

Catholic Diocese of Northampton

Interim Monitoring Visit

6 February 2020

Cardinal Newman Catholic School, Luton (URN 109699)

Since the last Section 48 Inspection in March 2017, there have been significant changes in leadership at Cardinal Newman. The headteacher took up post in September 2019 and the head of religious education started in this role in September 2018. There have also been key changes to the school leadership team. The religious education department is staffed by a team who are extremely experienced and committed and they have experienced a period of relative stability in the most recent past. Despite a period of significant change, the headteacher, school leadership team, the school chaplain and the RE department have ensured that the strong vision and ethos evident throughout the school are maintained, and indeed enhanced, by a passionate commitment to the development of the community as a whole. Pupils are equally as passionate about their school and clearly articulate the importance of community and the mission of the school. The actions from the previous inspection have been comprehensively addressed and of particular note is the extremely positive impact of the strategy to address the gap in Pupil Premium achievement in religious education. Excellent progress has been made, building on what was already outstanding, to ensure that the Catholic life of the school and provision for religious education remains dynamic. There is a real sense of fresh impetus and moving forward. The school's capacity to sustain the current position is secure.

The school's self-evaluation of religious education and Catholic life is extremely thorough and accurate. It reflects a deep commitment to the mission of the Church and the spiritual development of children at the school. The school has undertaken a thorough review of the curriculum, timetable and timings of the school day and a consultation with stakeholders has taken place. Once implemented, this will ensure that 10% of curriculum time is devoted to the teaching of religious education in each year group, 7 to 11. The curriculum provides a range of excellent opportunities to further personal and spiritual growth. The theme of the school development plan is 'Good to Great' and this is a sense that permeates the entire school. The community is not prepared to stand still and seeks continuous improvement in all areas.

It is evident throughout the school that the Catholic life is of central importance to the entire community. There is a strong commitment to personal development and well-being, exemplified by the Year 11 Collective Worship which focused on mental health and exam preparation. The whole school focus on the theme of kindness and the introduction of 'Kindness Ambassadors' is supported by the planned demonstration of faith in action throughout the Lenten 40 Acts of Kindness. Pupils are justly proud of their school and value the rich and diverse opportunities presented to them to develop spiritually and to contribute in an active way. This is exemplified through the commitment during the pilot of the Faith in Action Award. The strong leadership of the senior team and chaplain, ensure that the quality of prayer and worship remain outstanding and there is a clear sense that this is central to the life of the school. A dynamic approach was taken to the promotion and celebration of the Year of the Word with a central focus on sharing scripture within the community. There is a continuous commitment to review and staff are responsive to the needs of the children who remain at the heart of everything. This was evident in the school's response to a number of recent bereavements which focused on ensuring that care and support of children is enhanced. The school chaplain has also revised the way that new staff are inducted into the

Catholic life of the school and has recently provided a significant contribution to the Trust Wide New Staff Induction programme.

Standards in religious education continued to be above the national average and have been broadly maintained despite a significant increase in the complexity and challenge presented by the new examinations at both GCSE and A Level. Curriculum developments have ensured a commitment to providing the very best education and experience for all groups of children. This can be illustrated by the decision to review and change examination boards as a result of concerns about pupil engagement. Excellent planning and delivery has had a significant impact on pupil outcomes, especially in relation to the achievement of Pupil Premium children. The RE team is committed, professional and very experienced. A real sense of community is clearly evident and demonstrated through the collaborative planning that happens throughout the department. The leadership of the department is excellent and will be further supported by the implementation of imminent changes to the leadership structure. The head of department is beginning to be involved in delivering CPD across the school. This will ensure that the subject continues to be viewed as a foundation subject and the RE team as role models for colleagues more widely.

Areas for development:

- To continue to review and implement a strategy to increase cohort numbers on A Level courses.
- To continue to embed opportunities for the RE team to lead whole school CPD opportunities so that the department maintains its profile as a foundation subject and central to the life of the school.

The reviewer would like to thank members of staff and pupils for the very warm welcome and the hospitality accorded throughout the visit.

Jo-Anne Hoarty on behalf of the Diocese of Northampton