

Archdiocese of Cardiff

Inspection Report

Corpus Christi Catholic High School

Inspection dates	9-11th February 2009
Reporting Inspector	Mrs Paddy Landers
Type of school	Comprehensive
Age range of pupils	11-16
Number on roll	1034
Appropriate Authority	Cardiff
Chair of Governors	Mrs K Brown
School Address	Tydraw Road, Lisvane, Cardiff. CF23 6XL
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E-mail address	bmullins@cardiff.gov.uk
Parish(es) served	Christ the King Holy Family St Brigid and St Paul St Joseph St Peter St Philip Evans St Teilo and Our Lady of Lourdes
Date of previous inspection	24-27th February 2003
Head teacher	Mr David Stone

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archdiocese of Cardiff and Inspection of denominational education under Section 50 Of the Education Act 2005

Description of the School

Corpus Christi Catholic High School is a voluntary aided mixed 11-16 school within the Catholic Archdiocese of Cardiff. It serves the whole of the north of Cardiff from Pentrebanne in the west to Pentwyn in the east, as well as the central areas of Cathays, Roath and Adamsdown. It is comprehensive in its intake. Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and approximately 10% are entitled to free school meals. This is below local and national averages. English is spoken as the first language in 93% of the homes and 15% are from minority heritages. 99% of pupils are Catholics. Pupils are representative of the full range of ability. There are 92 pupils who are identified as having Special Educational Needs, of whom 29 have statements to address their specific needs.

Inspection grades

An overall judgement for each question is made using the following grades:

Grade 1: good with outstanding features

Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings

Grade 3: good features outweigh shortcomings

Grade 4: some good features, but shortcomings in important areas

Grade 5: many important shortcomings

Table of grades awarded

Key question	Inspection grade
How effective and efficient is the provision of Catholic education in meeting the needs of learners and why?	1
1. How effective are leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school/college?	1
2. How good is the provision for prayer, collective worship and the liturgical life of the school/college?	1
3. How well do learners achieve in religious education?	1
4. How effective are teaching and learning in religious education?	1
5. How well does the religious education curriculum meet the needs and interests of learners?	1
6. How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners in religious education?	1

The diocesan reporting inspector wishes to express sincere thanks to governors, head teacher, staff, pupils and parents, and to the registered inspector and inspection team, for the courtesy and co-operation received during the inspection.

Overall Effectiveness

How effective and efficient is the provision of Catholic education in meeting the needs of learners and why?

Corpus Christi Catholic High School is a very good school with many outstanding features. The school is well led by the head teacher who has a clear vision of the aims of a Catholic school. He receives excellent support from his strong leadership team and committed staff. The school's motto is "Together we are the Body of Christ" and this, together with its mission statement, provides clear guidance for all that happens in the school. The school has an unquestionable Catholic ethos and the values of the school are firmly rooted in the Christian principles that permeate all aspects of school life. The school provides equality of access to all learners and ensures that all achieve their potential. The provision for spiritual and moral development, and for collective worship, is outstanding. Behaviour at the school is very good.

Governors are very knowledgeable about their school. They are clearly involved in all aspects of school life and very supportive of the Catholic ethos. The governors ensure that religious education has a high profile within the school and that the liturgical life fosters spiritual and moral development. The link governor for the religious education department works closely with the teachers in the department and is very supportive. The part-time chaplain is also a considerable asset in enabling the school to develop the liturgical life of the school and to meet the needs of individual learners.

The quality of teaching in the religious education department is very good and in many cases outstanding. Learners achieve well in all key stages and examination results are very good. Learners enjoy their religious education lessons and value the opportunities that are offered to them. The head of department has made excellent progress in identifying the needs of the department and in planning for the future.

The school has excellent links with the feeder primary schools, St David's College, and the other schools in the Faith-Based Learning Network. There are well-developed links with parishes, and plans for further growth in the future. The school is very well supported in developing the religious life of the school by the work and frequent visits of local clergy.

Improvement since the last inspection

The strengths of the school, recognised at the last inspection, have been maintained and further developed. Teaching in the religious education department has continued to improve, and the department is now at the forefront of teaching and learning within the school, with an emphasis on thinking skills, assessment for learning and meeting individual learning needs. Strategies have been put in place, which have reduced gender differences in achievement.

Regular liturgies are provided for learners, led by the chaplain who also supports teachers with resources for assemblies and classroom based daily acts of worship. Teachers meet for prayer every Tuesday morning, and an INSET day on the

Catholic ethos was held recently in conjunction with the other Catholic High schools in the city.

