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**SHREWSBURY**

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**REPORT ON THE  
MONITORING INSPECTION  
OF OUTSTANDING SCHOOLS**

**St James' Catholic High School,  
Cheadle Hulme**

**URN: 106142**

**DfE Number: 3564600**

**3<sup>rd</sup> May 2017**

**Inspector – Mr J McCann**

The areas of focus in this monitoring inspection were :-

1. **OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS** - How well pupils achieve and enjoy learning in Religious Education
2. **LEADERS AND MANAGERS** – How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan and implement improvement of outcomes for pupils.
3. **PROVISION** – The quality of Collective Worship

The school's most recent Self Evaluation judges that its **Overall Effectiveness** is **Outstanding** and supports these judgements with comprehensive evidence. This judgement is **confirmed** through Section 48 Monitoring Inspection and the following comments summarise findings in the aspects of the key areas identified above.

## **OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS**

Standards of achievement in Religious Education are very high. There is effective analysis and monitoring of academic performance with positive intervention strategies. The standard pupils achieve at GCSE RE are consistently significantly above average and are in line with, or frequently above, the standards achieved in other core subjects; this is particularly true of the highest ability pupils. The evidence provided indicates a sustained level of high achievement in terms of pupil progress and achievement at each key stage.

GCSE results in RE over the last 3 academic years show 87%-90% of the whole year cohort achieving an A\*-C grade, with more than 50% achieving an A\*-A grade in two of the three years. Targets for 2017 results are consistent with previous performance with 87% of Year 11 predicted an A\*-C grade and 45% achieving an A\*-A. The department enters all students for examination and virtually 100% consistently achieve an A\*-G grade. The department regularly has the highest number of pupils achieving A\*-A grades which makes it one of, if not the most successful subject at this level in the school. A three-year GCSE course begins in year 9 that allows opportunities for development, linkage and reinforcement of topics.

From observation, 572 responses to pupil questionnaires and interviews with pupils it is evident that the pupils in each key stage are keen to do well, display an engaged and positive attitude to the subject and work with interest and engagement in lessons. Pupils speak very positively about the subject, especially the nature of the issues studied in key stage 4, the atmosphere in class, the willingness of the staff to support them and want them to achieve at the highest level.

The pupils gain a good understanding of the beliefs and traditions of Catholicism while also engaging with the broader spiritual, moral, cultural and social issues of contemporary society. This is all underpinned by the many opportunities that exist beyond the classroom for pupils to be engaged with local, national and international charities, and engagement as Spirituality Prefects and Charity and Form Prayer reps. Pupils understand the vision and values of the school and are very supportive of them. The school's Mission Statement and its meaning are introduced to all students through RE in Year 7 and is a recurrent theme throughout their 5 years. The Mission Statement and 'Shine' Values are prominently displayed throughout the school and in all documentation.

## **LEADERS AND MANAGERS**

The Headteacher, senior leadership team and governing body are deeply committed to the Church's mission in education. The commitment to these values, in which academic and personal growth are so important, is evidenced in the school's policy documents and practices and its effective leadership, management and governance. There is unequivocal and explicit evidence that the Catholic mission of the school is a priority, along with opportunities for spiritual and moral development and collective worship. This is most demonstrably evidenced through the appointment of an effective dedicated lay chaplain whose impact is acknowledged throughout the school at all levels. The commitment of all to the provision of a chapel to accommodate whole class groups in a school where classroom space is at a premium and the allocation of an appropriate budget to support chaplaincy provides further evidence of this commitment.

There is effective monitoring of academic performance and appropriate intervention strategies undertaken by the Head/Acting Head of the RE department. The department is line managed by a member of the SLT and offered support by a link member of the governing body, who is also a priest in one of the school's parishes. The Catholic life of the school is monitored and reviewed by the SLT, governors and the chaplain as well as the pastoral team. Parental and pupil opinion is sought through questionnaires which are analysed and impact upon the processes of evaluation and planning. Classroom observations are regular, accurate and well documented. Prayer and reflection are an integral part of the Wednesday Morning Prayer, form and assembly provision and are subject to informal monitoring by the lay chaplain, senior managers and pastoral leaders. Staff, governors and the priests from the six parishes, which many of the pupils come from, appreciate and understand the school's mission and purpose and are wholly and actively involved in their implementation. There is general pride in what the school represents and the pupils are extremely positive in support of this. Students overwhelmingly (98%) believe that 'this is a good school to be at'.

## **PROVISION**

Collective Worship, in its many forms, is central to the daily life of the school and forms a key part of every school celebration. The organisation of the provision is a strength of the school as it involves so many senior leaders, thereby providing strength and depth – a senior leader is the effective line manager for each of the strands and their role is much appreciated by colleagues.

Praise, celebration and affirmation are a significant feature in the life of the school, as evidenced through interviews, questionnaire responses, the school calendar of events and the extensive weekly school newsletter. The school has a dedicated lay chaplain to promote, deliver and facilitate the development of Collective Worship across each year group and provide support for staff and pupils. The lay chaplain and senior leadership work closely with a group of Y11 Spirituality Prefects and Form Prayer reps in delivering Wednesday Morning Prayer and Form Prayer and reflection in form at the start of each day. Evidence from senior leaders, governors, staff, pupils and parish priests indicates that this element of school provision is very effective, highly valued, well developed and firmly integrated into the life and practice of pupils and staff.

Morning Prayer, on a Wednesday before school begins, is an excellent example of the work the school is engaged in, in developing the prayer life of pupils, helping them gain in confidence and fully engaging them. Members of the senior leadership team also work closely with the Head/Acting Head of the RE Department, lay chaplain and pastoral leaders in leading year group Acts of Collective Worship.

Collective worship and prayer are an integral part of the daily life of the school, as are planned opportunities to receive the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation, with a sympathetic appreciation of the opportunities given to those of different denominations and faiths. The school is actively and positively engaged with all of the priests in the parishes it serves and welcomes their significant contribution to the Catholic life of the school. These activities are linked to practical experiences and challenges that enrich the students' spiritual, moral and cultural education, through charitable fund raising e.g. CAFOD, Wellspring, Prem Dan, St Ann's Hospice, Retrak; the work of the Faith in Action group; working with other Catholic schools as part of Mini DASH.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS**

St James' lives its mission statement. Outcomes for pupils, the provision for Catholic Education, leadership and management in the development of the Catholic life of the school are all confirmed by this inspection as **outstanding**. The mission of the school is clearly evidenced throughout in terms of practice, aspiration and relationships, all in the context of striving for the highest academic achievement. Much of this comes from the key leaders in the school embracing the Catholic ethos and letting it SHINE for everyone to see and give the glory to God

## **IMPROVEMENT SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION**

- The appointment of a lay school chaplain.
- The strength and depth of the 'Catholic Life Team' of senior leaders
- Whole school review of Mission Statement and Values undertaken January '14
- Pupils throughout the school involved in the planning, support and delivery of collective worship, prayer and development of spirituality.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**In order to maintain and enhance the progress of the school even further it is recommended that the school:**

- **conduct a full school review of the Vision and Mission statement engaging all new stakeholders**
- **extend and develop more formal approaches to link governors attachment to faculties.**
- **review the curriculum offer in Key Stage 3 Religious Education as a consequence of the new GCSE course introduced into KS4, to ensure balance particularly with regard to other world religions.**
- **further develop the publication and dissemination of the prayers and reflections created in school to a wider audience.**