



Nottingham Roman Catholic Diocesan Education Service

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Ms Kate Hayles
Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy
Mere Close
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23 February 2017

Dear Kate,

Diocesan Canonical Monitoring Visit to Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy

Following my visit to your school on 20 February 2017, I write on behalf of the Nottingham Roman Catholic Diocesan Education Service to report on my findings from the visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent diocesan canonical inspection.

The visit was the first since 'Religious Education' was judged to require improvement following the diocesan canonical inspection on 18 January 2016. It was carried out under Canon 806 of Canon Law.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent diocesan canonical inspection.

The school should take further action to:

- *Sustain and build upon the improvements made in the teaching of Religious Education by promoting a culture whereby objective, ongoing reflection and reviewing of practice in the light of changing expectations in education is the norm.*
- *Ensure that planned actions to address any teaching that is not securely good are taken within a reasonable timescale so that by the end of the academic year, all teaching in Religious Education is securely good and that some is outstanding.*
- *Further develop teacher feedback forms so that they clearly state next steps for improvement and set a date to review progress against these steps.*
- *Further develop teachers' confidence and skills in differentiating teaching styles to meet the specific needs of all pupils and monitor to ensure that these are consistently and effectively applied in all classes.*

The school will be re-inspected within five years of the previous diocesan canonical inspection.

Evidence Base

- Meetings with the headteacher, subject leaders for Religious Education, the Chair of Governors and the Deacon, who is also a governor.
- Lesson observations, jointly undertaken with Mr Hirst (Professional Challenge Partner for the Corpus Christi Catholic Academy Trust) in all key stages including discussions with pupils during the course of these observations.
- Scrutiny of book samples from all year groups jointly undertaken with Mr Hirst.
- Scrutiny of the school's Self Evaluation Form and other documentation provided by the headteacher.
- Scrutiny of documentation provided by the Subject leaders for Religious Education including the school's action plan.

Context

- The current headteacher has clearly developed in her role since the last inspection in January 2016 when she was newly in post.
- There have been some staffing changes since the last inspection.
- A new subject leader for Religious Education, based in Key Stage 2, has been appointed to work alongside the subject leader for Religious Education in Early Years and Key Stage 1.

Main findings

Progress Against Issues Raised in the Diocesan Canonical Report January 2016

Improve the quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education so that it is at least good by ensuring that all teachers:

Develop questioning techniques that challenge and develop pupils' thinking and understanding.

Have consistently high expectations of pupils both in terms of behaviour and the quality of oral and written work in Religious Education.

Clear, high expectations of behaviour and work.

Have a clear understanding of the lesson objectives being taught in Religious Education and plan activities that are clearly matched to those objectives.

Ensure there is a consistent approach to:

The level of challenge for all pupils in Religious Education lessons.

Pupil behaviour in lessons.

The presentation and amount of written work.

Use marking to provide clear guidance to all pupils about how well they have done in Religious Education and how they could improve their work further.

Ensure pupils are given opportunities to respond to this marking.

Marking consistent across the school.

Driver words used to give clear marking feedback

Improve the quality and efficacy of whole school self-evaluation by:

Ensuring that there is a shared understanding of what the high expectations that the school has of its pupils looks like in practice.

Developing a more systematic and focused approach to evidence gathering to provide a clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses in Religious Education.

Developing lesson observation and work scrutiny skills across the leadership team and Religious Education team so that monitoring and evaluating does not rely solely on the headteacher and can be carried out on a regular basis throughout the year.

The rigour and speed at which the school has sought to address the areas for improvement identified in the January 2016 report is impressive. Since the last inspection:

Governance:

- Governors have introduced a RAG rating system to monitor all areas of Catholic Life of the school, including Religious Education. As a result, they now have a realistic and accurate view of the school's strengths and its areas for improvement.
- A new subject leader for Religious Education has been appointed. She is based in Key Stage 2 and works alongside the subject leader for Religious Education for Early Years and Key Stage 1.
- In liaison with the headteacher and senior staff, governors have revised the behaviour and marking policies for the school.

Leadership

- The headteacher has grown in confidence and has established clear expectations in respect of behaviour and standards of work in Religious Education.
- The newly appointed subject leader for Religious Education has made a significant impact on the quality of the teaching and learning of Religious Education. She has set out clear expectations and established 'non-negotiables' such as display and use of 'driver words' and 'big questions'. As a result, there is a consistent understanding and application of the high expectations that the school's leaders have for Religious Education.

Behaviour

The revised behaviour policy is consistently applied across the school and has had a very positive impact on the standard of behaviour throughout the school. In the lessons observed, pupils' behaviour and attitudes for learning were exemplary. Pupils enthusiastically engaged in peer discussions and remained on task, even when working independently.

Marking and Written Work

The new marking policy is consistently applied across the school. Marking feedback makes good use of the 'driver words' to assist pupils in improving their work and pupils routinely respond to this feedback. The standard of work in books showed that pupils were being challenged at an appropriate level for their age and ability and were making good progress.

External Support

- The school has been very proactive in terms of seeking further support and guidance from the Diocesan Primary RE Adviser. This has included training for all teachers with respect to the planning and delivery of the *Come and See* programme.
- The Religious Education subject leaders have always sought additional support and guidance and have attended related diocesan training days including the Bishop's Certificate for Teachers' course.
- The Diocesan Primary RE Adviser also met with the headteacher and RE subject leaders in the Autumn term to discuss and review progress made with respect to the Religious Education development plan.

This letter will be copied to the Chair of Governors and the Director of Education.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Elis Field
Diocesan Canonical Inspector

