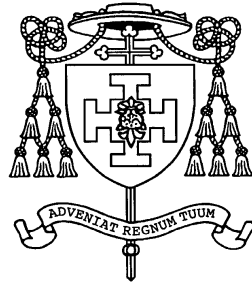


**THE DIOCESE OF SHREWSBURY**



**St Ambrose College**

**URN: 131315  
DCSF No: 358 5899**

**27 April 2010**

**Report on the  
Inspection of Denominational Education**

**Lead Inspector: Dcn Paul Mannings  
Link Inspector: Mrs Elizabeth Dolan**

**The inspection of the denominational education of  
St Ambrose College  
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**

<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL**

St Ambrose College is a Catholic, voluntary aided, boys' grammar school, under the trusteeship of the Congregation of Christian Brothers, and situated in the Trafford Authority. The College has specialist status for Mathematics and Computing. Learners are drawn in the main from many Catholic schools in the local borough, which includes the dioceses of Shrewsbury and Salford. A number attend from dioceses in the wider area. There are 943 learners on roll of whom 80% are baptized Catholics with 7.8% from other Christian denominations and 2.4% from other World Faith traditions. Three learners have statements of special educational needs, with a further 19 supported by School Action and 6 by School Action Plus. There are 52 members of staff (including six part-time) of whom 26 are Catholic. The College campus is subject to a total rebuild under the remit of BSF with a projected completion date for the end of 2011.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS**

St. Ambrose is an outstanding Catholic College committed to the charism of Blessed Edmund Ignatius Rice, whose Eight Essentials of Education steer their mission to '...strive together to make real in our lives and in the world, the values of the Gospel.' Since the last inspection the College has maintained its outstanding capacity for continued improvement in all areas. This is reflected in the Leadership and Management of the Catholic Life and Ethos, and in Collective Worship. Achievement and standards in Religious Education together with teaching and learning are outstanding. The leadership and management of the Religious Education Department is outstanding at all levels. Learners, parents and carers show outstanding support for the College.

**GRADE 1**

## **IMPROVEMENT SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION**

Improvement since the last inspection has been outstanding. The department has increased resources for information communication technology, not least in the provision of personal notebook computers for groups of learners. The continued rise in the standard of teaching and learning has been marked by a growing focus on sufficient stretch and challenge for the higher ability learners. There is consistency and high quality use of the departmental marking policy.

**GRADE 1**

## **CAPACITY FOR DEVELOPMENT**

There is outstanding capacity for development. This is evident from the concise and thorough Religious Education Self-Evaluation. Quality statements are supported by strategic plans for development and identified improvements. The document is cohesively linked to the Faculty Action Plan and Review, which targets improvement within realistic timescales. Areas for development are incorporated within the annual College Improvement Plan.

**GRADE 1**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT**

- Maintain and continue to develop the existing outstanding practice in the Catholic Life and Ethos of the College and in curriculum Religious Education.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE AND ETHOS**

Leadership and management of the Catholic Life and Ethos of the College are outstanding. This is ensured by the governors, headmaster and all levels of leadership. The Mission Statement is owned and understood by the community. It is linked to practical aims and objectives, which are used to evaluate its effectiveness. In addition the *Eight Essentials of Christian Brother Education* focuses on the raison d'être for the College. Its terms are also 'lived' not least by the learners who feel the content is a mission statement in its own right. This latter document underpins the whole effective process for monitoring Catholic Life and Ethos. It forms the framework for the College Improvement Plan, thus keeping the identification and continued pursuit of spirituality at the core of College life. Leadership might consider the next Mission Statement Review when the completed rebuild marks a new stage in its Catholic life and ethos. The focus could be upon the phased adoption of the *Eight Essentials* as the singular way forward in mission.

Spiritual and Moral development is a strength of the College. It is clearly identifiable in the confident expression, values and attitudes of the learners and also forms an integral part of the annual curriculum and pastoral review process, together with the College Development Plan. The latter identifies criteria whereby it can be supported.

Chaplaincy is undertaken by a small number of priests who are committed to the role and attend whenever possible. College leadership has a vision for a wider chaplaincy dimension inclusive of learners and staff, once the new building is established. They might also consider the benefits of a chaplaincy leader to coordinate all who may be involved.

The promotion of community cohesion is outstanding. The College undertakes wide-ranging social interaction and fundraising projects at local, nation and global level. These include groups for LIFE, Justice and Peace and CAFOD. There is a focus on Christian Brothers' immersion activities for staff and Edmund Rice international projects for staff and learners. The Religious Education curriculum promotes community cohesion through its focus on knowledge and understanding of other World Faith traditions, together with its emphasis on citizenship through Gospel values. In Collective Worship themes are inclusive of current affairs, issues and moral dilemmas. Leadership at all levels act as role models to the learners. The College strives for the common good of all members.

