

DIOCESE OF MENEVIA



Bishop Vaughan Catholic School Inspection Report on the Religious Dimension of the School

Headteacher	Mr J Blackburn
Reporting Inspector:	Mrs P M Landers
Accompanying Inspector:	Mrs M Harris
Inspection date:	March 26-29 2012
Chair of Governors:	Mrs J Gomes
Type of School:	Comprehensive
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Number on roll:	1400
Date of previous Inspection:	27 March 2006
School Address:	Mynydd Garnllwyd Road Swansea SA6 7QG
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Parish(es) served:	Cathedral Church of St Joseph Our Lady of Lourdes, Townhill Our Lady Star of the Sea, Mumbles Holy Cross, Gendros St Benedict, Sketty St David, City Centre St Illtyd, Danygraig

St Joachim and St Anne, Dunvant
 St Peter, Llandore
 The Sacred Heart, Morriston
 St Benedict, Clydach
 Blessed Sacrament, Gorseinon
 Sacred Heart, Ystradgynlais

Appropriate Authority: City and County of Swansea

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Menevia and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 50 of the Education Act 2005

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key question 1: How good are outcomes?

Key question 2: How good is provision?

Key question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on prospects for improvement.

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector leading practice or practise that is both consistent and highly effective.
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement

The table below shows the terms that Diocesan inspectors use and a broad idea of their meaning. It is for guidance only.

Proportion	Description
With very few exceptions	Nearly all
90% or more	Most
70% or more	Many
60% or more	A majority

Close to 50%	Half / around half
Below 40%	A minority
Below 20%	Few
Less than 10%	Very few

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Diocesan website: www.dioceseofmenevia.org

Context

Bishop Vaughan Comprehensive School is an 11-18 mixed school serving the City and County of Swansea and the Diocese of Menevia. The school has 1400 pupils, of whom 261 are in the Sixth Form. At the time of the last inspection there were 1271 pupils on roll. At post 16 the school works jointly with the neighbouring Morriston School and in partnership with the other schools with sixth forms and with Gower College. Pupils come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds and an increasing number from economically disadvantaged homes. 20% are entitled to free school meals. There are 4 pupils for whom Welsh is their first language.

In recent years there has been a trend of increasing numbers of pupils with low reading ages and a variety of special needs. The intake is largely from white British families though there is a growing percentage (17%) from ethnic minority communities, many of whom have English as their second language. 52% of the pupils are baptised Catholics, the majority of the others are Christian though there are children of other faiths, and pupils whose families can support the Catholic ethos and want an education in a church school.

Significant changes have occurred within the Governing body since the last inspection. There are several new governors, including parent, LA and staff governors. The Chair and Vice Chair of Governors were in place at the last Inspection as were the Foundation Governors. The Headteacher was in post at the time of the last inspection though there have been several changes to the Leadership Team and a number of newly appointed teachers. There have been no changes to the buildings since the last inspection. The school continues to do as much as it can to maintain the physical environment.

Summary

How effective is the school in providing Catholic education?	Excellent
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Bishop Vaughan School is an excellent school because:

- the Catholic ethos permeates all aspects of school life. The Catholic life of the school is given a high priority which has positive outcomes for all pupils,
- pupils' spiritual needs are met through a variety of appropriately planned liturgies, retreats, pilgrimages, charity work and other activities.
- the well being of each child is a high priority and the school has a very effective pastoral system'
- the school is well led and managed by governors and senior leaders who are fully committed to catholic education,
- the quality of teaching in the religious education department is very good and teachers are reflective and evaluative,
- pupils make very good progress academically, examination results are very good,
- sector leading practice with the provision of A/S Ethics at KS4 for the more able and talented,
- sector leading practice with the provision for Philosophy for Children in religious education lessons,
- partnerships with parents, feeder primary schools, local secondary schools, parishes and other agencies are well developed,
- there is excellent support from parish priests and the diocese,
- Pupil behaviour is very good and a strong feature of the school.

What are the school's prospects for improvement?

Excellent

- the outstanding vision and leadership of the headteacher and senior leadership team, ably supported by the head of the religious education department,
- the guidance, support and challenge provided by the governors. The Governing body clearly understands its role and is actively pursuing excellence,
- the Head teacher and senior leaders have robust systems for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing performance in the school,
- a team of dedicated religious education teachers who are committed to delivering high quality, challenging lessons,

- the excellent support for liturgy and PSE provided by teachers from other departments including Music, English, Art, WBQ and Geography.
- the appointment of a part time Chaplain who ably complements the work of the religious education department and the pastoral care system.
- the ethos of the school, which recognises and enhances the value of each individual in the school within a culture of continuous improvement. All groups of pupils are challenged and supported.

Recommendations and Required Actions

R1. Develop a programme of Induction for newly appointed staff into an understanding of, and a commitment to, the Catholic life of the school.

