exposed to traditions such as the rosary and Stations of the Cross. All year groups have opportunities for retreats. There are daily prayers in which all students join. They use their many talents to express their worship such as in the Gospel choir.

Grade 1

How effectively does the school promote community cohesion?

A real strength of the school is the way it includes students from many faiths in its religious observance and study. Students have excellent opportunities to enhance their experience of traditions other than those of their own families through the interweaving of cultural differences within the school community. They take part in diocesan events such as helping with the sick at Lourdes and raising funds for other charities. Students also experience traditional places of pilgrimage in England, such as visits to the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham. They study other world faiths both in the classroom and through assemblies and visits. Strong multi-agency partnerships are very effective in finding the right help for the students and their families. Nevertheless, although links with local parishes are improving, the wide catchment area of the students means that it is a constant struggle to make strong parish-school links with those parishes the students attend.

Grade 2

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

Students make good progress in Religious Education by the end of Year 11. Standards are average and similar to those in English but students achieve a higher proportion of the A/A* grades in Religious Education. This is a reflection of the department's determination to target underachieving students, particularly boys and those of Black African and Afro-Caribbean heritage. Examination targets are challenging and the department is very effective in driving up standards. Students show a good understanding and knowledge of Catholic faith but also of the traditions of other major religions. Within lessons, students communicate orally a genuine interest in exploring beliefs and religious issues. Sixth form students are keen on the AS option over two years, of philosophy and ethics. They were coherent and well engaged in a discussion of the cosmological argument for the existence of God.

Grade 2

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is good overall and sometimes outstanding. In the best lessons seen during the inspection, students were challenged to think spiritually, ethically and theologically and to become aware of the challenges of being a Christian in everyday life. Staff are very knowledgeable and well qualified for their task and show a strong commitment to the Church's mission. Relationships between staff and students are good and this leads to mainly positive attitudes to learning. Resources are excellent as is departmental planning. There is a high degree of consistency in the students' classroom experiences. Nevertheless, there are missed opportunities to guide students on how to improve their work, particularly through the quality of teachers' marking. Students with diverse needs are mostly well supported but there are instances where those who are at the early stages of learning English and those who have specific learning challenges are not catered for well enough.

Grade 2

Quality of the Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is very good. The Religious Education department provides a curriculum which fully meets the Diocesan requirements with regard to the allotted time. It is well supplemented by daily prayer and worship. Cross-curricular links are used well, particularly those with English, art, geography, science, citizenship and drama. These enrich students' experience and develop their understanding. The religious education curriculum aims to develop the whole student and, thus, makes an invaluable contribution to building the school community. Schemes of work are well constructed to ensure progression through year groups. The post-16 provision is an excellent attempt to accommodate the interests and aptitude of sixth-form students. The school offers both an academic course at advanced supplementary level and the recommended NOCN general Religious Education in line with diocesan guidelines.

Grade 1

Leadership and management of Religious Education

Religious Education at Bishop Douglass is very well co-ordinated and managed. The subject leader and department team, along with the other very supportive senior staff, provide good role models for staff and students. Religious Education has a high priority in the school. Monitoring and evaluation of classroom practice, teachers' planning and student's performance and progress are rigorous. Along with the core areas, the students' progress in the academic study of the Catholic faith is analysed carefully by significant groups to check for underachievement. The department leader has a strong sense of the Church's educational mission and shares this with the staff. Professional development opportunities are accessible to all staff and well based on review findings. In the well kept learning environment, the head of department ensures that resources and staff are deployed very effectively so that all students are included fully in the religious life of the school. The subject leader has done very well in the two years since taking up her post, particularly in developing a strong sense of team work and in driving up standards.

Grade 1