

Catholic Diocese of Northampton



## **INSPECTION REPORT OF DENOMINATIONAL CHARACTER AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

### **CARDINAL NEWMAN CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL**

Warden Hill Road, Luton LU2 7AE

DfE School No: 821/4606

URN: 142310

Head Teacher: Mr J Richardson

Chair of Governors: Mrs K Sutton

Reporting Inspector: Mrs K Edwards

**Date of Inspection: 23 March 2017**

Date Report Issued: 19 April 2017

Date of previous Inspection: June 2011

The School is in the Trusteeship of the Diocese and in partnership with  
St Alban Academies Trust

## **Information about the school**

Cardinal Newman Catholic School is an 11-18 co-educational school in the Diocese of Northampton. The school is an Academy and is part of the St Alban Catholic Academies Trust. There are 98 members of teaching staff, 32 of whom are Catholic. There are 1,583 pupils on roll, of whom 1,195 are Catholic with the remainder coming from a diverse range of Christian and other faith backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is approximately 24%. There are more than double the number of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds compared with the national average, and 32% of pupils speak English as an Additional Language. Large numbers of pupils come from Irish, Polish or African heritage reflecting the Catholic/Christian immigration profile of Luton.

## **Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school**

**Grade 1**

Cardinal Newman is an outstanding Catholic school which is oversubscribed and flourishes due to its inspirational leadership and determination to work with other organisations and faith groups to promote good relationships and community cohesion in Luton. The distinctive Catholic nature of the school is visible and vibrant in the relationships between pupils and teachers, the high quality prayer and collective worship, creative displays, pastoral support and its service to the local, national and global community through outreach work and charity fundraising. Pupils are rightly proud of their school and appreciate the inclusive nature of their community where all are made to feel welcome and valued.

Due to the strong vision, commitment and leadership of the governors, head teacher, senior leaders, school chaplain and head of RE, outcomes for pupils are outstanding.

## **The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**Grade 1**

The school is in a strong position to continue to provide outstanding Catholic education. Benefitting from Diocesan funding the entrance to the school has been rebuilt and the chapel has been refurbished. Local authority funding has enabled the building of four additional classrooms and a dining room and the refurbishment of other areas. The sixth form now all follow a General RE course and a significant number now take A level Ethics and Philosophy. Assessment at KS3 has now been revised so it is linked more closely to the level descriptors in the Religious Education Curriculum Directory.

The quality of self-evaluation is outstanding as witnessed in the detailed and evaluative SEF RE. In addition, a sub-committee of governors meet regularly to monitor and evaluate the Catholic life of the school and behaviour. Progress and achievement in RE is monitored by another governors' committee concerned with standards, and a chaplaincy report is made to governors annually.

Furthermore, an Ethos Group chaired by the deputy head teacher and involving the head of RE, the head teacher, the chaplain and the head of inclusion meet weekly. Their role is to monitor and evaluate all aspects of the Catholic life of the school and their agenda is varied and wide-ranging.

The head teacher has a strong vision for Catholic ethos and takes every opportunity to lead with a spirit of service. His leadership is inspired by the social teachings of the church and he is followed in this by the senior leadership team. He has recently taken on responsibility as the CEO of the multi-academy trust to enable him to work in closer partnership with 'the family' of other Catholic schools. He is enthused by this opportunity to develop the provision of Catholic education further in a partnership involving mutual challenge and support.

The head teacher, leadership team, governors and trust directors plan strategically to ensure that the school continues to be effective in offering an outstanding Catholic education. It is notable that the head of RE has been given responsibilities for whole school strategic development and as an SLE is having an impact on achievement across the school not just in the RE department.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Continue to narrow the achievement gap between pupil premium and non-pupil premium pupils further in RE.
- Introduce the Faith In Action Award for pupils.
- Develop the role of Faith Ambassadors further to train lay leaders for the church.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

### **Grade 1**

Pupils value the care and support they receive from their teachers and the school chaplain. They feel proud to be part of the school as a faith community and said they felt 'privileged' to come to the school. They appreciated the welcome that the school extends to those of different or non-faith backgrounds and spoke warmly of the links made with the wider Muslim community. They said that everyone was invited 'to be part of our family' and 'we get so much love and support'. They felt that their views were important and that they were listened to. They appreciated the approachability and visibility of senior staff and spoke warmly of the inspirational leadership of the head teacher who they felt, 'protects us and gets us to be the best we can'. This expectation is realised through high standards of learning and behaviour but also through the very many charitable works and service of others which pupils take part in. There was particular enthusiasm for the school sponsored walk which involves all pupils and staff. The role of the sixth form in supporting other pupils in lessons and leading them in worship is notable and praiseworthy.

Pupils respond well to the many opportunities for prayer and worship in the school. They enjoy leading and contributing to liturgies and participate with reverence and respect. They appreciate the links between ministry in their parishes and the opportunities to serve at school masses too. They found the themes presented in assemblies personally challenging and supportive, especially mentioned was when issues of gang rivalry and violence had arisen in the local community. The opportunity to visit a Lenten Liturgy in the chapel showed pupils taking ownership of prayer and reflection on the Stations of the Cross, facilitated by their teacher, and proved a moving experience.

