



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST EDMUND CAMPION CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL ERDINGTON, BIRMINGHAM

Inspection dates 20th – 21st May 2008
Reporting Inspector Mr Joseph Skivington

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Catholic Secondary
Age range of pupils	11 - 18 years
Number on roll	983
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mr Michael McCormack
School address	Sutton Road Erdington Birmingham B23 5XA
Telephone number	0121 464 7700
E-mail address	enquiry@stedcamp.bham.sch.uk
Parish	The Abbey, Erdington
Date of previous inspection	April 2005
DCSF School Number	330/4663
Unique Reference Number	103537

Headteacher Mrs Philomena Steele

Description of the school

St Edmund Campion is an 11-18 co-educational school with 983 students, 75% of whom are baptised Catholic. The majority of students come from challenging socio-economic backgrounds in the poorest wards of the city. The number of students with special education needs is about average. Prior attainment on entry overall is below national expectation: in religious knowledge it is broadly average, depending on the previous primary school or family background. About 40% of the staff are Catholic. The Catholic life of the school is supported by the local priests and a dedicated full time lay chaplain. The school has undergone significant changes in the last three years, being moved on to a single site, with all the consequent disruption, and the appointment of a new headteacher two years ago.

Overall effectiveness of the school

St Edmund Campion is a satisfactory and rapidly improving Catholic school with good features. The excellent vision and leadership of the headteacher has inspired governors and staff and is a key element in driving up standards of achievement in religious education. There is a strong Catholic ethos which is grounded in the mission of the school and is the yardstick by which the success of the school is measured. It is characterised by an openness and respect for every individual as a special person created in the image of God. The provision for collective worship, as well as the spiritual and moral development of the students, is good, centred as it is at the very heart of the school in the chapel and chaplaincy. Standards of achievement are satisfactory in the main school as well as the sixth form. Teaching and learning are good with some outstanding practice observed. Leadership and management of the subject are effective under the present acting head of faculty, with the supportive help of the senior leadership team. The recruitment of a permanent post holder is proving an ongoing problem, which needs a solution if the good work already achieved is to be secured and developed further.

Areas identified at the last inspection in April 2005 have been addressed with mixed success. Poor results gained at GCSE in that year were replicated in 2006, but since then have improved significantly although still below the standards achieved by students nationally. Teaching and learning are now solidly good across all stages. The mission underpins the work of the school although there are no structures in place to regularly monitor the effectiveness of the mission statement and its implementation in all areas of school life.

The school has an accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses and strategies are in place which have already led to significant improvement, particularly in standards achieved in religious education. The numbers of students choosing to study the subject at A Level has risen dramatically because it is seen as a worthwhile subject and is well taught. There is a commitment and determination in leadership at all levels to reinvigorate both the subject and the Catholic ethos of the school, and there are clear signs of impressive gains already, to prove that there is the capacity for St Edmunds to improve even further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Appoint a link governor who will support and monitor the subject effectively and report back to the governing body
- Fine tune the assessment and tracking procedures recently introduced, in order to enable each student to achieve their full potential.
- Examine and reflect on the mission of the school, and its implementation, as a whole community and with greater frequency.

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

The Catholic life of the school and its leadership and management are good. Under the excellent leadership of the headteacher, the governing body and staff are fully committed to maintaining and nurturing the Catholic ethos of the school. The mission statement was re-examined two years ago and aspects have been fruitfully discussed on staff retreats, but a revisit as part of the school's self evaluation of its Catholic life to consolidate its mission is due. The school has yet to develop fully comprehensive procedures to ensure a well grounded, understanding of the quality of its Catholic life. The spiritual and moral development of the students is promoted well by all staff, not only in lessons, but also by example. Students are encouraged successfully to live out their beliefs by helping and caring for others. This is evident in their generally good behaviour around the school as well as the good relationships they have with one another. Non-Catholic staff are supported well, and given the opportunity to discuss and find out what it is to teach in a Catholic school, both through the induction process and regular Inset days. There are good links with the parish, and very good links with the primary feeder schools have been established, specifically through the efforts of the lay chaplain.

Collective Worship

The quality of the provision for prayer, collective worship and the liturgical life of the school is good. Prayer is an integral part of the school day and the chapel and chaplain are always available to the students. A voluntary weekly Mass is very well attended, with sixth formers setting a very good example. The liturgical year is well planned and participation of students is high. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is well received both by Catholic and non-Catholic students. Students take part in assemblies and respond with reverence and attention. Collective worship contributes enormously to their spiritual and moral development, because they hear the word of God in homily and exhortation, and have the example of Jesus constantly put before them through His parables and teaching. This is evident in the exercise of their generosity through many charitable projects and fundraising, as well as their care for others and respect for life.

Community Cohesion

All are welcome and made to feel welcome in St Edmund Campion as is evident from the mix of faiths amongst the students and staff. There is an openness and inclusivity which is celebrated and carefully nurtured. The views of those of different faiths or none are respected, without coercion, but rather as an invitation to participate fully in the life of the school. There is a consistent set of values which are espoused and shared by all. Leadership has promoted really fruitful links with other schools in the community. The school and its facilities are physically shared with the local community, especially through extended school and summer events. The religious education programme gives students the opportunity to explore other belief systems and culture both in lessons and assemblies. The study of Judaism and Islam is particularly well covered. The fact that all students and staff participate fully in liturgies including the Eucharistic celebration helps to cement the unity of the community. Students say their views are listened to and respected, and the school responds to their initiatives, for example, through the school council which organises many charity fundraising events which benefit the local and wider community.