Working with the Faith-Based Learning Network provides opportunities for students to participate in an additional number of learning pathways at key stage 4. Regular retreats at Llantarnam Abbey and St Clare's have been organised for key stage 3 pupils whilst a good number of key stage 4 learners visit Soli House at Stratford. Improvements to the PSE programme also provide opportunities for the further development of the spiritual and moral life of learners.

Capacity to improve

The school is well placed for further development of the religious life of the school. Growth and development are clearly prioritised by the head teacher, leadership team and governors, who share a vision of what makes a successful Catholic school and many of the structures and practices, are already in place for still further progress. The school's self-evaluation document is an accurate reflection of the school's strengths, and areas of development have already been identified.

The head of department has a clear understanding of what is needed to further develop the department and how to continue to raise standards. A team of well-experienced, committed teachers, who are willing and able to work with her to drive the department forward, supports her. The head of department and chaplain share a vision of enhanced liturgical provision for the school. However, lack of a school hall will make further growth difficult.

The inspector concurs with the thorough evaluation made by the school of its strengths and areas for development, both in the Catholic life of the school and the provision for curriculum religious education.

Grade: 1

What the school should do to improve further

- ❖ Continue to develop a range of strategies to enable students to be more effective learners and to challenge the more able.
- ❖ Continue to develop assessment for learning to fully inform learners about the quality of their work and empower them to improve.
- ❖ Continue to monitor exercise books to ensure consistency of marking and feedback to learners.
- ❖ Continue to ensure that assemblies and liturgies are enhanced with ICT, music, artwork, dance etc.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL/COLLEGE

Leadership and Management

1. How effective are leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school/college?

Good features

There is a strong and effective focus by leaders on the development and nurturing of the Catholic life of the school. The school's Mission Statement is rooted in Gospel values and clearly informs and underpins all policies. The ethos of the school is based on the dignity and value of every human being, and this is monitored and evaluated regularly by the senior managers of the school. The head teacher and leadership team take a very active role in developing the Catholic life of the school. They are well supported by a committed religious education department, which is well led by the head of department. The inclusion of all learners is a central goal, based on the belief that all learners should be provided with opportunities to develop into the best possible people that they are called by God to be.

The high level of involvement of the strongly committed governing body is an outstanding feature. Governors are very active and involved in all policy decisions. They monitor and review the school improvement plan and their detailed knowledge of the school is evident. Learners are very aware of themselves as spiritual beings. They are aware of the many social issues in our society, can discuss moral principles and make informed choices. They are very well behaved and excellent relationships exist within the student community and between learners and adults. There is an ethos of trust and respect in the school with an emphasis on the dignity of every person.

The Catholic ethos permeates all aspects of the school. The music department supports the liturgies and makes an important contribution. The school's middle managers lead and manage in line with the school's ethos. There is a very good pastoral structure, which supports learners in all aspects of their school life to enable them to fulfil their true potential. This is enhanced by the work of the chaplain and the school counsellor who can meet with learners on an individual basis and visit homes. A weekly staff liturgy provides opportunity for prayer and reflection and an INSET day on Catholic ethos was held recently in conjunction with the other Catholic High schools in the city.

Charity work is extensive and very generously supported within the school to include both fundraising and outreach. Very good links exist with parents and feeder primary schools. Parents are very pleased with the ethos of the school and the teaching of religious education. They have confirmed that the staff of the school are always available to them. They can contact the school at any time to discuss any concerns or problems they may have. This is evidenced by their comments at the meeting with the inspector and by the results of the questionnaire.

Shortcomings

There are no important shortcomings.

Grade: 1

Collective Worship

2. How good is the provision for prayer, collective worship and the liturgical life of the school/college?

Good features

Provision for collective worship is very good. Prayer and worship are at the heart of the school community. The head of the religious education department and the chaplain plan the programme of worship for the year. Liturgical celebrations at Christmas and Easter take place during the school day and in the evening so that parents can attend. Penitential services are held during Lent. Liturgy is planned carefully to incorporate scripture, music, drama, poetry and dance. A year 7 Welcome Mass is held early in the autumn term and all parents are invited. The feast of Corpus Christi is celebrated with a Mass for the whole school in a marquee on the playing fields. Learners and parents report that this is a very special day for the school.

