

Archdiocese of Cardiff



St David's Catholic College Inspection Report

Inspection dates	26th to 27th January 2011
Inspectors	Mrs Ann Fowler Mrs Patricia Landers
Type of establishment	Sixth Form College
Age range of students	16-19
Number on roll	1550
Local Authority	Cardiff
Chair of Governors	Mr Christian Mahoney
College Address	TY Gwyn Rd, Penylan, Cardiff, CF23 5QD
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E-mail address	enquiries@st-davids-coll.ac.uk
Parish(es) served	Parishes in the city of Cardiff and in Barry and Penarth
Date of previous inspection	31st January to 3rd February 2000
Principal	Mr Mark Leighfield

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the college's current performance and on prospects for improvement.

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector leading practice or practise that is both consistent and highly effective.
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The table below shows the terms that Archdiocesan inspectors use and a broad idea of their meaning. It is for guidance only.

Proportion	Description
With very few exceptions	Nearly all
90% or more	Most
70% or more	Many
60% or more	A majority
Close to 50%	Half/around half
Below 40%	A minority
Below 20%	Few
Less than 10%	Very few

Copies of this report are available from the college and from the Archdiocesan website: www.rcadc.org

Context

St David's Catholic College was founded by the Archdiocese of Cardiff as a Catholic sixth-form college in 1987. It is based on one campus in the north-east of Cardiff and provides learning opportunities for about 1,550 full-time learners. Enrolments have increased by about 36% over the last four years. Nearly all learners are aged 16 to 19. It serves a number of Catholic parishes within the Archdiocese of Cardiff and since 2004 has established a faith based learning network which encompasses Bishop of Llandaff, Corpus Christi, Mary Immaculate, St Illtyd's and St Teilo's schools. Apart from these schools, it also has links with other Catholic schools, including primary schools.

The college's mission is to be 'a Catholic college for the community, to discover and realise the full potential of all, in an atmosphere of love, service and respect, inspired by Christ'. Its first strategic aim is to establish a community based on the Gospel. 51% of learners are at present from the Catholic community. Approximately 42% of learners receive the educational maintenance allowance and 45% are eligible for educational deprivation funding. An increasing number of students are from ethnic minority communities.

Although the majority of students, just under 80%, enrol for level 3 courses, with most on A2/AS level courses, the college also offers level 2, level 1 and vocational courses. All students undertake a general RE programme, as well as studying for the Welsh Baccalaureate.

Summary

How effective is the college in providing Catholic education?	Excellent
The leadership team is strongly motivated by the desire to create a community based on the Gospel. Through their actions they model and make explicit the Catholic vision of life. In particular they take seriously the option for the poor, actively supporting students who face challenging circumstances. The provision for Level 1 students is to be commended especially since the college has to support this financially. Although the college has increased in size since it was first established, it has sought to create a strong sense of community and family. The notion of leadership as both service and witness is thoroughly embedded in its understanding and this in turn models a vision of what it means to be human for others. They are concerned to develop the potential of all students and the college's overall success rates are high at all levels of study and above most other further education colleges in Wales. The RE and Chaplaincy team leaders have a clear vision of what they are trying to achieve and have a good sense of future direction.	
What are the college's prospects for improvement?	Excellent

Areas for development from the previous inspection have all been effectively addressed. Senior leaders and governors are committed to Catholic education and to developing the potential of all individuals. They are highly motivated and consistently communicate high expectations to staff about securing improvement. The leadership team, and chaplaincy leaders, have a clear grasp of the ways in which the college needs to move forward and have already identified the salient points. The governing body fulfils its canonical and statutory responsibilities and is committed to supporting development.

Recommendations and Required Actions

What does the college need to do to improve further?

1. Restructure the chaplaincy team to include student, parent and parish representation.
2. Involve students in the planning, delivery and development of prayer and worship within the college.
3. Provide inset to help all tutor staff develop greater confidence, skill and knowledge in their delivery of prayer and reflection.
4. Review the year 12 General Religious Education Programme with schools in the faith partnership and the diocese to ensure additionality and it fulfils all the requirements of the Curriculum Directory.

What happens next?

The college will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations. Progress in addressing the recommendations is monitored by the Archdiocese.

Main Findings

KQ1. How good are outcomes?

