



# EAST ANGLIA DIOCESAN SCHOOLS' SERVICE

*Director of Schools' Service: Mrs. Julie O'Connor*

*The White House, 21 Uppgate,*

*Poringland, NR14 7SH*

*Tel: 01508 495509 Fax 01508 495358*

**Email: [joschools@east-angliadiocese.org.uk](mailto:joschools@east-angliadiocese.org.uk) or [ssc@east-angliadiocese.org.uk](mailto:ssc@east-angliadiocese.org.uk)**

## Interim Monitoring Visit

St Alban's Catholic High School, Ipswich

13<sup>th</sup> May 2016

The school has 1,080 pupils, of which 56% are Catholic. The percentage of Catholic Teachers is about 22%. The school is a co-educational converter academy. It serves several parishes within Ipswich and the surrounding areas. Pupils come from 37 feeder primary schools, including the three main Catholic primary schools in Ipswich. There is an Executive Headteacher, a Principal and a Senior Leadership Team. One of the Assistant Principals is Head of Religious Education and leader of 'Catholic Life'. She is due to retire after many years of valued service to the school. A new Head of RE has been appointed for September 2016. Some readjustment of responsibilities of the Senior Leadership Team will take place to ensure that leadership of Catholic Life is well maintained. The school has a full time Lay Chaplain who has made a positive impact on the 'Catholic' and 'Liturgical' life of the school since her appointment in September 2014.

The interim monitoring visit of five hours included:

- an assembly with year 9
- meeting with the Principal, Head of RE and Lay Chaplain to discuss developments since the last Diocesan Inspection in June 2013
- pupil voice meeting with pupils from a variety of year groups
- learning walk of three Key Stage 3 lessons
- work scrutiny of yr7 and yr10 books and files
- meeting with Head of RE about developments in the department
- plenary meeting with the Senior Leadership Team, which included discussion on strategies for governors to be more actively involved in the schools' Section 48 self-evaluation process.

Pupils are very proud of their school. They value the positive relationships throughout the school and the impact of the Catholic life of the school. One of the year 7 pupils said "The school is a welcoming and supportive Christian community." The pupils are actively involved in the Catholic life of the school by participating in liturgies and other celebrations. They greatly value the introduction of the 'House' system and acknowledge how the 'House' masses have further deepened the sense of community. They value the opportunities for retreats, particularly the retreat at The Briars. They also enjoy assemblies and the weekly voluntary mass which is attended regularly by a good number of pupils.

Religious Education has a suitably high profile within the school. Pupil attainment is excellent at GCSE and A Level. Pupils say that they valued opportunities to explore different ideas and beliefs and have time to reflect on a variety of moral and social issues. The RE department are preparing for the curriculum changes brought on by the reforms to GCSE and A Level qualifications.

The school has responded well to the recommendations in the last inspection report and has made progress on the three action points *as follows*:

*Embed the consistency of quality feedback across the Religious Education department so that all students clearly know how to improve their work further.* There are a variety of strategies being used to give feedback to pupils: written feedback in pupil books, verbal feedback and through pro-forma sheets. Best practice seen is where pupils engage in dialogue with this feedback, respond in order to make further progress and know the next steps in their learning. There is still need for greater consistency across the department in seeking response from pupils to ensure that they are clearly aware of how to improve.

*Improve on the consistency of the mainly good quality of prayer in tutor time, including planning for pupil leadership.* Pupils and teachers make use of the variety of resources being provided to enhance their prayer during tutor time. There are opportunities for tutor groups to go to the Chapel and some groups make use of prayers written by pupils. Teachers have been provided with training to support these developments. Senior leaders have monitored prayer in tutor time.

*Ensure that Chaplaincy consistently offers the organisational structure that gives all pupils the full range of chaplaincy provision, including liturgical and other activities, in a coherent viable plan.* The school has established a 'Chaplaincy Working Party' to lead the developments in provision. There has been significant progress in this area, including; involvement of House Captains, the introduction of weekly Mass, celebration of feast days of House saints, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and marking the Year of Mercy.

Following the work sampling and discussions with the Head of RE, **the diocesan inspector recommends that pupils evidence the verbal feedback they receive and also that current best practice regarding written feedback is further embedded.**

After discussing with Senior Leaders, strategies for enabling pupils to take a lead in prayer and liturgy, **the diocesan inspector recommends further developing a pupils' Chaplaincy Team in parallel to the Chaplaincy Working Party.**

Religious Education at Key Stage 5 is integrated in the General Studies programme. **The diocesan inspector recommends that the school formally review the provision to ensure this sufficiently covers the requirements of the Curriculum Directory for this Key Stage.**

The Principal and senior leaders are rightly proud of the school and are committed to promoting and shaping the Catholic identity of the school. Staff and pupils are inducted successfully about the values that underpin the life of the school.

We would like to thank everyone at St Alban's Catholic High School for the warm welcome during the visit. Feedback from the Principal indicated it was a valuable, supportive visit and offered further opportunity for action and direction.

Patrick Harrison & Tom Reilly.