



December 2015

Diocesan Education Service,
Don Bosco House,
Coventry Road,
Coleshill,
B46 3EA

St Wilfrid's Catholic Academy School
Queen's Avenue
Tunstall
Stoke on Trent
ST6 6EE

Dear Mrs Mason

Section 48 Monitoring inspection:

Thank you for the welcome you, your staff and pupils gave to me when I inspected your school on the 7th December and for the information you provided both before and during the inspection. I am grateful for the time given by all including the parish priest in speaking with me.

The inspection was a "light touch" monitoring inspection because your school was judged at the last section 48 inspection to be an outstanding school and because it is now five years or more since you last received a diocesan inspection.

The purpose of the inspection was to assess the quality of the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning for Catholic life and religious education. In order to make this judgement I read school documents, including a summative self-evaluation, interviewed senior leaders, the chair of governors, the parish priest, the subject leader for RE, and pupils, conducted a learning walk jointly with members of the senior leadership team, and looked at a sample of pupils' written work. In addition, I gathered evidence of some of the outstanding practice in the school as part of a diocesan wide survey of good practice in Catholic life and religious education.

Catholic Life

In its self-evaluation, St Wilfrid's Primary Academy judges its overall effectiveness in relation to its Catholic life and RE to be outstanding. This appraisal is fully justified based on the evidence gathered during this light touch inspection, which validated the school's own judgement as accurate and dependable. The pupils benefit enormously from the Catholic life of the school, and make an outstanding contribution to their collective worship, evident in their outstanding engagement with the rich opportunities for prayer and worship as well as their outstanding behaviour. Of particular strength is their understanding of the relevance of what they learn both in lessons and outside to their own lives. The pupils' input was central to the decisions over the vision statement 'Together One Family, One Community in Christ'. They are also successfully proactive in organising their charity fundraising events themselves. The parish priest celebrates Mass each week for the school in the parish church to emphasise the place of the school in the parish mission within the wider mission of the Church. In the Advent Mass during the inspection the pupils behaved impeccably, attentive and reverent, singing enthusiastically and reading with confidence. A good percentage of parents attend these Masses and attendance at the parish Sunday Mass has grown, as a result of this and the parents' deeper commitment to the First Communion and Confirmation preparation programmes. An impressive whole school Advent assembly at the end of the day enabled pupils to reflect and prepare for the Advent reconciliation service.

Pupils' engagement also takes the form of pupil audits and feedback on their experiences of prayer, liturgies and assemblies. More could be made of this well established feedback process in terms of frequency, but also the quality of the questions in order to extract even more reflective answers that the leadership can respond to. They are enthusiastic in helping to plan and present their own assemblies, but need to take on even more ownership of their prayer life and what they contribute specifically to the Catholic aspect of school life. Nevertheless there is an extensive bank of evidence both written and photographic which shows the depth and quality of the Catholic life of the school and their involvement in it. The school is already working on this: to increase pupil involvement and ownership in their prayer life is one of the key objectives built into the school improvement plan for this year and it is beginning to yield results. The growth in confidence of pupils preparing their own



liturgies are duly documented and, as a result, the quality and impact of these occasions are improving rapidly, but also provide the leadership with a very clear grasp of the impact provision is having, and how it can be improved.

Governors and senior leadership play a very hands-on part in nourishing and enabling a vibrant Catholic ethos. They are frequent visitors and challenging, critical collaborators, as evident from a scrutiny of the minutes and the responses to the headteacher's and subject RE reports and reviews. All the processes for feedback from pupils, parents, and staff are then fed into the school improvement plan, which is very much a live, working document constantly being re-shaped and updated. Because the school is part of the local Catholic academy group it benefits from the input of the other schools' staff and governors, an overall robust surveillance which ensures the best practice through rigorous monitoring and challenge, and the impressively fruitful joint assessments and planning which results in exemplary provision and outcomes. These rigorous processes and the overarching academy group supervision, are the surest touchstone for the reliability of the school's self evaluation. The school is open to change and willing to embrace new challenges, new ideas: for instance the fruitful use of the diocesan advisory service for Inset staff training. The staff play a vital part in the nurturing of the school's spiritual life through their excellent modelling and example, for instance, their reverent demeanour at prayer and their full involvement in every liturgical event whether they are leading it or not. This is clearly mirrored in the pupils' comportment and attentiveness at prayer.

Religious Education

The school judges provision for religious education as outstanding, including the impact of teaching, assessment, and the curriculum. The reason it knows this is because it has embedded robust processes for monitoring the quality of the impact of teaching on learning, which crucially elicits feedback from the pupils. The RE subject leaders from the other academy schools meet frequently to exchange notes, peer assess and moderate provision and outcomes, a rigorous process which ensures the reliability and quality of the school's own evaluation process. Teaching over time is consistently good with much that is outstanding. Lesson observations and work scrutiny during the inspection confirmed this judgement. The school is in the fortunate position of being a training school and can identify and employ excellent young Catholic teachers of immense potential. As a result, the achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, across both key stages, consistently meets, and for a significant number of pupils, exceeds expectation. The evidence from lesson observations and work scrutinies amply bear this out. Pupils very readily contribute to their own learning by their real enjoyment of the subject, regardless of their faith background, and can question their teachers to get clearer answers that are relevant to their lives. This feedback in turn enables teachers to re-shape the lesson learning objectives to meet the pupils' learning needs. Monitoring and assessment enables staff to review their practice and its impact. Pupils receive fruitful feedback, with targets set in child friendly level indicators. The school is already aware that the impact of marking could be enhanced with more consistent challenging comments and higher expectation of the quality of the pupil's written response. The dialogue marking structure however is very well embedded and set to be an effective driver of progress. The curriculum and schemes of work are constantly being reviewed. School and parish work jointly, pray and celebrate Sunday Mass together, with the pupils taking an increasingly pro-active part in the liturgies.

St Wilfrid's is an inspiring exemplar of a school with an outstanding Catholic ethos and RE, which has the capacity to maintain and deepen its commitment to its mission through its dedicated, expertise-rich leadership, its openness to change through the supportive challenge from its sister schools, and constant seeking the best practice to maintain its high level quality of provision for Catholic life and religious education.

Yours sincerely

Joseph Skivington
Diocesan Inspector