Good

St David's College excels at creating a sense of belonging and providing students with skills and attitudes that will support them, and others, in the future. During their courses of study, students become increasingly confident in expressing their own views. Staff model what it means to put faith into action and because they act with integrity, students are aware of what it means to live in the light of the Gospel and are able to reflect these values in their own lives. They respond to the needs of people beyond the college. They show an understanding of the need to forgive, to be forgiven, and have a good understanding of right and wrong. One local resident for example wrote to express her appreciation for the way students from the college came to her aid when she fell on the street and needed help. Within the Religious Education lessons and in the life of the college in general, they demonstrate an understanding of others and respect for difference. They understand that faith leads to action and that living a life of faith is important to many. They respond to opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities organised by the chaplaincy, including pilgrimages to both Lourdes and Rome, quiet days of reflection, voluntary Mass, involvement with La Sallian projects, and supporting projects in Tanzania organised through the parishes in Cardiff run by the Rosminian Order. Students benefit from the care and guidance programme which is demonstrated through their success at academic levels and their sense of well-being and optimism for the future. Students need more opportunities to take responsibility for the Catholic Life of the college to enable them to develop as future faith leaders. The work of the Student Council is not sufficiently known amongst students. The Council, as well as the chaplaincy team, could be a mechanism for extending leadership and responsibility for the Catholic life of the college.

Within the provision for formal Religious Education in the college, there are two strands: the A level provision, which includes both AS and A2 courses, and the general Religious Education programme, which all students undertake. All students enjoy their learning and respond positively to the opportunities offered. One student, for example, in Year 12, coming from a background outside the Catholic sector said that she had initially been wary of taking part in the general Religious Education programme, but it was now her favourite course because it gave her an opportunity to be listened to and to explore issues in a non-threatening way. Within the general Religious Education programme, because the course is differentiated according to ability, students are able to access the material and make progress. They become increasingly religiously literate during Year 13, where the course develops a more focused and explicit faith content.

AS and A2 students make good academic progress and value the opportunities offered to them. Students undertaking these courses become increasingly religiously literate, using wide-ranging technical vocabulary, and are able to work independently.

Assemblies and other forms of prayer and worship make use of music, art and media, which enables students to be engaged and to grow in an understanding of

the issues raised. Other departments within the college are, on occasion, involved in the planning of prayer and worship. For example, a film made by the media studies department was used in one of the Advent assemblies. This helps students to appreciate that other curriculum areas can contribute to chaplaincy work, reinforcing the link between faith and life. Collaboration between curriculum areas needs to be encouraged. Students show respect for each other and students from different backgrounds feel included in worship.

What is less secure is the involvement of students in planning and taking responsibility for prayer and worship. As a consequence, they are not able to develop skills in this area. The college has identified this as an area for development.

KQ2. How good is provision?	Excellent
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The college has a dedicated team of Religious Education specialists, who deliver the general Religious Education programme and the A level courses. This enables staff to work effectively in planning courses, which are tailored to the needs of students. Teaching within both the A level and the general Religious Education programme is effective in enthusing students and developing their interest. The general Religious Education course is designed to begin with students' own experiences and understanding of themselves, and of their relationships and experiences of the world. This is to take account of the wide variety of backgrounds that students come from. As the course progresses, it takes on a more explicit faith dimension though this needs to be made more explicit especially in Year 12. Good and imaginative use is made of technology to enhance learning. Where teaching is at its best, a wide variety of techniques are used to promote active learning and student involvement. These techniques involve, for example, the use of paired discussion, card sort exercises, role play, whiteboards, film and media. Because the course is differentiated, including an honours course for gifted and talented students, all students are able to make progress. Students develop techniques of working collaboratively and they learn to respect the views of others. The subject knowledge of staff is good. The general Religious Education course offers the opportunity for students' work to be formally assessed and recognised through Agored Cymru. This assessment programme is in the early stages but promises to allow students to take more responsibility for their learning. In order to ensure the provision for Religious Education is completely additional to previous work, the college would benefit from more discussion with the schools in the faith based partnership. Provision needs to be augmented to ensure the Welsh dimension is incorporated into the course.

