

**Report of the Denominational (Canon 806 & Section 48)  
Inspection of**

(Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

***St. Alban's Catholic High School***

DfE No: 935/4603

URN: 137849

For Catholic Diocese of East Anglia



Chair of Governors: Mr David Verney

Headteacher: Mr Matt Baker

Denominational Inspector: Mrs Kate Pereira

Dates of Inspection: 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> September 2019

Date and grade of previous inspection: June 2013 Grade 1

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL**

St Alban's Catholic School is an 11 – 18 Catholic comprehensive school in the East of Ipswich. It is a converter academy and has recently joined the Our Lady of Walsingham Multi academy Trust. There are approximately 925 pupils at the school, of whom 53% are Catholic, 36% are from other Christian denominations and nearly 2% are from other world faiths. There are 3 Catholic primary schools that feed into St Alban's school along with over 40 other primary schools from across Ipswich and south Suffolk. The admission number for the school is 268 and there are currently 109 students in the Sixth form. The largest ethnic group is white British at 52%, just over 20% of the pupil population have English as an additional language and there are 23 students with an Education, Health and Care plan. There are 3 teachers at St Albans who hold RE teaching qualifications and approximately 18% of staff are Catholic.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS**

**Grade 2: Good**

### **How effective the school is in providing Catholic education**

St Albans provides a good Catholic education for its pupils. Leaders convey the Catholic mission of the school with fervour and clarity and St Albans is clearly on a journey to fulfil this mission. The school contains highly visible signs of its Catholicity including the beautiful chapel and new stained-glass windows in the entrance to the school and chaplaincy is well led. Leadership in RE (religious education) is relatively new and still embedding but already strong and purposeful with a clear vision for the future.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Increase curriculum RE time in Years 7 & 8 to as near to the 10% of the whole curriculum time as possible which is the time diocesan guidelines require.
- Develop and embed the newly implemented Post 16 core RE course and ensure it meets the 5% curriculum time which is the time diocesan guidelines require
- Further improve progress for all groups of pupils in RE at GCSE, by ensuring the very best teaching and assessment practice across the RE faculty is shared and acted upon.
- Involve a wider range of students in a planned and systematic way in the evaluation of Catholic life and mission so pupils lead the planning of improvements.
- Create a more systematic, formalised approach to self-evaluation by setting up a team of key staff, clergy and governors who meet periodically to evaluate Catholic life, RE and collective worship
- Involve a larger number and wider range of students in the leadership of daily collective worship.

## **CATHOLIC LIFE:**

**Grade 2**

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is good. Pupils make a positive contribution to the Catholic life of the school through charity work such as the youth St Vincent de Paul group, CAFOD Young leaders and the support for the school's three charities. A significant amount of money was raised last year for both local, national and international charities, including CAFOD. Pupils have a strong understanding of social justice which underpins their charity work and express a sense of wanting to do more and of getting more students involved. This is also shown in the way pupils respect and support each other and those in need around them.

The quality of provision for the Catholic life of the school is good. The mission statement is clear, and most staff are happy to take part in activities reflecting the Catholic life of the school. There is a real sense of a supportive community where vulnerable pupils are cared for. Student well-being is a high priority and support for their mental health is excellent. Staff strive for excellence and are good role models for the pupils. Staff promote high standards of behaviour and these expectations are evident in and around school. Relationships are excellent and behaviour is good. Any incidents of poor behaviour are dealt with swiftly and effectively through the school's behaviour policy. Teacher/pupil relationships are very strong, positive and respectful. Personal, Social, Health education is well planned, age appropriate and in line

with diocesan guidelines. Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) is monitored carefully by the Head of RE and sensitive issues are taught by specialist RE teachers which ensures the Catholic ethos is maintained.

Leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school well. Leaders are excellent role models of good practice as leaders of Catholic life which is reinforced by pupils and staff. Staff morale is generally good and has improved over the past two years. There is a sense of teamwork and strong resolve amongst the staff at St Albans which is steeped in a realistic hope of what can be achieved over time. Reports are shared by the headteacher and lay chaplain at governors' meetings and the school development plan is used well to plan improvements to Catholic life. The school would benefit from a more systematic, formalised process for Section 48 self-evaluation in the same way other areas benefit from the robust quality assurance systems of the school. This could be supported by setting up a team consisting of key staff and governors meeting periodically. Governors are committed to the Church's mission. This is shown in the way the school supports diocesan policies and vision such as by joining the Our Lady of Walsingham Multi academy Trust in July 2019.

