

**ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK
COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS & COLLEGES**



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the
Archbishop of Southwark and inspection of
Denominational Education under Section 48
URN 118907

St Gregory's Catholic Comprehensive School
Reynolds Lane
Tunbridge Wells
Kent
TN4 9XL

Chair of Governors	Mr A Moffatt
Headteacher	Ms Rosemary Olivier
Inspectors	Mr J Carvill Mr M Sheridan
Inspection dates	19 November 2008

**ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK
COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS & COLLEGES**
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Introduction

Description of the school

The school is voluntary aided, situated in the Tunbridge Wells deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark and maintained by Kent Local Authority which operates a selective system of education. The principal parishes which the school serves are St Augustine's, Tunbridge Wells, St Thomas', Sevenoaks, Corpus Christi, Tonbridge and St Mary's, Crowborough. The proportion of students who are baptised Catholics is 62%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to religious education is 5% in Key Stage 3, 8% in Key Stage 4 and 3% in the Sixth Form (General RE).

The school takes students from 11 to 18 years. The number of students currently on roll is 1062 including 192 in the Sixth Form. The attainment of students on entering the school is broadly around average although, because of the selective system, the school has a lower number than nationally from the highest ability range. The proportion of students eligible for free schools meals is average. Around 30% of the students receive extra support in class, which is above the national average. The majority of students are British white with a high proportion of white European students. The proportion of students from homes where English is an additional language is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness as a Catholic school

As a Catholic learning community, St Gregory's is, overall, good with many outstanding features. Leadership and management are outstanding. The mission statement underpins the life and work of the school. The senior leadership team have an accurate awareness of the strengths of the school and have identified the areas for development. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding and the governors very effectively support and monitor the Catholic life of the school. Pastoral care is excellent and chaplaincy is good but would benefit from the post being full-time. The Retreat programme could be further developed. The school is outstanding at promoting and achieving community cohesion and the quality of provision for collective and personal worship is, overall, good. Standards in religious education are good as is the quality of teaching and learning in that subject. The content of the religious education programme is good but the time allocated to the subject at Key Stage 3 is below that recommended by the Bishops' Conference. Leadership of religious education is good. The school has made good progress since the last inspection.

Improvement since last inspection:

The school has successfully addressed most of the issues raised in the last inspection. The percentage of Catholic teaching staff now stands at 60%. Most school policies make reference to the mission statement while there is in place a new and very appropriate general RE course for the Sixth Form. The Key Stage 3 religious education curriculum time, however, is still only half that required by the Diocese and the Bishops' Conference.

Capacity to improve further:

The inspectors believe the school has good capacity to improve further.

Grade 2

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

In order to improve even further the governors and the senior leaders in the school should:-

- Ensure the religious education curriculum time meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference at all key stages (10%) and this was an issue raised in the previous inspection.
- Expand and develop the Retreat programme in order to enhance the spiritual experience of all students.
- If possible, make the post of chaplain full time.
- Ensure that in religious education lessons the resources and materials used more closely meet students' individual learning needs.

The Catholic life of the school

Leadership and management

Leadership and management of St Gregory's are outstanding. The mission statement, which is prominently displayed around the school, and which most students know, underpins the life and work of the school. The school's development plan, identifying the areas for development, requires each Area of Learning to develop strategies to promote students' spiritual growth.

The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. She has a very clear vision for Catholic education and, with the senior leadership team, bears witness to the Catholicity of the school by being a very good role model and by taking a leading part in the prayer life and worship of the school community. The distinctive Catholic nature of the school is evident from the religious icons and artefacts around the site and in the very beautiful chapel. The governors effectively monitor and support the Catholic life of the school and the impact of the school's actions through the link governor visits, attendance at liturgical services and particularly through the Catholicity, Community and Communication committee which meets every term and which also receives reports on religious education from the subject leader.

Links with the parishes are strong. Three priests serve as governors and the majority of parish priests are on the chaplaincy team. Many of these are regularly involved in offering the Sacrament of Reconciliation, celebrating the voluntary Mass on Wednesdays, accompanying Year 7 to Aylesford or attending Advent, Lent or end of term assemblies. Working with the Chaplaincy team, the RE teachers involve local priests to support the staff in the classroom. For example, priests have an input on Marriage Encounter, the work of the Church in the world today, The Church and sexual ethics and there is an annual forum for debate between a panel of priests and Year 12/13 General RE students. Many of the students are involved in their parishes, for example, as Readers, in the choir or part of the Youth band and staff make a point of attending the Confirmation of students.

