



March 2016

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

Mr Michael Burrowes,
Principal,
Cardinal Griffin Catholic College
Cardinal Way
Stafford Road
Cannock WS11 4AW

Dear Mr Burrowes

Section 48 Monitoring inspection:

Thank you for the warm welcome which you, your staff and students gave to the Assistant Inspector, Mrs Rachel Waugh, and to me, when we inspected your college on 11th February 2016. We want to thank you, too, for the very efficient way in which the pre-inspection information and analysis was sent to us, for the documentation which was made available during the inspection, and for the time given by staff, the chaplain, students and chair of governors.

The inspection was a “light touch” monitoring inspection because your school was judged at the last Section 48 inspection to be a good school with some outstanding aspects and because it is now approaching five years since you last received a diocesan 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. In order to be able to make this judgement we read your self-evaluation document, interviewed senior leaders, the chaplain, the chair of governors and students. We studied your evidence folders and examples of students’ work. We completed four observations of RE lessons, three of which were with senior leaders. We attended Mass with a house group and a Year 12 prayer assembly.

Your own internal evaluations judge your college to be outstanding overall, both in the quality of RE and of Catholic life. We are unable at this stage fully to endorse this judgement. There are, however, a significant number of outstanding elements; nothing that is less than good with some outstanding features; outstanding capacity for accelerated improvement. Leadership and management of the college, and the RE department, are strong, and you are helped by a knowledgeable, committed and effective governing body, not least its chair, who maintain a rigorous combination of support and challenge.

The self evaluation document shows a thorough awareness of the issues from the last inspection, though a continued focus on the reflective aspects of learning with some groups would be of benefit. There is good evidence of the importance placed on evaluation in the development of the college since then, and how it can feed effectively into future planning. However, current documentation for Catholic life is not consistent in quality or quantity: evaluations are not summarised in a way which enables forward planning to be totally transparent or to ensure outcomes for school improvement. Teachers know the college and its students well, and are focused on success and improvement. They could consolidate this improvement across Key Stage 3 by more secure use of assessment for learning, offering targeted ways forward for progress and attainment. Planning includes a focus on spiritual and moral development in a cross-curricular sphere; a more



specific focus on vocations is required, though the college is being supported in this by Father Dominic Chuka and the introduction of the Magis Curriculum and a vocations day.

RE is delivered by a recently-established team of committed teachers, very well led by a new head of department, and underpinned, as are the Catholic life and pastoral support given across the college, by engagement with the Jesuit Institute. Whilst attainment in external examinations is only good at present, mitigated to some degree recently by changes to GCSE and the internal delivery structure which have been addressed, there are clear, timetabled processes now in place for regular review, follow-up and evaluation, involving staff and students. For example, individual action plans in the sixth form involve dialogue and undertakings by students, staff and the home, and are regularly reviewed and revised where necessary. Self-evaluation identifies improvement targets for GCSE and A Level. Progress from Year 9 is very strong, benefitting from detailed analysis of data and evidence of prior attainment, and leading to action points which leadership pursues with vigour and determination. Progress in Key Stage 3 is more modest, with evidence on entry from a range of feeder schools. In order to address this, a primary liaison role has been created to ensure greater consistency and accuracy of data on entry, and the department delivers a teaching module on basic Catholicity. Students from all groups are well served by the curriculum and teaching across RE, which is always at least good with outstanding features, although the reflective aspects of learning should not be overlooked, as suggested by the previous inspection. Teachers plan and analyse their lessons closely. They learn from their own work and that of their colleagues in the team, sharing planning and resources and modifying them according to the students' needs. Students are introduced to other world faiths through the curriculum and wider life of the college. A range of strategies and resources are well used to support learning; however, the learning environment would be enhanced by clearer focus on prayer corners in classrooms, and displays containing students' work. Students are enthusiastic about their work in RE.

Evaluation of assessment strategies plays a major role in the work of the RE Department. Under the clear-sighted leadership of the head of department, positive progress in assessment processes has been made through the use of data, together with pre- and post-assessment activities and *DIRT* time. Application is more consistent in Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3, however, and sixth form assessment practices need to come into line with best practice in younger year groups. Whilst marking is not yet totally consistent, it is clear that teachers have secure strategies for helping students to move forward. Students benefit from these strategies through opportunities for self- and peer-assessment, which in turn enhances their understanding of how to improve. Greater emphasis could be placed on WAGs and the continual use of SMART targets.

The college judges its Catholic life to be outstanding. This is broadly reliable, because the college makes extensive and effective provision, with links to the framework of the Jesuit Institute integrated within its life as a diocesan school, benefits acknowledged by the departing parish priest and the chair of governors. However, reliance for this judgement is made rather on verbal assurances and personal experiences during the inspection than a clear, structured and consistent evidence base. The departure of the lay chaplain, who played a central role in so much of the Catholic life of the college and the quality of its collective worship, as well as liaising beyond the college, has prompted a review of ways forward, to be undertaken by a representative group of staff, students and governors, and to include a reshaping of the mission statement and ways further to promote Gospel values. The vibrant Catholic life of the college is evident through opportunities for collective worship or quiet reflection, displays around the building, and all interpersonal contacts. Pastoral care is strong, with channels of support through staff, but also through the vertical tutor structure and its buddying system, and behaviour is exemplary. Works of charity are encouraged across the college, and each year group has a responsibility in this. The introduction of the Magis Curriculum, formerly called enrichment, offering over 30 clubs and producing a termly bulletin to showcase best practice, provides a focus for vocations, the development of skills and natural talents. There are links with ventures across the world, for example World Youth Day and volunteering



schemes, and this weekly provision promotes the truth that “God is in everything”. Parents and students are encouraged to become involved in the life of the college and their views sought, through questionnaires for example.

The programme for collective worship is carefully integrated into the daily life of the college and is monitored by senior staff, a link governor and the lay chaplain, who had regular meetings with the headteacher and submitted a written report to governors. The college has been expertly guided by the chaplain and lay chaplain, though both have recently moved on. A new priest will be arriving soon, and the college is actively seeking to appoint a lay chaplain. There is a strong determination to sustain the quality of collective worship, which enhances the spiritual development of students, Catholic and non-Catholic, through its programme of house Masses, voluntary Masses, form assemblies and prayer assemblies. Students are confident to take on responsibilities, and are fully involved in music, reading, serving and prayer life. Faith ambassadors and the Sixth Form Chaplaincy Team are very active and effective, supported by a group of Sacristans, and the chaplaincy improvement plan provides a valuable point of reference for planning and evaluating collective worship, as well as college life more widely.

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

- Secure assessments at KS3 so that students know exactly where they are and how to progress
- Make more explicit the monitoring and evaluation of Catholic life, especially with the new chaplain and lay chaplain

Yours sincerely

Paul Nutt
Diocesan Inspector