R2. Further develop Assessment for Learning so that it empowers pupils to improve the quality of their own learning and is consistent across the department.

R3. Continue to develop pedagogy to bring all staff in the department up to the standard of the best.

R4. Consolidate the importance of the RE department as the centre of school life by creating a suite of RE rooms enhanced by ICT. This was a recommendation of the previous inspection of 2006 which the school has been unable to progress.

R5. Consider ways of further developing chaplaincy provision within the school to consolidate and enhance the work of the Chaplain.

What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

Progress in addressing the recommendations will be monitored by the Diocese.

Main Findings

KQ1. How good are outcomes? Excellent

Lessons observations provide evidence of pupil enjoyment and engagement in learning activities, as did pupil and parental comments in questionnaires and meetings. At Key Stage Three the course is based on ICONS and is assessed using NBRIA levels. The quality of Key stage 3 work observed was of a high standard, in particular the extended writing tasks. Pupils are presented with challenging activities which they enjoy, responding well to the challenges presented. Responses in lessons showed that pupils are becoming religiously literate and were willing to communicate their ideas confidently. Most pupils keep on task and concentrate well.

The Religious Education examination results are of a consistently high standard and compare well with similar schools; outcomes are excellent at GCSE, AS and A level. Of particular note are the AS results obtained in KS4 by the more able and talented pupils. Taking into consideration the varied baseline on entry into the school, outcomes are extremely good. Most of the time differentiation provides for outcomes appropriate to the ability of the child. The departmental self evaluation recognises underachievement in the Basic Skills group of pupils, and strategies have been put in place to rectify this.

Pupils respond extremely well to lessons, liturgy and all aspects of the Catholic life of the school. They can articulate the school ethos and have a sound understanding of the key celebrations in the liturgical calendar. They express their beliefs confidently and put them into action through the extensive charity work that takes place. Pupils treat each other with a high level of respect, including those of other faiths and none. They take full advantage of the opportunities offered for retreats and pilgrimage and speak with enjoyment and appreciation of these activities. Of particular note is the sixth form trips to Rome and Santiago de Compostella. Other activities include representation at the Flame Congress and the World Youth Day in Madrid.

Pupil response to prayer and worship is very good and is an outstanding feature of the school. All pupils have ample opportunity to participate in a variety of liturgy and act with reverence and respect. A particular strength is the presence of a school Chaplain and the use of the chapel. The Chaplain is well regarded by staff and pupils. He engages well with young people and is highly committed to his role. The voluntary mass observed was well attended with genuine participation from pupils. The Lenten liturgy was outstanding,

enabling pupils to make connections between faith and life and providing an opportunity for reflection. Pupils prepare and lead acts of worship The Sacrament of Reconciliation was also offered to pupils during the course of the week.

KQ2. How good is provision? Excellent

There are seven specialist teachers in the Religious Education department. Teaching is highly effective in enthusing pupils, ensuring that they learn very well, and develop their understanding of the Catholic faith. Excellent subject knowledge is applied to challenge and inspire learners. Teachers employ a range of teaching styles and plan activities which enable pupils to work independently and collaboratively. Generally, teachers have high expectations of their pupils who make excellent progress in most lessons. Resources are sufficient and are of a high quality. Pupils are provided with detailed feedback, they know how well they have done and can discuss what they need to do to sustain good progress.

The school's detailed and accurate information on pupil achievement is used effectively to identify and quickly tackle under achievement so that pupils achieve well. Regular assessment, including pupil self assessment, ensures that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Challenging targets are set with pupils. The use of questioning is a particular strength to push forward pupils' learning, particularly at Key stages 4 and 5. Some further assessment for learning strategies are employed to empower pupils to improve their own learning.

All Bishops' Conference requirements and local diocesan requirements are fully met. The curriculum helps pupils to critically reflect on the Catholic faith and the responses it gives to questions of meaning and purpose. As a result pupils are able to clearly articulate their own personal response to the deeper meanings of life. Classrooms are well maintained with good displays of pupil work and provide a stimulating learning environment. Programmes of studies are relevant to the pupils' learning needs; differentiation was evident in all lessons. A particular strength of the department is the way courses are matched to the learning needs of the individual. Pupils benefit from excellent opportunities to improve their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This includes Philosophy for Children, Liturgy, Retreats, Pilgrimages and celebration days within school. The Welsh dimension is encouraged through the House system named after Celtic Saints, the use of incidental Welsh, prayer in Welsh, the Eisteddfod and the programmes of study. The Religious Education department also delivers part of the PSHE programme, including

Sex Education and part of the Basic Skills communication programme, Levels 1 and 2.

