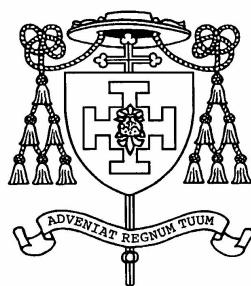


THE DIOCESE OF SHREWSBURY



Upton Hall School FCJ

9th and 10th November 2006

Report on the Inspection of Denominational Education *(under Section 48 of the School Inspections Act 2005)*

Lead Inspector : Mr J McCann
Link Inspector : Rev J Gallagher, SDB

**The inspection of the denominational education of
Upton Hall School FCJ
was carried out at the request of the Governors of the School
in fulfilment of their obligation under the requirements,
and according to the directives of, the School Inspections Act 2005.
The school was inspected within the framework
approved by the Bishop of Shrewsbury
for the conduct of inspection of the denominational education of
Catholic Secondary Schools within the Diocese.**

Key for Inspection Grades

Grade 1	:	Outstanding
Grade 2	:	Good
Grade 3	:	Satisfactory
Grade 4	:	Inadequate

Characteristics of the school

Upton Hall School FCJ is a Catholic voluntary-aided 11-18 selective grammar school for girls. The school is under the trusteeship of the Society of the Faithful Companions Jesus and in the Diocese of Shrewsbury. The school was founded in 1859 and has an excellent reputation in the area. The school recruits students from a wide geographical area within the Wirral peninsula and from a range of socio- economic backgrounds. Pupils gain entry into the school by selection at 11 on passing the school's entrance examination. There are 908 pupils on roll with 221 in the sixth form. 92.4% of students are Catholic, 6.9% are from other Christian traditions, 0.7% of students are from other faith backgrounds. Students enter the school having achieved standards well above national average. The proportion of students with statements of special educational need is well below national average, as is the proportion of students eligible for free school meals, although 26.8% of students in the sixth form do qualify for an Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA). The school employs 57 full time teaching staff and 7 part time staff. 30 of the teaching staff are Catholic; 32 are from other Christian traditions, and 2 are from other faiths. The school has achieved specialist school status in technology and languages.

Overall effectiveness

1

Upton Hall School FCJ is an outstanding Catholic school. The Head and Senior Leadership Team have a clear vision of the mission of the school as a Catholic school. They are in the process of undertaking developments in key areas of school life always bearing in mind the vision set out in the Mission Statement and the inspiration of the educational vision of the founding religious congregation of FCJ. Staff and students are happy, feel supported and in turn take responsibility for ensuring that the values set out in the Mission statement are lived out in the daily life of the school.

Improvement since the last Inspection

1

With regard to the prayer life of the school many areas of support have been put in place since the last inspection. A part time chaplain has been appointed who provides appropriate material for all staff on a weekly basis; a priest chaplain has been appointed within the last two terms; an icon on staff laptops gives access to materials to support staff in leading prayers and reflections. However the recent introduction of the 5 min registration and period for prayer and reflection at the beginning of period 1 each day may not always be consistently observed and the opportunity for developing this particular area of prayerful reflection may be lost for some students. Attention has been given to the extent of the responsibilities of the Head of RE Faculty. From September 2006 an additional full time member of the RE staff was appointed; a part time chaplain took up post last academic year; a priest chaplain has been in post for some months; the PSHCE programme is delivered by Form Tutors; RE staff are represented on the liturgy planning group but are not responsible for it. The Head of Faculty feels very supported and affirmed by the Head teacher and Leadership Team.

Even though a slight increase in the time allocation has been achieved since the last Inspection the time given at KS3 continues to be significantly less at 7% than the 10% directive of the Bishops. The school has developed strategies to ensure that parents are kept informed about the religious education programme on offer to the pupils. A 'Curriculum Outline Booklet' is prepared and distributed to all parents at the beginning of each academic year giving outlines of areas of study and topics within each curriculum area. The R.E. faculty (department) now shares good teaching strategies and holds regular formal meetings to focus on strategic areas for development. Regular calendared meetings are held in line with the school's calendar for faculty meetings and the RE faculty are funded to have off-site inset 1 day a year tailored to meet their identified needs.

Leadership and Management of the Catholic Life and Ethos

1

The Head teacher and Leadership team have a clear shared vision for the school and its future in a time of exciting developments within the school: new building, curriculum development and change, restructure of collective worship and form time; the role of chaplaincy within the school; behaviour for learning – the development of Academic and Behaviour Progress Sheets - reporting concerns.

It is evident that the spiritual, moral and social education of students is an outstanding feature of the school. The school has a policy on Religious Education and Collective Worship which should be reviewed in light of recent curricular developments.

The Governing Body takes a keen interest, is actively involved in all the school does to ensure the Catholic ethos inspired by the FCJ spirituality. Link Governors work with various faculties. The Governing Body generally acts as a critical friend to the Head, SLT and Faculty Heads.

Staff feel supported by the Leadership Team and each other. New staff felt welcomed and appreciated the faith dimension of the school – even though some are not Catholic. Newly qualified teachers found the induction programme very helpful. Although newly appointed staff had no formal induction they appreciated the many informal meetings that took place and the willingness of senior leaders to make time available

Students were very happy and full of praise for the school particularly the friendly supportive atmosphere. The sixth form particularly expressed their pride in the school and welcomed the opportunities to take responsibility and ownership of initiatives e.g. Cabinet, School Council, Student Listeners. Younger students appreciated the service of the older girls and spoke of the support given by Student Listeners. All students spoke very highly of R.E. at all Key Stages, including General R.E., 'as active and engaging'. All of the pupils were clearly aware of the sanction system but saw it in a supportive rather than a punitive role. Pupils reflected very positively on the Y7 Mass and the end of term assemblies led by the sixth formers.

