



**Department for
Christian Education**

MONITORING VISIT at St Francis Xavier's College on 4 February 2016

THESE ARE AREAS TO CELEBRATE

- Catholic life at St Francis Xavier's College is well underpinned by the Scriptural call expressed through its Mission Statement to, "Live out the values of Christ and His Gospel". This is founded on the charism of the Brothers of Christian Instruction, who by way of serving the school and residing on site continue to provide a living, personal witness. The chaplain, a religious brother, has considerable experience and established impact. His facilitation has assisted pupils and staff to interact with religious confreres throughout the provinces, more recently in Canada and France, thus reinforcing the schools global dimension. The chaplain is closely involved with the diocesan chaplaincy network, which adds a continually refreshed scope to his ministry. There is active involvement by pupils in wider ranging community involvement for service toward the common good. Neither is chaplaincy insular. It extends to include all who wish to be involved. Staff and pupils provided a tour of the attractively created pictorial evidence of their social involvement at home and abroad. Pupils connect this work with the Mission Statement whose aims they readily support and understand. They also speak of the influence of Religious Education in providing both theory and the motivation to live by Gospel informed values. Governors and leadership manage and monitor Catholic life effectively through annual reporting from staff. They are well placed to lead by example and practice. The governors refer to the needs of pupils to have the occasions in school to participate in sacramental practices. This extends to the staff who are called to identify the meaning of Catholic life and how to enrich its promotion.
- Collective Worship provides a strong commitment to both public and private prayer and worship. During monitoring Collective Worship included pupils and staff. Readings were meaningful due to confident delivery and audibility. The whole presentation was relevant to the theme. Periods of reflection were supported by inspirational music. Pupils were able to commemorate and receive the challenge to learn from the tragedies of history. Collective Worship takes place in form and year groups. The content is thematic and expresses the Liturgical Year. It also expresses well the inclusivity of Catholic Social Teaching

and how to practically live that teaching. It includes knowledge, understanding and where appropriate the celebration of other world faiths and traditions. Coordination and monitoring are equally as collective and includes chaplaincy, management and member of the Religious Education staff. The chaplain liaises with other schools so as to maintain levels of best practice. Pupils value Collective Worship because they know it is prayer. They are offered time for reflection. The content motivates them to take action. They are keen to be involved as participants and in leading acts of worship. Pupils drew attention to the theme of the week expressed as a prayer focus at the main entrance. They shared understanding of the Year of Mercy, also symbolised by artwork at the school entrance. Pupils readily link the theme of Mercy expressed through Collective Worship, as a key strand of Catholic life.

- Religious Education is efficiently and managed with dedication by governors, senior and departmental leadership. The Section 48 Self Evaluation document is developing into a practical expression of the departmental improvement plan. The head of department, appointed substantively at the beginning of the present academic year is a time serve member of the team. The department of eight is committed, united, hardworking and driven to maintain Religious Education at the core of Catholic life. It benefits from significant inclusion of senior leadership and established members of staff. They attend all diocesan in- service. Best practice is shared.
- Achievement in Religious Education has to be judged within the context of the widening intake of mixed ability pupils. By the end of Key Stage 3 the majority are making at least three levels of progress matched to their own personal baseline starting points. In Key Stage 4 whilst recognising that performance at GCSE falls well below the national average for A*-C, the school is addressing this shortfall. Projected performance for the current Year 10 is set to reach within the 60% -65% range, thereby resuming rates of progress as of three years ago and so falling close to national rates of achievement. For A level, performance is stronger with 87% achieving A-E. In general Religious Education student are progressing between Levels 2 and 3. The department continues to address achievement through rising standards in teaching and learning. There is thorough preparation for GCSE and A Level though increasing attention to examination practice. In all key stages the process for assessment is meticulous. Work is accurately matched to Religious Education Levels of Attainment and to public examination grading as appropriate. Formative and end of task marking and annotation is directional. Pupils are given clear pathways for progress and encouraged to comment upon personal performance. Pupils enjoy Religious Education because they are motivated to achieve through clear study pathways.

- During monitoring, the quality of teaching and learning was high. There were two joint observations of a full and part lesson. The first group was of higher ability and the second, mainly of lower ability. At all times expectations were high. Teaching and learning was thoroughly differentiated. Learning support assistance was well deployed. Learning outcomes were shared. Prior learning was developed. Main tasks were extremely creative and appropriately challenging. Pupils worked well both collaboratively and independently. There was efficient monitoring of progress. All pupils remained on task. Constructive use of open questions encouraged confident responses. Pupils listened to each other and celebrated progress. Plenary activities were well linked to subsequent personal preparation for subsequent lessons. Pupils enjoyed their work because it was, in their view, exciting and brought Religious Education to life.
- The Religious Education curriculum fulfils the requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales. In all key stages there is implicit research, revelation and response, which upholds to British Values. This is evident through the Gospel values applied to life. There is an emphasis on the call of Scripture to love God and to love one another. The focus is on personal respect for self and others. The high level coverage of other world faiths and religions is well rooted in a sense of community. Pupils are led to understand that faiths and religions work together in harmony. They can respect their differences. . Catholic belief, practice and social teaching is careful, thorough and applied directly to being responsible citizens in contemporary society. The school is rigorously applying curriculum reform in Key Stage 3 and is set to embrace the same for GCSE and A level.
- Consequently St Francis Xavier's retains the highest expectations for Catholic life through the practical living of its Mission. The school remains equally committed to Religious Education. Leadership at all levels is clear and realistic in setting targets for continued improvement.

AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Continue to reconstruct the Section 48 Self Evaluation Document as a practical guideline for improvement. Seek diocesan assistance with this task.
- Maintain and develop the rising standards in teaching and learning to bring about increased achievement at GCSE. Continue to attend all diocesan in-service.

Monitoring Visitor: Deacon Paul Mannings