Assemblies are held daily. They are based on the liturgical calendar, are rooted in scripture and have a clear message for learners about how to live a Christian life. Tutor groups take responsibility for preparing and leading assemblies. One assembly observed during inspection week was planned and delivered by a year 7 tutor group and was based on the parable of the talents. When not in assembly, collective acts of prayer and worship take place in tutor groups. Section 28 inspectors commented on the high quality and reverence of worship. Tutors are provided with resources produced by the chaplain. Learners are involved in a variety of ways, including reading, leading prayers and providing music.

There is an attractive chapel, which is used for some liturgies and is fully accessible to learners during the day. The Blessed Sacrament is reserved there. The Welsh dimension is recognised by celebrating the feast days of Welsh saints and some prayers are said in Welsh.

Opportunities for retreats and pilgrimages are regularly provided. In key stage 3 all learners participate in retreats at Llantarnam Abbey and St Clare's. Key stage 4, learners are offered the opportunity to visit Soli house in Stratford for a retreat. Learners were very enthusiastic about their experiences during these visits and valued the opportunity for prayer and reflection. Trips are also organised to Belarus. Students talked about their visit to Belarus with great enthusiasm and maturity. Learners' response to all aspects of collective worship is outstanding. They display reverence, are receptive to the message and are willing to participate. Collective worship fulfils statutory and diocesan requirements.

Shortcomings

There are no important shortcomings.

Grade:1

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and Standards

3. How well do learners achieve in religious education?

Good features

Learners achieve well in religious education and clearly enjoy their lessons. Learners make good progress according to FFT data and national averages. At key stage 3, learners show a sound knowledge of the topics studied in the programme. They understand the liturgical cycle of the Church and are clearly aware of Christian values. Assignments are well written and levelled according to NBRIA levels and learners' achievements are tracked throughout their time in the school. Standards reached are identified using the RE portfolio and analysed and used to inform planning.

Learners achieve exceptionally well at key stage 4 compared with local and national benchmarks. 70% of learners consistently reach A*-C grades with over 30% achieving A* or A. Boys results have improved considerably in the 2008 examinations. Teachers have high expectations of learners who are encouraged to be active in lessons. Learners understand and can articulate the teachings, beliefs and values of the Catholic Church. In years 10 and 11, learners produce assignments of good quality. Less able learners are well supported in class by teachers and achieve well. All learners agreed that their lessons are interesting. They recognise the value of their study and can talk about the Welsh dimension through their study of Welsh saints and places of pilgrimage.

Learners display well-developed key skills in their lessons. They listen attentively, discuss well and use extended speech where opportunities are provided. They are confident in using thinking skills strategies. They understand how their work can be improved and are keen to fulfil their potential.

There is evidence of extended written work in most exercise books or folders. Learners are encouraged to use subject specific vocabulary, including complex terminology in the case of older learners. ICT is used to enhance learning in lessons. Emotional and spiritual literacy are developed through experiential topics. Schemes of work have been adapted to take account of individual learning needs. Behaviour in lessons is generally very good.

Shortcomings

There are no important shortcomings

Grade: 1

Quality of provision for religious education

4. How effective are teaching and learning in religious education?

Good features

The department is composed of five full-time specialist teachers and two part-time non-specialists. All religious education teachers are Catholic and hold the Catholic teachers certificate. Every teacher was observed teaching in each key stage during the Inspection. All teaching observed was good and in many cases outstanding. There is a purposeful atmosphere in lessons and excellent learner-teacher relationships. All teachers display a secure knowledge of their Catholic faith and of the programmes of study. They also demonstrate a commitment to teaching religious education and are excellent role models.

Lessons are well planned and presented. Learning objectives are clearly stated at the beginning of the lesson and excellent use is made of starter and plenary sessions during lessons. Teachers use thinking skills strategies to good effect in lessons. A variety of learning styles including paired and group work, and a range of resources, are used to cater for all learning types. Interactive whiteboards are used effectively to create a focus for lessons. There is evidence of the use of ICT by learners. Teachers display high expectations of their learners. Teaching is dynamic, challenging and experiential. Less able learners are well supported and achieve well in lessons. More able and talented learners are given the opportunity to study philosophy.

Teachers use assessment to inform planning and target setting. Books and assignments are generally marked regularly and good work rewarded. In key stage 3, assignments are assessed appropriately for knowledge and evaluation. In key stage 4, assessment, planning and monitoring are well developed and used to inform learners' progress. Diagnostic marking is evident and assessment for learning is well embedded in classroom practice.

The department shows a commitment to Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig through the study of Welsh saints and places of pilgrimage. Some prayers are said in Welsh. Education for Personal Relationships is delivered through religious education and personal and social education. Respect for oneself, others, the sanctity of life and the teachings of the Church form the framework of this area of the curriculum. Parents are very satisfied with the manner with which this is taught in school.