**GRADE 1**

### **COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

The provision for and quality of Collective Worship is outstanding. The policy contains the philosophy with practical details for implementation. There are weekly themes focused on the Liturgical Calendar. Year group prayer and worship takes place once each week and form groups gather daily. There is opportunity for prayer during lessons and within meetings. Masses and services take place throughout the year. Consequently learners have opportunities for a practical involvement, which they highly value. This was exemplified on the day of inspection through two acts of worship in which learners' and staff were actively engaged. In each there was an emphasis on both personal reflection and group interaction. There is a system for monitoring quality and practice within the College framework for pastoral review. This ensures the content and delivery of Collective Worship makes a major contribution to learners' spiritual and moral development.

**GRADE 1**

### **ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are outstanding. In Key Stage 3 figures for summer 2009 indicated 100% achieving Level 5, with 99% Level 6 and 76% Level 7. The latter represents a significant rise from 52% in the previous year. In Key Stage 4 the 2009 GCSE cohort achieved 96.1% A\*-C with 53.5% gaining A\*-A. These figures remain well above the national average and also above the College target of 50% A\*-C over the past three years. In the Sixth Form A2 grades for 2009 were 52% A/B with 100% A-E. All of these figures are consistent with maintained and developing rates of achievement and attainment during the last three years.

Rigorous standards in class focus on the capabilities and starting points of all learners. Standards are supported by the continued rise in the quality of teaching and learning, together with quality assessment. A significant contribution is made by the learners own attitudes in class. Their enjoyment of Religious Education together with their behaviour in and out of class is exemplary. They are motivated to achieve through the opportunities to extend and enrich classroom activities through contributions to the community.

**GRADE 1**

### **TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

On the day of inspection six lessons were observed and the quality of teaching and learning was outstanding overall. All other elements were at least good. This is an improvement since the last inspection, which identified lessons ranging from satisfactory to good with outstanding features. Teaching is organized, structured and creative. Full use is made of the three-part lesson. A minority of lessons still require development of some pedestrian activities that may not always

engage and challenge some higher ability learners. The overall quality of learning is exemplified by both interactive and independent activities. There is effective differentiation provided through teacher-led presentation, choices of activities and by outcome. The majority of learners are highly confident in sustaining their own rate of pace and progress. Procedures for assessment are robust and rigorous in all key stages. The process is detailed within the handbook and includes formative and end of task activities, matched to levels of attainment in Key Stage 3 and to accredited courses in Key Stage 4 and the Sixth Form. Assessments provide evidence that learners are challenged to explain, show understanding and to defend their judgements and opinions. Formative marking and annotation of learners work is a key development since the last inspection. All work is being marked according to the marking policy. Comments are diagnostic and developmental. Learners' written work shows high standards of presentation. The content matches the frameworks of study. There is clear knowledge and understanding of key vocabulary and concepts. Effective tracking of progress includes learners. Assessment outcomes are supported by detailed reporting and meetings with parents and carers so ensuring a high level of involvement in the education of their children.

**GRADE 1**

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE R.E. DEPARTMENT**

The leadership and management of the Religious Education department is outstanding. The subject is at the core of Catholic Life and managed through the Faculty of Religious Education. Senior leadership provides clear direction and active support not least through their participation within the department. The Faculty Director, who is also an assistant head, provides outstanding management and coordination. There is a department of ten consisting of four qualified core members who deliver most of the curriculum. Six are part time members from other subject disciplines, one of whom is qualified in Religious Education. Together they are an active, committed and high profile team, which accounts for the status and success of the subject. Systems for performance management are well embedded. The process includes at least three observations of teaching to enable sharing of good practice and continued professional development.

The curriculum is well managed and coordinated. In Key Stage 3 the allocation is 8% with 12% for Key Stage 4. The Sixth form receives 20% for AS/A2 and 4% for the general course. All of the content is clearly linked to the Curriculum Directory. It is well supported by text and ICT resources, in many cases prepared by the department. This is the result of generous funding and effective provision and deployment of resources. In Key Stage 4 all learners undertake GCSE over two years. In the Sixth Form the AS/A2 course in Religious Studies is well established. The accredited general course has been introduced in recent years and is undertaken at Level-2-3 by all learners. Equal opportunities are promoted through the continued development of teaching and learning and by learners' access to accredited courses. Consequently the curriculum makes a strong response to diocesan and national requirements. It provides an outstanding contribution to learners' spiritual and moral development.

Governors monitor Religious Education through the faculty annual review and by their own active participation in College life. In addition they are well informed and rooted in the understanding of the faith dimension of the Faculty and its contribution to the overall Catholic life of the community. Consequently they provide an outstanding discharge of their responsibilities.

**GRADE 1**

