



Diocese of Arundel and Brighton

# INSPECTION REPORT

St Paul's Catholic College  
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DfE Number: 126101

Headteacher: Mr R Carter  
Chair of Governors: Mr G Bartlett

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Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Bishop of Arundel & Brighton  
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Date of inspection: 6-7 March 2014  
Date of previous inspection: 19<sup>th</sup> November 2007

Lead Inspector: Dr J Lydon  
Associate Inspector: Mr P Ward

## **Description of School**

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St. Paul's is a voluntary aided school in West Sussex Local Authority. It serves the Lewes deanery and particularly the parishes of St. Paul's, Haywards Heath; St. Wilfrid's, Burgess Hill; Our Lady Immaculate and St. Philip Neri, Uckfield; St. Pancras, Lewes; St. Thomas More, Seaford and St. Edward the Confessor, Keymer. The proportion of Catholics in KS3 and KS4 is 89% whilst in KS5 this is 61% with a wide range of students applying from schools locally to join the Sixth Form. The weekly curriculum allocation dedicated to RE is 9.33% in KS3 and KS4 and 16.6% at KS5 for A level provision.

The school takes students from the ages of 11 to 18 and has a broad catchment area of over 400 square miles. The number of students on roll is 1025 and this is due to rise to 1100 in September 2014 with 5 form entry and Sixth Form expansion. The attainment of pupils entering the school is broadly above average and achievement and attainment is significantly above national average at all key stages. In 2013 this placed the school in the top 13% nationally. The number of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average. 19.5% of students are from minority ethnic groups and the number of students with English as an additional language is below the national average. The number of students with statements in the school and those on school action + support is above the national average.

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

### **Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school**

As a Catholic educating community St Paul's Catholic College is outstanding. Leadership and management are outstanding, particularly in the context of the building of an effective Catholic educating community, evidenced during the inspection and by a recent survey in which 86.1% of parents, staff and students rated community spirit as outstanding. The building of this community has developed beyond the confines of the College by virtue of the development of the Inspire Teaching Alliance, led by St Paul's due to its status as a National Teaching School and National Support School, which has a deep rooted commitment to supporting and nurturing schools with a religious character. The central tenet of the Mission Statement, "innovative, inspirational and Christian education", encapsulates the strategic vision and direction of the College. The support of the chaplaincy team is a significant strength of the College, a view shared by both staff, students and parents. Collective worship is vibrant, enhanced significantly by the Sixth Form members of the chaplaincy team. The school has a very good capacity to improve further.

**Grade 1**

### **Improvement since the last inspection**

- All action points of the last inspection report have been addressed.
- Links with clergy, parishes, primary schools and the local Catholic community have developed considerably since the last inspection.

- The programme for student spiritual leaders has developed across the school, exemplified by the expansion of the 'CHAPS' student chaplaincy team.

**Grade 1**

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Continue to promote the development of Catholic Senior Leaders, particularly through the Inspire Teaching Alliance.

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## **The Catholic Life of the School**

### **Leadership and Management**

The leadership and management of this Catholic College are outstanding. The leadership of the school is strongly focused on its Catholic mission, on raising standards and promoting the personal development of students. The impact of the Head Teacher cannot be overstated, exemplified in his balancing the roles of leading the College while also leading the Inspire Teaching Alliance which is regarded as a particularly positive initiative by staff and Governors who commented on the added dynamism it brings to the College, especially in the context of nurturing future teachers and leaders. Leaders at all levels have a strong sense of the educational mission of the Church and the role of the school in expressing it and provide very clear direction for the Catholic life of the school. They communicate a strong sense of spiritual and moral purpose, with a focus on promoting high standards and the holistic development of the pupils. This is modelled by the Head Teacher in his line managing the Religious Education department. Excellent pastoral care is demonstrated by the efficient systems that allow staff to report concerns which are promptly investigated so as to resolve issues, evidenced by students and data from pastoral leaders. Governors are aware of the critical importance of maintaining Catholic identity and working towards further securing its prominence in the life of the school, demonstrated most recently by their success in appointing a new chaplain. An excellent range of extra-curricular activities was regarded by students as particularly significant in developing the College as an educational community and the characteristic of staff "going the extra mile" was recognised by students and emphasised by clergy as one of the defining characteristics of this College. Staff in general, feel valued, summed up by one teacher who stated that "staff at all levels feel empowered that they can make a difference". The College community is characterised by high morale with inclusion for all axiomatic.