Shortcomings

There are no important shortcomings

Grade: 1

5. How well does the religious education curriculum meet the needs and interests of learners?

Good features

There are high expectations of all learners in the religious education department and all pupils are given the opportunity to succeed. A wide variety of relevant learning activities, together with the most up to date pedagogy, ensure that religious education is suitably challenging for the needs of learners.

The curriculum provides appropriately for learners and successfully matches their potential and aspirations. Examination results are very good. There are detailed schemes of work for all levels and these have recently been adapted to promote the development of religiously literate learners and to match individual learning needs. The curriculum meets the needs and interests of learners and is in line with Archdiocesan requirements in all parts of the school.

The religious education department is well-resourced with books and also uses the media and Internet to provide additional materials. Accommodation is good. The religious education rooms are in the heart of the school and are attractively decorated. Learners' work is displayed in all classrooms. A very attractive chapel is always open, giving staff and learners opportunity for prayer, reflection and meditation. Cwricwlwm Cymreig, bilingualism and the study of Welsh saints are all in place in the schemes of work.

The curriculum is extended by a wealth of extra-curricular activities to further enhance the learners' social, spiritual and moral development. Learners are encouraged to participate in a variety of liturgies and are given regular opportunities to attend Mass in school. An Alpha group meets during lunchtime led by teachers and the chaplain to create a sense of community and to spend some time in prayer and discussion. There is a variety of fundraising schemes that respond to national and international events. Retreats at Llantarnam Abbey, St Clare's and Soli house, together with visits to Belarus, offer a variety of enriching experiences.

Through curricular and extra-curricular experiences, and through acts of worship, there is much emphasis on the development of the whole person. The results are evident in the learners' respectful attitudes and in the strong Christian ethos of the school.

Shortcomings

There are no important shortcomings

Grade: 1

Leadership and management of religious education

6. How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners in religious education?

Good features

The religious education department has a prominent profile within the school and the subject is highly valued. The department leads many of the current initiatives developing pedagogy within the school. The head of department leads her team effectively and provides good support for them. She reviews schemes of work regularly and is well-informed about new initiatives in the teaching of religious education. The teachers are very good, experienced practitioners and learners benefit from consistency of approach in the classroom. Department staff have access to up to date resources and to relevant training. There is great emphasis on meeting individual learning needs and the department has well-developed strategies in place to support those with learning needs and to challenge the most able. Assessment for learning is embedded in schemes of work and empowers students to take control of their own learning. The department's concentration on thinking skills leads to improved achievement.

The departmental improvement plan is focused on setting challenging targets to raise achievement and support all learners. The department self-review is accurate and realistic. It provides a clear agenda for the future.

Shortcomings

There are no important shortcomings.

Grade: 1

The School's Response to the Inspection

Governors and staff are delighted with the inspectors' judgement that Corpus Christi Catholic High School is a very good school with many outstanding features. We are particularly pleased that the report identifies the school's unquestionable Catholic ethos and the fact that the school's values are firmly rooted in the Christian principles that permeate all aspects of school life, including the equality of access for all learners.

It is very pleasing that Corpus Christi was judged to be good with outstanding features in all six key areas of school life. We are delighted too, that the quality of teaching in the Religious Education department was deemed to be very good, and in many cases, outstanding so that learners enjoy their education lessons and achieve well.

Corpus Christi is also grateful that inspectors recognised the important roles played by governors, the chaplain and the head of department, and that the school has excellent links with its partners in parishes, primary schools and St David's College.

The school now looks forward to implementing the recommendations of the report which will be incorporated into the school's improvement plan.

We would like to thank Mrs Landers and Mrs Felton for their highly professional approach throughout the inspection process which was carried out with integrity, care and a full understanding of the mission of a Catholic school.

Evidence Base for the Inspection

- The school's self-evaluation document and other relevant documentation
- The religious education department's self-evaluation document, handbook, policies, schemes of work and other relevant documentation
- 13 lesson observations in both key stages
- Learners' written work
- Pre-inspection meetings with the head teacher, governors, parents and head of department
- Parent questionnaires
- Meeting with the link governor to the religious education department
- Meeting with head of department and staff of the religious education department
- Meetings with the head of music, the chaplain, the counsellor and a teaching assistant.
- Attendance at Estyn section 28 meetings
- Attendance at 3 school assemblies, 2 tutor group acts of worship and staff prayer
- Discussion with learners at both key stages
- Observations of the day to day life of the school