### **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (RE):**

### **Grade 2**

Most pupils enjoy their learning in RE. At A' Level, pupils achieved an excellent progress score of ALPS 3, in 2019. This is a significant and rapid improvement in progress from the previous two years with the scores being ALPS 7 in 2017 and ALPS 6 in 2018. Attainment at GCSE has remained the same for the past two years with 69% of pupils achieving a grade 4 or above which is very close to the national average for RE. Some pupils made good progress at GCSE, but a significant number of students did not reach the target grades they should have. Achievement is generally good at the end of Key Stage 3 with most students reaching a 'secure' level, and some exceeding this.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in RE is good. In the best lessons skilful targeted questioning is used to probe and develop higher order thinking skills and other formative assessment techniques are used well to adapt lessons to suit the pace of progress made by individual students throughout the lesson. All lessons begin with engaging starters and relationships between teachers and pupils are positive. In the best lessons, learning questions are used to focus students on the learning journey and time is taken to unpack the meaning of key vocabulary and make links to prior learning. Most pupils participate well in discussions, respecting each other's viewpoints and work well independently when required which results in quality written work. In the best lessons students use their own initiative to find answers and to formulate their own questions. However, during the inspection some students struggled to access parts of some lessons because the pace was either too fast or the task too difficult because it was pitched incorrectly. Pupils are generally positive about RE lessons and show good levels of religious literacy which is supported by the key word displays in RE classrooms. Displays are vibrant and informative showing reference to the current taught RE curriculum, including artefacts from other world faiths. Most pupils respond to the written feedback given by their teachers on reflection sheets and there is good evidence of quality marking in most exercise books.

Leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for RE well and have rightly identified the key areas needed to improve further. The Head of RE has a clear vision for the future and is determined to take the Faculty forwards. She has galvanised an effective team who are now well placed to implement the improvements required to take the RE Faculty to the next stage. The newly appointed Second in charge of RE is providing good support. The RE curriculum complies with the *Curriculum Directory* and although Post 16 provision for core RE has now been implemented, it will take time to embed. It is, however, well below the diocesan requirement of 5% curriculum time for core RE, being at only 2.5% for both Years 12 and 13 respectively. Curriculum time therefore needs to increase for core RE. In addition, whilst Key Stage 4 is at 10%, the curriculum time for RE at Key Stage 3 is 7.5%. As the diocesan requirement is 10%, the RE curriculum time also needs to increase at Key Stage 3.

Consistency in marking and feedback has improved since the last inspection as a result of careful monitoring, sharing good practice and a new school feedback policy.

## **COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

### **Grade 1**

Most pupils respond to and participate in collective worship very well. Pupils are well behaved and respectful during collective worship and most participate actively. During the inspection Sixth Form students took part in Mass with reverence and most joined in with the beautiful hymns. Pupils respond well to the prayer bell every morning and prayer during form time has improved since the last inspection, resulting in students sometimes leading prayer in the mornings. Students enjoy writing their own prayers and use them in their form groups and at the beginning of their RE lessons. There is now an enthusiastic active student chaplaincy group who enjoy planning Mass and special liturgies so that some students often read, take on roles in Mass and sometimes lead assemblies. Most pupils value collective worship and particularly like the opportunities available to them such as voluntary Mass and reflection days. Pupils would like even more students to be involved in leading aspects of daily collective worship across the school.

The quality of provision for collective worship is outstanding. It is central to the life of the school for all pupils regardless of faith background and is given the highest priority in terms of planning and allocation of time. There is a variety of planned opportunities for collective worship such as weekly voluntary Mass, Mass on holy days and special occasions, reflection days, pilgrimage to Rome and experiencing different types of prayer. The lay chaplain is experienced and highly effective in her role and is constantly evaluating and looking to improve. All RE lessons start with a prayer and the sign of the cross is visible during acts of collective worship. Collective worship has clear themes and is linked to the liturgical year. Opportunities for Reconciliation take place during Advent and Lent and students receiving Confirmation are supported and celebrated. The Chapel is used well both during RE lessons and for liturgies, as well as for weekly voluntary Mass and external links are used well such as Christian Youth ministries. Prayer is central to St Albans and staff enjoy attending acts of collective worship and described the Sixth Form induction Mass as 'beautiful and very special.' Provision is made for students to reflect deeply, sing and take part in all aspects of the Mass. A programme of prayer at staff briefing sets the tone for the day and is led confidently by a variety of staff members.

Leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship well. The headteacher and deputy headteacher, supported by key staff, relentlessly drive, promote, lead and evaluate the quality of collective worship in the school with passion and zeal. Reports are shared with governors by the chaplain and governors attend key events and Masses. The newly appointed governor for Catholic Life is an asset to the school and keen to support improvements. There is a clear line management structure in place for the Chaplain which is overseen by the deputy headteacher. Collective worship is monitored by leaders through learning walks of form time, by dropping in on assemblies and attending Mass. Actions are then put in place if necessary to improve.



## **EAST ANGLIA DIOCESAN SCHOOLS' SERVICE**

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### **Letter to pupils explaining the findings from the Diocesan Inspection**

4<sup>th</sup> October 2019

Dear Pupils

#### **Diocesan Inspection of St Alban's Catholic High School**

Thank you very much for welcoming me into your school for the inspection on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> September

Here are some of the things I especially liked:

I especially liked the positive way you conducted yourselves around school and the pride you show for your school. I really enjoyed the Mass I attended and like the way your school provides a variety of opportunities for worship such as Mass, reflection days and different prayers which help you to reflect and develop your faith. The way you get involved in charity work is impressive too and reflects your commitment to those in need. I enjoyed meeting members of the student chaplaincy team and hearing your views.

I have asked your teachers to consider:

working to improve the progress you make in RE so that more of you reach or exceed your target grades and to increase the amount of time spent learning RE in Years 7 & 8 and in Years 12 and 13 core RE.

I have also asked that your teachers arrange for more of you to be actively involved in leading collective worship and in having a say about how good the Catholic life of the school is to help to improve things even more.

Thank you

Yours sincerely

Mrs K Pereira  
Diocesan Inspector