



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Monitoring Visit

ST JOHN FISHER CATHOLIC COLLEGE

[Part of the Christ the King Multi-Academy Company]

Ashfields New Road, Newcastle-Under-Lyme, Staffordshire, ST5 2SJ

Inspection date	3 rd May 2016
Reporting Inspector	Mrs Janet Mellor

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Academy
Age range of pupils	11-19 years
Number on roll	981
Appropriate authority	Board of Directors
Chair of Governors	Mr Eric Dray
Telephone number	01782 615636
E-mail address	office@sjcc.net
Date of previous inspection	January 2011
DFE School Number	8604713
Unique Reference Number	140802

Headteacher	Ms Fionnuala Hegarty
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Previous inspection:	1
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This inspection:	1
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May 2016

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

Ms Fionnuala Hegarty
St John Fisher Catholic College
Ashfields New Road
Newcastle-Under-Lyme
ST5 2SJ

Dear Ms Hegarty,

Section 48 Monitoring inspection: Tuesday 3rd May 2016

Thank you for the kind welcome which you, your staff and students gave to the Assistant Inspector, Miss Louisa Craig, and to me, when we inspected your college on 3rd May. We want to thank you too for providing the pre-inspection information and for the documentation made available to us during the inspection. Thank you for the time given by staff, the chaplains, learners, parents and the Chair of the Academy Committee.

The inspection was a "light touch" monitoring inspection because religious education (RE) and the Catholic life of your college were judged at the last inspection to be outstanding and because it is now five years since the last section 48 inspection.

The purpose of the inspection was to assess the quality of the college's self-evaluation and improvement planning for RE and Catholic life. The process for this assessment involved reading your self-evaluation documentation, interviewing senior leaders, chaplains, a representative of the Academy Committee, parents and groups of learners, as well as studying your evidence folders and examples of the learners' work. We completed seven observations of parts of RE lessons, and attended part of an assembly, form prayer and a form Mass.

On the basis of your own evaluations, you made the judgement that the college is outstanding in the quality of its Catholic life and RE. We are pleased to confirm that this judgement is accurate. The last inspection indicated some inconsistency in the quality of teaching and learning in RE. Your current evaluation is that consistency has been achieved and that all learners receive good to outstanding teaching. Our own observations support this judgement. It has been achieved through careful monitoring of lessons and work scrutiny, as well as shared resources and a sound teamwork approach, which constantly focuses on improvement. Teachers set high standards and challenging targets for their classes, and learners respond with excellent behaviour and engagement. The RE department is at the forefront of recent college developments in assessment in the light of the new GCSE grading system and rightly judges itself to have made great strides forward also in this area since the last inspection. Learners know how they are progressing, value target setting and the time given to respond to teachers' comments. The use of data is embedded, enabling precision in the development of strategies for supporting learners on an individual basis, and addressing issues such as the gap between the progress of boys and girls, and of that between those supported by additional funding and other learners. The progress of learners with special needs has been identified as a focus for attention in forward planning. Overall strategic departmental planning is in place. However, more confidence in setting measurable targets and succinct reference to evaluation would give a greater focus.

Emphasis in departmental planning is given to the immediate task of preparing for curriculum change, including for GCSE. The department justifiably evaluates positively its existing skills in delivering teaching



about other faiths. Although the evaluation refers to a *comparison* of faiths, our work scrutiny did not indicate that this is the approach. Evidence showed that the study of Judaism, for example, is rightly rooted in a deeply held respect for this world faith as well as in an aim to help learners to understand the Jewish roots of the Catholic faith. The RE department invites learner feedback through a 'comments' box and therefore monitors teaching at the point of delivery, as well as in discussions with senior colleagues and in department meetings. Learners enjoy RE because of the challenge it affords, and the excellent relationships with their teachers. Outcomes have risen in the last two years to well above diocesan averages with an almost entire cohort entry. As a result of this, progress and outcomes at GCSE are rightly evaluated as outstanding.

At Sixth Form level the college has good reason to take pride in the provision of General RE for all, and the entry of 80% of the cohort for the extended project, given the complexities of timetabling within the Trinity Consortium. Learners were seen developing high levels of research and writing skills on controversial topics within the media such as abortion and euthanasia. They have excellent knowledge of the teachings of the Catholic Church in these areas. Courses for AS and A2 in Philosophy and Ethics attract generally improving numbers of learners, and teaching, learning, progress and outcomes are closely monitored. Our work scrutiny indicated very thorough marking and feedback, with rapidly developing skills in the extended writing and argumentation required for advanced level success. Over the last three years results have been outstanding with a high proportion of top grades and an almost 100% pass rate.

The college also judges its Catholic life to be outstanding. This evaluation is based upon increasingly significant feedback and surveys, including from learners and their parents and carers. Overall improvement planning prioritises chaplaincy and ethos, and indicates a leadership role in this area by all senior managers. Targets are linked to the vision statement created in June 2015, and a recent reworking of the mission statement has led to greater clarity of purpose. Areas for development are identified through observations, formal monitoring and evaluation leading to target setting for the coming year. The lay chaplain has a key role in evaluation as he applies with growing confidence his own study skills to detailed and frank analysis. The academy committee receives regular reports on the Catholic life of the college and not only provides support and challenge but also a dynamic engagement in provision and impact, for example in the Lourdes pilgrimage.

Provision for Catholic life is well planned and seen to be the responsibility of all staff, as is stated firmly in your annual review of 2015, and this leads to many initiatives. The college is constantly eager to reach out into the local community through, for example, support for primary schools, and musical events. Sixth formers' work with the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is highly esteemed and enables them to experience work in the spirit of justice and charity, through practical tasks and fund raising. Christian unity is a focus through work with an Anglican feeder school, and with the Salvation Army at harvest thanksgiving time, also reflecting the diverse Christian intake. As a result of our interviews with learners it is clear that they are very aware of their own spiritual and moral development whilst studying at the college, through extra-curricular activities, including the Duke of Edinburgh award, retreats, RE, Citizenship and other subjects. They grow in an awareness of vocation especially through the annual vocations day, and are motivated to be ambitious and aware of their potential. Learners and their parents recognise acutely the key role of the college in personal formation. In this and its level of care for learners and their families the college clearly stands out.

The staff handbook is outstanding in its unequivocal statements about the fundamental Catholic purpose of the college and its nature as a worshipping community. The importance of high standards in liturgy is stressed, and the Church's calendar is incorporated into that of the college. As a target in improvement planning the task of developing form time prayer through a weekly reflection is supported by guidance from senior staff and monitored by them. During the inspection there was an excellent reflection on the saints' day with a Year 8 form, in which learners were challenged to think of ways in which they could live life in the way of Jesus, like the apostles. The priest chaplain contributes very effectively to planning for improvement in collective worship chiefly through discussion, and the staff liturgy group is of growing significance. Learners participate reverently in form prayer, liturgy, assemblies and Masses, contributing



and delivering their own ideas. Provision for the sacrament of reconciliation has developed following evaluation. It is highly valued by the learners and opportunities for the participation of those who are not Catholics are firmly established.

In order to assist the college in its excellent work, the following targets are proposed:

- Ensure that improvement planning for RE develops into a more succinct form and is focused on ambitious measurable targets
- Encompass into the annual review of Catholic life all surveys and feedback from the new opportunities afforded by the Trinity Consortium and the Multi Academy Company

Yours sincerely

Janet Mellor
Diocesan Inspector