Pupils benefit in many ways from the chaplaincy provision of the school. The whole school was engaged in 'Forty Acts for Lent' which challenged them to 'do something extra for Lent', following daily prayer and reflection in tutor groups. Pupils have responded enthusiastically to the challenges put before them to live a more Christian life. The chapel is seen as a very important part of the school and recently a focus for those needing support and a place to pray following the death of a pupil. Pupils valued the way in which the chaplain 'invited' them to take part in the many liturgical opportunities in the school and the 'love, kindness and support' offered during difficult times. They enjoyed the opportunity for spiritual development offered by the retreat programmes. They spoke of their pride when awarded a red 'Newman Faith' badge which recognises pupil contribution to the Catholic life of the school or the 'Newman Blue' that celebrates student achievement as they make the most of their God-given talents.

Pupils make outstanding progress in RE in the school. They respond with maturity to the challenging material offered to them and take ownership for the quality of their work. In conversation they expressed how important their work and progress in RE was, and the acronym symbolising the school mission statement at the top of their work reminded them of

this. They found the marking and feedback from their teachers very helpful in knowing how to improve, and they had a clear idea of individual targets and expectations of progress. They learn collaboratively and listen respectfully to opinions different from their own. Older pupils are very appreciative of the targeted revision programme offered by the department and the extra help and support as they prepare for important public examinations. Pupils value the creativity of their teachers and enjoy the subject. Sixth form pupils spoke enthusiastically about how interesting and inspiring they found the General RE programme. GCSE results are significantly above national averages and recent A level results were in the ALPs good to outstanding category.

## **Leaders and managers**

**Grade 1**

There is an evidence and deep commitment to promoting the school's Catholic life seen in the work of leadership of the school and the RE department. The deputy head teacher meets with the governors half-termly to discuss the pastoral, spiritual and liturgical life of the school and policies are also set and reviewed as part of this committee. Strategic planning takes place in the context of the Catholic ethos and the weekly meeting of the Ethos group ensures that issues of faith development, social justice, prayer, worship, chaplaincy and pastoral needs of staff and pupils are discussed and monitored regularly. Governors visit the school regularly and, as part of the wider role of the work of the Trust, have an opportunity to monitor and evaluate the school's SEF RE.

Governors meet with the head of RE annually and monitor and evaluate the department's Excellence Plan. The head teacher quality assures the work of the department, and a deputy head teacher scrutinises progress data. Book scrutinies and lesson observations feed into the school appraisal system so that staff are accountable for the quality of education they provide. RE in the school has a high profile. The many links with the work of the chaplain, special needs, the pastoral system and the support from the team for pupil acts of service and charity mean the department is central to the Catholic life of the school.

## **Provision**

**Grade 1**

The work of the school chaplain is outstanding. The induction programme for new staff ensures that all are made welcome and given what they may need to lead and support prayer and worship in the school. Explanation of the church's liturgical year, feast days and particular prayers enables those from different faith backgrounds to support pupils' knowledge and understanding of Catholic belief and practice. The provision of high quality prayer booklets and materials supports daily worship and gives pupils opportunities to lead prayer and reflection in form groups. The chaplain's strong link with the pastoral system enables her to provide particular support to those who need it, especially in cases of family bereavement. Her attendance at all parents' evenings is valued by parents. The chaplain ensures there is good liaison with the parishes, the chaplains from the other Trust schools and the wider group of chaplains in the Diocese. She encourages pupils to get involved in retreats and Diocesan youth events and plays a key role in the successful transition of Year 6 pupils from the primary schools. She takes responsibility for the chapel ensuring that the door is open to all and that it remains a place of tranquillity for prayer and reflection. The chaplain plays a pivotal role in ensuring that the quality of prayer and collective worship in the school is inclusive and excellent.

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is outstanding. Teachers have challenging targets for their pupils and are highly motivated to get them there. Lessons are planned in a detailed way to ensure progress for all and are delivered with high expectations. Thoughtful and creative activities enable academic rigour in study but also opportunity for spiritual and moral development. Regular checking of progress throughout lessons ensures good pace and a clear focus on learning. Highly effective questioning enables pupils to access higher order

thinking skills. There is excellent planning for and delivery of differentiation which enables all to succeed. There is a consistent house-style in marking and feedback which incorporates self and peer assessment resulting in pupils taking responsibility for improvement. Excellent relationships between pupils and staff mean high standards of behaviour and collaborative endeavour to do the best that is possible.

The quality of the RE curriculum is outstanding as the courses offered follow NORES and CES guidelines and offer a balance of Theology, Spirituality, Philosophy and Ethics. The KS3 schemes of learning are based on 'The Way, The Truth and The Life' with a module on each of Hinduism, Judaism and Islam to enable pupils to gain insight into other faiths found in the wider local community. Due to the fact that the KS3 course is built on the Bishop's Religious Education Curriculum Director and upon the Principle Document of Vatican II, it provides a good preparation for the new AQA GCSE course on Catholic Christianity implemented in Year 10 this year. Pupils in KS4 exceed the syllabus demands in order to learn about the Catholic Church's view on all moral and philosophical questions. The department has started teaching the new OCR A level course to Year 12 chosen as it was felt the course content and structure best suited the school's pupils. The General RE course followed by all post-16 pupils gives valuable time to reflect on themselves, the society in which they live and how they can live out their faith in the local community.