Parents have a very positive view of the school. In a recent survey they particularly valued the work the school does in promoting students' moral code and in providing a safe school community. Pastoral care is excellent. The mixed-age tutor group - called Review Group - works well in simulating the family unit and students have a positive attitude towards it and some think it helps build relationships across the years. Many year 7 & 8 students value the 'buddy' system whereby Sixth Formers mentor some younger students. Relationships and behaviour are exemplary, where students are courteous to each other and to staff. Chaplaincy is good. The part-time lay chaplain successfully co-ordinates an effective team of chaplains to provide high quality liturgies and offers good support to Review Tutors with prayers for their Review group. There is also a good involvement of the chaplain with the formal pastoral system. The Retreat programme is developing. More could be achieved if it was possible to make the post full-time.

Grade 1

Quality of provision for personal and collective worship

The quality of provision for personal and collective worship is good with some outstanding features. There are good opportunities for Mass. For example, it is celebrated on the Holy Days that occur in term time when the chaplain successfully secures the services of five priests and students attend in their respective Areas of Learning. In addition there are class Masses for Year 7 and a voluntary Mass every Wednesday in lunchtime, which is normally well attended. There are non-Sacramental services on Ash Wednesday and, during Holy Week, year 7 & 8 students lead the Stations of the Cross. During Lent local priests come in to the school to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The school is very fortunate in having two chapels. The large and beautiful chapel, which is colourfully decorated with symbols of liturgical themes and the school's current focus for 'faith in action' –the CAFOD "Living sustainably" project and the Sanctuary chapel, in the new Sixth Form centre, is used for class Masses and the weekly voluntary Mass while also providing a suitable quiet space for prayer and reflection for older students. Student participation at Mass is good. They act as readers, lead bidding prayers, take part as musicians or Eucharistic Ministers. The quality of assemblies ranges from good to outstanding. When outstanding, a reverent and prayerful ambience is created through the use of music, lighted candles and ICT and students are attentive and responsive, with excellent participation by interacting with the leader or through readings. There is excellent opportunity for private reflection. The Retreat programme could be developed further in order to enhance all students' religious experience. Currently, Year 7 visit Aylesford Priory for a day, one class in Year 8 go to St Vincent's while there is a residential retreat for a group from students from Years 10-12 at Kintbury. Reflection and prayer posters around the school provide good and spontaneous opportunities for reflection. Each religious education lesson begins with a prayer as does the daily staff briefing.

Grade 2

Community Cohesion

Community cohesion is an outstanding feature of St Gregory's school. The impact of this is that all students feel welcome and valued there. The admissions policy specifically includes other world faiths, and the school is rightly proud of its inclusive nature. The school recognises the ethnic diversity of its student population and very successfully promotes tolerance between students from different cultural and racial groups in all subjects and especially in the Review groups and in religious education. The Outreach project at Sherwood, in which staff, work with young people not in education, employment or training to improve their skills for employment, is another excellent example of St Gregory's commitment to the local community. Charity fundraising events, for example, the Harvest Fast Day lunch of soup and bread and the local parish Soup Bowl for homeless people, raises students' awareness of the vulnerable and marginalised as well as raising money for CAFOD projects, Amnesty International and the support of a student training for the priesthood in Ghana, while the International Festival day, run by the PTA, show-cases the ethnic mix of the school and celebrates the rich variety of cultures and traditions of the students. Cultural awareness is further raised

by multi-language prompts around school, especially in the Chapel, where the lay Chaplain focuses attention on racial diversity and global inclusion. The ecumenical student population of the school is a strength and is mirrored by the staff many of whom, though not Catholic, give a strong and effective witness to their own Christian faith, for example, by joining prayer and liturgies, supporting the school's charitable work and discussing with students their own moral and spiritual views and experience. Some are very active, for example, in supporting the residential retreat programme. Students who are not Catholics feel totally included in the community of St Gregory's. For example, Muslim boys joined the school in January 2008 and have been fully integrated and the local Imam has been invited into school to meet them and to speak to Sixth Formers. The school has an informal partnership with the local Anglican comprehensive school, sharing courses for post-16 and for hard- to -place students, to keep those vulnerable young people in a Christian environment which shares the same values. Religious education is studied by all students, encouraging understanding of faith and belief and a respect for others and their beliefs, while in assemblies, the CAFOD projects of "walking alongside others" in 2007/8 and the "living sustainably" project for 2008/9, help learners to understand their global context. The school has intermediate status as an International School and already students experience virtual and actual links with students in Europe, via the Comenius project in Year 9, while the link school in Zambia visited with a basketball team last year and the World Challenge trips have enabled Sixth Formers to volunteer their services in many countries where they can make a difference to the lives of disadvantaged people. The school provides genuine opportunities for students to have a voice in decision-making – for example the School Council. Student representatives are members of the governors' Vision Working Group, the School Food Policy Working Group and of the Racial, Gender, Disability Scheme Working Group.