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

Students enter the school with levels of religious knowledge which are broadly in line with national expectations. A special induction series of lessons on the Mass successfully introduces students, particularly from non-Catholic schools, to the meaning and significance of the Eucharistic celebration. By the end of Year 9 standards are slightly above average for the majority of students. This represents good achievement. Those with special educational needs achieve as well as the others because of extra help and tasks that are often, though not always, tailored to their learning needs. Gifted and talented students are identified but not always given sufficiently challenging work to do. Good progress is evident in written work. Students from the start are encouraged to form opinions and defend them, so that extended writing skills are good with growing confidence in evaluation. For example, Year 7 produced thoughtful work on decisions and consequences, as well as empathetic writing describing the feelings of the Wise men on their way to Bethlehem. Year 8 work benefits from very helpful marking and comments, so that progress can clearly be seen over the year. They summarise well, as in an exercise on evil and choices, and can see the relevance of belief to action. Year 9 work is well in line and above, thanks to the good teaching and high challenge to which they respond with enthusiasm. Much of the written work and class work is based on discussion, with quite mature and reflective contributions, as well as a good grasp of the main tenets of the Faith.

Standards at GCSE level, however, are below national expectations, and achievement in recent years has been, and remains, unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, current progress is now good. This is the result of a state of affairs two or three years ago when there was no monitoring of academic progress and large numbers of weaker students were not entered for the examination. In the last two years much effort has been devoted to raising standards with identifiable success. Numbers of students gaining grades A*-C at GCSE Level are steadily rising. In 2006 only 27% gained these grades. In 2007 this was raised to 38% and predicted grades and mock examination results indicate over 50% will achieve A*-C in 2008. This is still below national expectation, but shows an improving trend. The present Year 9 are commencing GCSE and the prognosis for Year 10 indicates continuing rising standards. All students are entered for the examination. They themselves now say that this subject now really interests them which it had not done before. Sixth formers follow a well-planned course which is popular and well attended. Growing numbers are opting for religious studies at A Level. Whereas there were only two candidates who sat the examination in 2007, there are now over fifteen studying at AS Level. Standards are broadly satisfactory with some excellent work seen. Students work hard in their lessons and appreciate the help they get from their teachers.

Quality of Provision for Religious Education

Teaching and Learning

Teaching and learning are both good, ranging from outstanding to satisfactory. Good teaching is characterised by strategies that encourage analytic and discursive skills, high expectation, good pace and work that challenges both lower and higher attaining students. Group discussion and peer assessment are used very effectively and students remark how interesting and relevant the topics are to them. Their knowledge of the beliefs of the Church is sound. The marking of books is generally impressive in its challenge and detail. The teachers' comments really do show the students how they can improve and get better and it works because progress is identifiable in the quality of written work over time. Assessment and tracking procedures are in place but need to be adjusted to provide a clearer picture of attainment and more realistic targets. Where teaching is less effective, the level of challenge or the presentation of the topic is not fully thought out. For example, the idea of stewardship of the earth was introduced in a lesson on the environment which could easily have passed as a geography or science lesson, where the topic had already been effectively covered in those subjects. Students work well together and are fully involved in their

learning. No lessons were observed in Year 11, Year 12 and Year 13 because of their involvement in the public examinations.

Curriculum

The curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and the *Curriculum Directory for Religious Education*. It also meets the needs of all the students. The programme for sex and relationship education is well planned. The sixth form curriculum is relevant to the students' needs and perceived as such. They are able to form their own views in the light of the teaching of the Church, for instance, in discussing current moral issues. Extra curricular activities enrich the programme, giving the students opportunities to put their Faith into action. Students have benefited from trips to Rome, helping out with the Lourdes pilgrimage, and retreats, such as the very successful Year 10 retreat at Soli House. Students said that they would like more such trips with wider participation.

Leadership and Management in Religious Education

Leadership of the subject, under the present acting head of faculty, with the close support of the senior team, has been effective in bringing about a remarkable improvement in standards of achievement. She has raised the profile and esteem of the subject, developed a very positive team spirit, and is cultivating an appreciation of the need for academic rigour, which was previously lacking. Assessment for learning and the closer monitoring of individual progress with achievable targets are at an early stage, but beginning to provide a useful and more accurate picture of the potential of each student and their developing needs. More lesson observations to share good practice are needed and are planned. There is an urgency to recruit, or train in-house, a permanent head of faculty so that the process of improvement now in place can be maintained and developed further. The department has sufficient resources, although not an administrative base, which are managed satisfactorily. The use of ICT is now part of the normal lesson and is an effective support for both teacher and student. Wall displays affirm the students' work and demonstrate the strong Catholic ethos in the school. Governors discharge their responsibilities towards the subject satisfactorily and there is a governor with the specific responsibility for religious education.