**Grade 1**

### **The Prayer Life of the School**

The Eucharist and prayer are central to the life of the whole College community. Each day begins with a prayer, either in tutor groups or in an Assembly. The outstanding Assembly witnessed during inspection included contributions from both staff and students and was described by students as a typical feature of College life. The chaplaincy leader produces booklets of Classroom Prayers and worship resources based around the liturgical seasons and focused on the Sunday readings. Whole College Masses are celebrated three times a year and a special whole community Mass was held in October to mark the College Jubilee and celebrated by the Bishop. Mass is celebrated four times a week with each RE class celebrating a termly Mass. The latter initiative is particularly innovative in that Fr Vladimir Nikiforov, the priest

Chaplain, provides a learning commentary on the Mass adapted to the age group of the students. Mass is celebrated on Holy days of obligation that fall within the school term. There is also an annual Leavers' Mass as well as a Mass for parents. The positive impact of the priest Chaplain was articulated by parents, students and staff. The College community celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Advent and Lent supported by members of the Deanery clergy, one of whom spoke of the significant contribution of the College to the spiritual development of the students, exemplified in a marked improvement in engagement by students presenting for the Sacrament of Confirmation. The chaplaincy leader encourages the College community to embrace chaplaincy, evidenced by the inclusive nature of the chaplaincy team whose members include staff, students, parents, clergy, a Governor and members of the support staff. The inclusion of students constitutes a particularly positive feature with the 'CHAPS' team playing a prominent role in GIFT (Growing in Faith) programme for Years 7 and 8.

**Grade 1**

### **How effectively does the school / college promote community cohesion?**

The inclusion of all is a central goal and a shared vision of this Catholic College in which staff and students of other religious traditions feel very much valued. Several colleagues representing other faith backgrounds stated unequivocally that "Catholicity unites us". The inclusion of Student Governors in Leadership Team discussions is a significantly positive feature in the context of collaborative leadership. Several staff from other religious backgrounds insisted that they felt included in St Paul's Catholic community, citing the support of Catholic colleagues in leading prayers with students. They also commented on the welcoming nature of the spiritual leadership of the College community. Support for colleagues and students was felt keenly at critical times such as bereavement. Systems are in place to ensure that pupils joining in Year 7 promptly feel members of the community, evidenced in student and parent interviews. The "Angels" initiative whereby students in Year 10 peer mentor those in Year 7 with a particular focus on leading prayer during tutor time was cited as a significant innovation by students across year groups. Inclusion of pupils with special educational needs was mentioned by the Student Governors to be a significant feature. Various curriculum initiatives have been introduced to support inclusion, for example ASDAN and BTEC qualifications. Parents confirm that they are kept very well informed of school activities as well as their children's progress. There is an SVP group in the College committed to serving in a Charity Shop, a Nursing Home and a Special Needs School. Access to staff was rated as outstanding by parents (79.3% in the 2013 Kirkland Rowell survey) with the "open door" policy of the Headteacher, setting aside one evening a month to meet parents, regarded as exemplary by parents. In the context of the wide-ranging extra-curricular provision, the College is committed to ensuring that students gain an equitable experience of College life, facilitated by the setting up of a hardship fund. This is being monitored through "St Paul's Passport" which aims to ensure that students achieve progress in all aspects of College provision. There is an extensive programme of charitable support for local, national and international charities with in excess of £10,000 raised annually. The College has secured the support of the British Council in promoting links with St Anthony's College in Kenya while several students have and will be involved in the Arundel & Brighton Diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes as "Redshirts". The College has good links with Catholic schools in the deanery and hosts the regular meeting of RE co-ordinators.

**Grade 1**

## **Religious Education**

### **Achievement and Standards in Religious Education**

Achievement and standards in religious education are outstanding. Almost all learners, including those with special educational needs, make at least good progress and many make very good or outstanding progress based on value added measures. At Key Stage 3 92% of students achieved Level 6+ compared to 82% in English with examples seen by inspectors of level 6+. Inspectors saw examples of work at Level 7. At Key Stage 4 the three year trend in respect of progress is 10% above expected while in 2013 the figure was 11%, the figure for progress at grades A\*-A being 7%. The ALPS (Advanced Level Performance Systems) figures for progress at Key Stage 5 are significantly positive. This high degree of achievement is valued by parents and students who rate Religious Education as outstanding in the Kirkland Rowell 2013 survey (parents 83.2% and students 98.0%). During interviews students at Key Stages 4 and 5 commented particularly on the commitment of teachers in ensuring that all students exceeded their potential, citing innovative teaching methods engaging the whole range of student aptitudes. Students also show good progress in developing religious literacy, clearly evidenced, for example, by a Year 8 student engaging enthusiastically with an inspector on the implications of the title Mary Mother of God.