Grade 1

Religious education

Achievement and standards

Attainment in religious education is, overall, good. More specifically, it is very good at Key Stage 3, where the high standards are comparable with the other core subjects. At Key Stage 4 attainment is satisfactory while it is good at Key Stage 5, where the results have remained constant over time. Girls perform better than boys, which reflects the national trend. The high examination entry rate is commendable. Students enjoy the teaching and learning opportunities offered to them and achieve well in this subject across all key stages. This can best be seen in the high take up of students choosing AS level religious studies year on year. Retention of students in Year 13 is also good with 80% of the students who progress from Year 12 continuing their studies at A2. Religious education is a strong and successful Advanced level option where all students achieve passes. In 2008, 88% of students attained higher grades. Standards in the classroom are also good across the key stages and most students like the subject.

Grade 2

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good with some outstanding features. Where lessons are good or better they are well planned and structured with clear lesson objectives shared with and understood by the students. Students prior knowledge and understanding are assessed before moving on to new material. Students are encouraged and affirmed and classroom management is good. Relationships, behaviour and attitudes are exemplary. There is a good variety of tasks and students are generally on task and most like the subject. The use of ICT in lessons is good. For example it was used well to stimulate motivation during a lesson on the Exodus. Students make good progress within lessons and over time. Written work is mostly of a high standard and students take care with it. Most lessons have solid pace. Students know the level they are working at but not all know how to move on from this. Teachers, when marking written work, sometimes make comments indicating how students could improve, although there is inconsistency in this area. Where lessons are less than good, opportunities to keep students on task are sometimes missed and the learning objectives are not always revisited at the end of the lesson. Overall, teachers should try to ensure that the resources and materials used meet students' individual learning needs more closely. A system for tracking and recording students' attainment and for setting targets is in place and parents are kept well informed about their children's progress. Religious education makes a good contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the students.

Grade 2

The religious education curriculum

The quality of the religious education curriculum is good. At Key Stage 3 it is developed around the Diocesan approved programme The Way, The Truth and The Life with supplementary material, using other resources. Using The Way, The Truth and The Life as a basis for the Key Stage 3 curriculum ensures that the Catholic nature of the curriculum is evident. The current theme promoted by the school, the CAFOD "living sustainably" project, is an excellent example of how the school community as a whole endeavours to make religious education relevant to modern life. In Key Stage 4 students follow the OCR syllabus, the study of Christianity and an examination of personal, social and world issues from a Christian perspective that allows them to explore essential elements of Christianity as well as ethical issues. The curriculum in Year 12/13 consists of two separate courses - an AS/A2 course which includes studying philosophy of religion and Jewish scriptures, and the newly established NOCN course, which is relevant to the needs of post 16 students. It is delivered in a series of modules that focus on theology, ethics and spirituality. One module allows students to explore their prayer life, using meditation with a non-liturgical liturgy as a culmination to the module. RE teachers support moral awareness by discussing with students the "ThinkuKnow" programme, to stay safe on the internet, led by trained staff in conjunction with Kent police. Year 12 have a day dedicated to relationships with a team of external Christian providers leading the day. This is developed with one of the Chaplaincy team priests providing input on Marriage Encounter.

The students' religious experiences are enhanced by visits to places of religious interest like Aylesford Priory and local churches. The curriculum time for Key Stage 3 is, however, still less than the 10% required by the diocese.

Grade 2

Leadership and management

Leadership and management of religious education, which is part of the Ethos and Personal Development Area of learning (EPD), is good with the potential to be outstanding. The acting subject leader, who is also head of the Additional Educational Needs department, is very committed to Catholic education and is extremely well organised. For example the departmental handbook is very detailed and well structured, with valuable guidance on policies, assessment, differentiation to meet the needs of AEN learners as well as offering support in developing activities for the more able students. The handbook also contains the subject's aims, minutes of meetings and reports of internal subject reviews conducted by the senior leadership team. Staff are encouraged to take on responsibilities and subsequent support is good with responsibility for each of the three key stages being delegated to three RE teachers.

Examination results are thoroughly analysed by teaching group and gender as well as by ability group and the findings and data are used to inform planning and teaching. For example, the use of a new tracking sheet for all key stages was introduced which allows both students and staff to monitor progress more readily. Also the use of AfL techniques to focus the student, such as "Where am I? How can I improve?" has been introduced recently. There is a good programme of formal lesson observation, work scrutiny and lesson modelling when staff teach groups together. For example, in Year 12/13, teachers share an aspect of a module which is then offered to other students. Assessment is robust with end of module tests every six weeks which enables the new monitoring system, using the traffic lights model, to be effective. Target-setting is also robust using CATs and KS3 results. The EPD development plan contains strands to develop the chaplaincy and the religious life of the school, which are also found in other AOL plans. Accommodation and resources are good. There are four dedicated classrooms all of which have an interactive white board, DVD facilities, and storage for text books. They also have notice boards with good displays of current student work and key words with pictures to help make them user-friendly for EAL students. In the Sixth Form centre there are facilities for video conferencing work as well as the Sixth Form Sanctuary. During the inspection this was used for a voluntary Mass, which was very well attended by students and staff. Every student has access to a text book and each has a personal copy of the New Testament.

Grade 2