Prayer and collective worship are central to the life of the whole school community and a key part of every school celebration and meeting. Prayer opportunities are provided for staff and pupils on a voluntary basis and the voluntary Mass was well attended. Acts of worship are truly Catholic in character, but inclusive of all. There is a wide range of prayer and worship opportunities and pupils respond well to these. The hall is well presented for liturgical celebrations, with appropriate symbols. Good use is made of power point images and music to enhance the sacred space. Artefacts are used when appropriate. The Chapel is central to the prayer life of the school and is well used. Pupils are encouraged to plan and lead worship, as was evident with the Lenten celebration where a group of year 13 students planned and led a very impressive and thought provoking liturgy. Staff are also very skilful in preparing and leading acts of worship, including those observed in form tutor time. The legal requirement for the school to provide a daily act of collective worship for every pupil is met.

KQ3. How good are leadership and management? Excellent

Members of the governing body fully understand and are able to articulate the Mission of the school. They know the school well and bring considerable expertise to their role. There are robust systems in place for evaluating the Catholic life of the school. Religious Education is treated as a core subject and governors are very involved in discussing and maintaining standards. The RE and Pastoral Governors Committee is active in guiding the strategic development of the RE department and school, and also engaged at a practical level, e.g. a Prayer Room has been provided for Muslim pupils. All but one of the recommendations from the last inspection have been met.

The school's leadership is totally committed to Catholic education. The Catholic Mission of the school is a major priority, along with spiritual, moral and its cultural development, as evidenced by the school improvement plan and school self evaluation. Pupils and staff are well aware of how and why the school is different. Strong points are the work of the Chaplain, the Chapel, Liturgies and the fact that Religious Education is treated as a core subject. The Head and Deputy are qualified RE specialists and have a teaching commitment.

The Religious Education department has a high profile within the school and is very successful. The Director of Learning RE is well qualified and highly effective. The Religious Education department is reflective, committed and at the forefront of the spiritual life of the school. The director of Learning sets appropriate challenges for her department. Robust systems exist for evaluation and monitoring as evidenced by lesson observation records and other documentation.

The school participates fully and actively in developing and implementing a variety of partnership activities. There is a wealth of evidence showing partnership with a range of faith groups, parishes, charities, primary schools, links with other secondary schools, the diocese and SACRE. Pupils benefit significantly and develop exceptionally well in a number of areas which the school alone could not provide. The school has links with others in many parts of the world and there is a varied programme of external speakers visiting the school. Within school, all staff are committed to the Mission of the school, and liturgy is supported by a large number of departments, including the Music department and the Pastoral teams. Links with parents are a high priority and well developed. Parents felt consulted and involved in their child's education. There are effective and good links with parishes and the school is well served by the parish priests.

Community cohesion is at the forefront of the school's Mission. There is a strong sense of belonging in the school and all are welcomed in a sense of equality and respect. There is considerable diversity in the school, yet it is totally inclusive. There are many activities to enhance community cohesion including a Culture Day, Sixth Form Religious Education days and the Eisteddfod. The school offers a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of their role in society. ESDGC is well developed and there is a very active Eco-committee and a Fair trade group. Listening to Learners is well embedded in the culture of the school and members of the School Council feel that their views are respected and acted upon. Pupils are very generous with their time, talents and money, and support a range of local, national and international Charities.

Appendix 1

Responses to parent questionnaires

180 parents/carers completed the parent questionnaire.

Nearly all parents/carers were happy with the values and attitudes that the school fosters and felt that were made to feel welcome in the school. They also believed that the school sought their views and concerns and took them into account. Most parents believed that the school gave them a clear understanding of what is taught in religious education and nearly all agreed that the school enabled their children to achieve a good standard of work in religious education. They were also happy with the help and guidance available to their children and believed that the school enabled their children to develop spiritually through prayer and worship. Most parents believed that the school kept them well-informed about their children's progress in religious education and gave them a clear understanding of what is taught in personal, social and health education and where appropriate, sex and relationships education.

Parents stated that they chose Bishop Vaughan School because of its Catholic teaching, its caring ethos, examination success, firm discipline and good reputation in the local community. Many parents commented on the excellent reputation that the school has. A large number of parents had themselves been pupils in the school and wanted their children to have a similar experience.

Appendix 2

Evidence Base

- Lesson observations
- The school's self-evaluation reports and other documentation
- Meetings with the Headteacher, Director of Learning religious education department, Chaplain, senior pastoral leader, music and geography teachers
- Meeting with parents/carers
- Meetings with three governors including the Chair of Governors, the Vice Chair, who is also a Parish Priest and a Foundation governor. All three governors were members of the RE and Pastoral Care Committee.
- Lesson observations
- Scrutiny of planning and assessment
- Scrutiny of pupils' work
- Attendance at year assemblies, Lenten celebrations, voluntary Mass, classroom based acts of worship and staff prayer.
- Discussions with pupils
- Discussions with the School Council, the Eco Committee and the Fair Trade group.
- Parent questionnaire returns