**Grade 1**

### **Teaching and learning in Religious Education**

Based on the lessons observed and on the written evidence of observations by members of the Leadership Team prior to the inspection, the quality of teaching is outstanding. Outstanding lessons included a wide range of imaginative teaching strategies which consistently engaged and challenged students, encouraging them to learn and grow in understanding. Where teaching is outstanding, thorough planning ensures a variety of engaging activities that enables all students to extend and deepen their prior learning. Students work independently and collaboratively, in carefully designed groupings, using a variety of prepared print and electronic sources to research a topic in order to address the key points. A series of discrete stages allows students to self and peer-assess their progress and so guide further research and promote clarity of expression. For example Year 11 students preparing to answer a GCSE-style question on the Epiphany worked effectively in self-organised groups to ensure all available sources were considered, tablet computers being used both to access material using QRs (Quick Response Codes) provided and to record artistic images to further enhance their learning and share it with others. In another example a series of learning activities enabled students to produce outstanding responses to a question focusing on a challenging moral issue. There was extensive evidence of formative assessment in the sample of books provided and in those inspected during lesson observations. Students at all Key Stages commented on the engaging nature of RE lessons and the variety of teaching styles adopted.

**Grade 1**

## **Quality of the Curriculum**

The religious education curriculum of the school is aligned to the 2012 Religious Education Curriculum Directory and adapted to the needs of students. An additional lesson has been added to the Key Stage 3 curriculum since the last Section 48 inspection, ensuring that the curriculum overall is in line with the requirements articulated by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. The Key Stage 3 curriculum includes an exploration of the major World faiths in line with the Directory while the sections of the AQA syllabus chosen at Key Stage 4 have a strong focus on Catholicity and are mapped effectively against the requirements of the Directory. Sixth Form General RE takes the form of five Spiritual Development days which equates to 5% of curriculum time, again in line with Bishops Conference obligations. The growing number of 'A' Level Religious Studies students follow a programme in Philosophy and Ethics reflecting the national trend. The delivery of the curriculum is regarded as innovative and inspiring by students across all Key Stages, reflected in interviews, Kirkland Rowell surveys and an online questionnaire, one comment suggesting that "we are able to debate and discuss topics openly and to be able to evaluate various things (for example rituals) and why or why not the Church should have them" Several students remarked that the engagement of visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learning styles constituted a particular strength of the RE Department. Every lesson for KS3 and KS4 is on the College's Virtual Learning Environment along with revision videos, guides, games, web-links, podcasts and exemplar mark schemes for KS4 and KS5. The Head of RE confirmed that the Department is resourced adequately.

**Grade 1**

## **Leadership and management of Religious Education**

The leadership and management of Religious Education is outstanding. Governors are very well informed of the strategic direction of the Department through link Governor. The Head Teacher line manages the RE Department and the consistently excellent RE results are indicative of the outstanding leadership of the Department. There is evidence of rigorous monitoring and self-evaluation within the Department, including regular surveys of student opinion. The Head of RE is committed to the advancement of the Department and is planning developments strategically, for example the creation of a new Sixth Form RE programme. She is an empowering presence, encouraging departmental colleagues to contribute effectively to the production of schemes of work. She animates regular internal in-service training and has regular meetings with colleagues to discuss the performance of students. There is a genuine feel within the department of a "community of learners" approach, supported by effective delegation. In the most recent 360° subject leaders review colleagues confirmed that the Head of RE "knows what it means to be a subject leader" and "has the ability to drive things forward" The leadership of the RE Department was mentioned specifically by Governors and clergy particularly in the context of constituting a role model for both staff and students. The RE Department is characterised by excellent communication both within and in collaboration with the chaplaincy team and the Head of Department leads a group of well-qualified RE teachers, committed to Continuing Professional Development.

**Grade 1**