Sr. Catherine, the chaplain, is settled into her new role within the school and is supportive of staff and students. She also takes time to visit families particularly in time of bereavement. The students and staff are aware of and appreciate the chaplain's role within the school and make use of her. The chaplain enables students to take part in activities led by the Diocesan Youth Service. Some students take an active and leading role in this mission in the diocese. The present room allocated to the chaplain is less than adequate; however, plans are in place to remedy this. The recent appointment of a priest chaplain has greatly increased the school's opportunities to offer liturgy and the Eucharist. However, at present there is no overall planned provision of a Retreat Programme throughout the school.

Collective Worship

1

Pupils in all years spoke positively about Acts of Collective Worship and their involvement in them. The pupils arrive prepared for an act of worship and are thoughtful and considerate of each other and appreciate the contribution made by other students. At times the acoustics in the hall and chapel can make it difficult to hear pupils with quieter speaking voices. The Acts of Collective Worship are developed and led by groups of six to ten pupils under the guidance of staff. A Head of Year or member of the Leadership Team attend each assembly and set the tone for the event. Helpful and stimulating power point presentation is used to support assemblies or liturgy.

Prayerful reflection after morning registration is clearly set out in the school's policy. Teachers who may be less confident in leading prayer are helped by resources provide by the chaplain. During our visit we witnessed one creative, inspiring reflective prayer, two others were good and involved the students, in one case there was no prayer or reflection.

Achievement and standards in Religious Education

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The Religious Education Faculty comprises a team of four full time very committed specialist teachers. Standards in Religious Education in KS3 are good; in KS4 and KS5 they are excellent as is clearly evidenced in examination results which have been consistently outstanding over the past years. In KS3 it would benefit students if levels were displayed in each pupil's book or were suitably displayed within teaching areas so the reference could be made to them by staff and pupils and further opportunities were created for more extended pieces of writing.

Quality of teaching and learning in R.E.

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The following were features in all of the lessons observed: a warm, welcoming, positive and inclusive atmosphere; active participation and involvement by the pupils; mutual respect shown by staff to pupils and between pupils; very good/excellent interpersonal relationships with the staff; a caring, safe environment in which to learn; a sense of a real relationship with the staff by the pupils especially in the higher years. All staff used technology to support their teaching frequently with great effect and in some cases a wide range of resources in a comfortable and confident manner. In some of the lessons observed a number of pupils had difficulty in completing the planned objectives due to timing issues – arrival at lessons from other parts of the school to the top floor Religious Education classes meant that some starter activities became too extended. A wide variety of methods and techniques were employed by staff to engage and motivate pupils and keep a sense of pace in the lesson. This did mean at times that pupils were not always able to finish tasks before moving on to another. Care must be taken that this does not become a feature of some pupils' experience. In KS5 there are some excellent examples of close marking to the AS/A2 mark scheme used to help students reflect on how to improve further. A range of stimuli used in lessons and active participation by the students. There is an excellent range of resources to support the units of work

Leadership and management of the department

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Excellent extension materials have been added to the Diocesan KS3 scheme often reflecting that this is a specialist technology college. Much of the work enhances and informs the basic core material and can act as a powerful stimulus to aid reflection. The Faculty lives out its Mission Statement as given in its handbook. The Faculty makes a significant positive contribution to the whole life of the school academically, pastorally as well as spiritually. The Faculty Handbook is a useful working document for all staff within the faculty however parts need to be updated to include new staff and to address the changing nature the department and its role(s) within the life of the school. Although it can have its own disadvantages, in terms of competing commitments, the two heads of Year have a significant impact on the pastoral life of the school and impact directly on the lives of many of the students in their years who speak very highly of them and the support that they give.

The faculty benefits from the excellent leadership of its Head and the commitment and enthusiasm of each member of the team. The faculty works from a suite of three dedicated teaching bases and a central office. This is a real strength. If a fourth teaching base could be found this would be a major benefit to the faculty. At present one member of the team 'travels' in order to teach. The three Religious Education teaching bases are well resourced and time, care and pride have obviously been given to the varied displays of students' work particularly in KS3 and KS4.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- To further consider the time allocation for Religious Education in KS3 in order that it is brought in line with the directive of the Bishops.
- To explore opportunities for students to have time for retreats and periods of reflection in KS4 KS5.
- To ensure consistency in the opportunity given to all pupils for prayer and reflection each morning.
- To provide better chapel and chaplaincy accommodation.
- To continue to implement the use of levelled tasks across KS3 which will give the students clear targets to work towards
- To devise an agreed departmental marking policy for KS3 and KS4 which gives students clear feed back on the quality of their response to tasks set and learning targets to further improve performance.

Capacity for improvement

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The school's self-evaluation is thorough and accurate. SLT and others are involved in on-going evaluation of recent developments in the life of the school and undertake consultation with staff and students. They, as well as the staff and students, have a clear vision of the mission of the school as a Catholic school inspired by the education values upheld the congregation of FCJ.