



14th October 2015

Diocesan Education Service,
Don Bosco House,
Coventry Road,
Coleshill,
B46 3EA

Mr Sean Devlin,
Principal,
Blessed Edward Oldcorne Catholic College
Timberdine Avenue
Worcester WR5 2XD

Dear Mr Devlin

Section 48 Monitoring inspection:

Thank you for the warm welcome which you, your staff and students gave to the Assistant Inspector, Mr Joe Skivington, and to me, when we inspected your college on 1st October. We want to thank you too for the efficient way in which the pre-inspection information and analysis was sent to us, for the documentation which was made available during the inspection, and for the time given by staff, the chaplain, students, parents and governors.

The inspection was a "light touch" monitoring inspection because your school was judged at the last section 48 inspection to be an outstanding school and because it is now five years or more since you last received a diocesan inspection.

The purpose of the inspection was to assess the quality of the college's self-evaluation and improvement planning for RE and Catholic life. In order to be able to make this judgement we read your self-evaluation document, interviewed senior leaders, the chaplain, governors, parents and students. We studied your extensive evidence folders and students' work. We completed seven observations of parts of RE lessons, two of which were with senior leaders. We attended collective worship with a tutor group and a year group assembly.

Following your own evaluations, you judge your college to be outstanding both in the quality of RE and of Catholic life. We are pleased to endorse this judgement which we regard as reliably based.

The self evaluation document shows a thorough awareness of the issues from the last inspection and there is clear evidence of how evaluation has played a very crucial role in the development of RE and the Catholic life of the college since then. The college has a well developed culture of evaluation which feeds into future planning, though current documentation does not always show the links. This is because the evaluations are not summarised in a way which enables forward planning to be totally transparent. There is also some lack of clarity between tasks and success criteria, but teachers know the college and its students well and they are focused on success and constant improvement. Planning for two years after the current year is strategic both for RE and for Catholic life and shows that the college has considered future challenges and how to prepare for them. Planning also includes a focus on spiritual and moral development in a cross-curricular sphere.

Attainment and progress in RE have benefitted from the forensic analysis of data, leading to action points which leadership pursues with vigour and determination. These are more clearly recorded for older students than for Years 7 to 9, though the college has evidence to demonstrate a rapid rise in the progress of younger students. Despite important changes to the GCSE examinations in RE the college has maintained an overall pass rate at or above national and diocesan averages. Over time there has been a significant rise in the number of A*-A, as was targeted in the previous inspection. For those students for whom special financial support is given, RE is enabling greater progress than average for the college. Overall students learn very quickly due their excellent behaviour and the high standard of teaching over time which motivates them. Teachers plan and analyse their lessons in minute detail. They learn from their own work and that of their colleagues in the team, sharing resources and modifying them according to the students' needs. Planning for the development of confidence to express opinions on the big questions in life and faith is constantly on the agenda. Already in Year 8 students can address competently issues such as the ministry of women in the context of vocation, viewing it from the angle of the Catholic Church, other Christian churches and other faiths. Care is given to maintaining a vibrant environment for learning and to the use of ICT to enhance the RE experience. Students have a major role in the evaluation of the



curriculum and there is evidence that their suggestions are implemented, for example in invitations to outside speakers and in opportunities for visits and retreats. Evaluation of the impact of student involvement in teaching about other faiths has led to planning for work with primary schools in which students from other faith communities in the college are ambassadors and serve to show the inclusive nature of the college. Meetings of the RE student council are formal and involve the students in forward planning, for example the visit of Bishop Byrne. Evaluation shows that students enjoy RE, and parents witness to that. The lively debates of topics relevant to current news issues for instance are brought into the home for family discussion.

Evaluation of assessment strategies plays a major role in future planning. RE has made significant strides in assessment through the whole school Review and Respond system (R&R) and has been singled out for praise. Students have been given opportunities to feedback on their perceptions of assessment of their work. Whilst marking is not yet totally consistent, it is clear that teachers have analysed carefully strategies for helping students to move forward. Students are involved in the assessment of their own work and they speak of the R&R system as encouraging them to be more objective. The college has ensured that students know how to improve and has set aspirational target grades based on careful analysis of prior performance of groups of students, and a range of other data.

The college judges its Catholic life to be outstanding. This is a reliable judgement, because the college not only makes extensive and effective provision but it knows how to move forward through the wealth of evaluation which is fundamental to its growth. However, a sharper focus could be obtained through more robust questioning and clearer links in the college improvement documentation. The college has recently reviewed its mission statement and has responded to issues in current British society, including the development of British values. Analysis of the leadership and management structure of the college has led to the decision to appoint a deputy principal with the role as leader of Catholic life, co-ordinating work across the college community. The college has justifiably assessed this appointment as crucial to its fundamental mission of 'the promotion of Gospel values and commitment to personal achievement' which it rightly claims to be woven into the fabric of the college. Forward planning for all aspects of Catholic life is calendared meticulously and support is provided in response to staff evaluation, with appropriate high quality resources. The priest chaplain meets weekly with you as principal and it is evident that your discussions lead to progress, for example in the reconciliation liturgies in Advent and Lent, where provision for students who are not Catholics has been sensitively developed. The college plans to continue to attach each of a team of five priest chaplains to a specific year group, evaluating the policy as very positive in that it enables priests and students to work together in developing spirituality.

The programme for collective worship is carefully integrated into the daily life of the college and is monitored by senior staff. The college has responded very positively to the target set in the last inspection to increase the participation of students in its planning and delivery, for example in the 'chapel based liturgies'. Students are confident to take major roles in assemblies, for example in witnessing to the spiritual experience of the Lourdes pilgrimage. Students from other world faith communities respond enthusiastically to the requests to speak about their own life of faith. The college mission in 2013 was initiated by students who then took part in the planning and evaluation. The evaluations of staff also feed into future planning, for example in planning for the next whole school mission.

Parents are highly appreciative of the impact of the college, and their involvement in the community facilitates a highly productive source of feedback for development. The governing body which includes two of the priest chaplains has a wide range of skills and experience. It is regularly involved in the discussion of evaluation and improvement planning documentation, and receives regular reports of the Catholic life and RE.

In order to assist the college in its excellent work, the following targets are appropriate:

- Summarise the results of evaluations so that successful and less successful aspects are recorded, together with any suggestions for further development arising from the questionnaires
- Ensure that improvement plans are comprehensive, including links with evaluation, and clearly prioritised tasks and specific success criteria

Yours sincerely

Janet Mellor
Diocesan Inspector