

**Catholic Diocese of Northampton  
Interim Monitoring Visit  
22 October 2015**

**Cardinal Newman Catholic School, Luton [URN 109699]**

Since the last full Section 48 inspection in June 2011, there have been significant changes in leadership at Cardinal Newman. The Headteacher took up post in September 2014 and the Head of Religious Education joined the school in September 2013. There have also been significant changes in the teaching staff in the Religious Education Department. Strong leadership, dedicated Chaplaincy and exceptional teaching have had a significant impact on the Catholic nature of the school and the quality of Religious Education. Collectively the Senior Leadership Team, the school Chaplain and the RE department have ensured that the school has a strong sense of community and a clear confidence in its important place within the Church. Pupils are passionate about their school and place real value on the educational experience that they have been given. Staff should be justly proud of the climate that has been created. The school's capacity to sustain the current position is secure.

The school has addressed both areas highlighted in the last inspection report. There has been a strategic review of provision at Post 16 in the RE Department which has had a significantly positive impact on pupil numbers on A Level courses, achievement in Year 12 and attendance at General RE lessons. The Head of RE has ensured that there is a consistent approach to AFL strategies across the Department and the quality of marking and feedback is high. This was evidenced through detailed lesson planning seen during the learning walk. This development has ensured that achievement in RE is high. The RE SEF has been updated and it provides a thorough review of the current position of the school. A comprehensive audit of SMSC has also been conducted and significant work has been done to develop the spiritual literacy of pupils across the curriculum.

Pupils in the school articulate a strong sense of community and demonstrate a genuine appreciation of the care provided by their teachers and the school Chaplain. They insist emphatically that a real strength of the school is the relationships that exist between children and also between staff and children. Pupils are justly proud of their school. Prayer is a prominent feature of life in the school. Appropriate training and support is provided for staff where required and pupils are actively engaged in opportunities to pray together. Pupils take a lead role in planning and presenting high quality acts of worship and they are confident in expressing their faith in front of their peers. There is a structured retreat programme, as well as meaningful opportunities for pupils to act in service of others and there are substantial opportunities for pupils and staff to contribute to charitable activities. The school environment and display is used to celebrate achievement and success of present and past pupils. Leadership in the school exemplifies the example set by Christ and is characterised by a depth of knowledge of the pupils and their specific needs. Care for the most vulnerable learners is prioritised and this has had a significant impact on the achievement of these children across the curriculum and within RE specifically.

The Religious Education Department is held in high esteem in the school. Teachers are active participants in the school's chaplaincy provision and charity work. The quality of teaching in RE continues to be extremely high and lessons are engaging and stimulate thinking at a high level. Pupils enjoy their learning and actively participate when required. Effective differentiation was a particular feature observed during the learning walk. There have been significant changes to the curriculum at Post 16 and the Head of Department has led these changes strategically. Achievement is high at both Key Stage Four and Year 12 and the progress made by vulnerable groups indicate that gaps are narrowing

significantly. The Head of RE has created an effective and dedicated team who are passionate about their subject and credible witnesses for the young people they work with. He demonstrates strategic leadership that is focused on improvement and he is fully prepared for the forthcoming changes to the curriculum.

Areas for sustaining improvement should include:

- revisiting the school mission with all stakeholders as part of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the school's opening
- opportunities planned during RE lessons for pupils to make a response to the high quality questions that teachers pose during their marking and feedback.

The inspector 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.