A Level teaching is very secure, with staff knowing the abilities of the students. They build on previous progress and structure work to enable progress. Students are provided with feedback and they understand what they need to do to make progress. Students are encouraged to become independent learners. Feedback from students is sought on a regular basis and used to help inform planning.

The college environment is well-kept, stimulating and constantly reminds students, through many images, statues and symbols, of the Catholic identity of

the college, though perhaps St David himself needs a more prominent focus. The spacious chapel is within the centre of the college and creates a sacred space for students to use. Muslim students are provided with a separate space to use for prayer. The pastoral care and well-being provision is excellent and designed to take account of both student needs and the Catholic nature of the college. Spiritual development is clearly identified as an integral part of the Well-Being programme. This is already being extended to include parents, who are invited to attend a session on cyber bullying. Forthcoming sessions include mental health and drug awareness. The potential to extend this to parents within the partnership network and beyond is a promising area for further development. A range of 'Quiet Days' is provided for students and these are well received; one student commenting "It put me at rest after my Nan's death." Apart from the quiet days, opportunities to take part in charitable events such as CAFOD exist, as well as pilgrimages, including the Welsh National Pilgrimage to Lourdes. Students also have the opportunity to take part in a wide variety of different clubs, including an eco-club. This offers the opportunity to see how Catholic teaching on creation can be effectively linked to action.

The college provides special services to mark specific events in the Church's liturgical year. These are prepared by members of the chaplaincy team in a variety of styles. They are designed to engage students and to be inclusive of the wide variety of backgrounds within the college. Opportunities for reflection take place through the tutor system, with tutors being provided with a variety of resources. In the best examples of this, staff are confident in their use of materials, use silence creatively for reflection and draw upon prayers from the Catholic heritage. The college has identified the need for further inset to support staff who are less confident in this area. Mass is celebrated on a regular basis within the college. Opportunity has been provided for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The chaplaincy team meets on a regular basis to plan, evaluate and review and is well supported by the leadership team. The chaplaincy development plan has already highlighted many ways of developing the existing provision.

KQ3. How good are leadership and management?	Excellent
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The college's leadership, including the Governing Body, is deeply committed to the Church's mission in education. One of the strategic aims of the college is to establish a community based on the Gospel and leaders at all levels strive to model what this means in practice, making explicit through their actions the connection between faith and life. Governors fully understand, and are able to articulate, the mission of the college and are prepared to support that mission through the way they resource the college's activities. They discharge all canonical and statutory responsibilities effectively. They receive regular reports on the religious life of the college and the Governors' community committee liaises directly with the chaplaincy team. The Chair of Governors has been in post since November and has a good grasp of the strengths of the college and a sense of the direction the college needs to go in the future to further develop its Catholic life. He has also spent time in the college directly engaging with parents, pupils and staff. The governors have mechanisms in place for seeking feedback from parents, students and staff, which enable them to set priorities for future

development. They are committed to continuous improvement with regard to the Catholic life of the college and are able to challenge effectively.

The leadership team within the college is deeply committed to promoting, sustaining and developing the Catholic ethos. There is extensive evidence that the Catholic mission of the college is a priority, along with the spiritual and moral development of students. They provide an induction programme for all staff, which outlines what the Catholic ethos means in practice and encourages staff to reflect on their role within it. Besides formal inset on the Catholic ethos, which occurs annually, they also offer staff the opportunity to take part in 'Quiet days', encouraging staff to reflect on their personal spiritual development. These days also aim to model how they might help the students in their tutor groups to develop spiritually. Senior leaders take part in their own specific days of reflection led by the chaplaincy team; the last one, for example, focusing on the role of leader as servant and shepherd. Staff are asked to provide feedback on their training and days of reflection, enabling the leadership to set priorities for the future. The Religious Education programme, and the tutor-led delivery of the Well-Being programme and reflection time, are monitored through questionnaires and feedback forms provided to student focus groups, as well as by direct observation. A data analysis of the performance of academic Religious Education is also carried out and performance is reviewed on a regular basis. A range of opportunities are provided for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These include the formal activities of the Religious Education department, quiet days, pilgrimages, charity activities, the Well-Being programme and the care and guidance systems.

The college fulfils the Bishop's Conference requirements for the time allocated to general Religious Education and the leadership sees this as an integral part of college life. Progress in the academic Religious Studies courses is effectively monitored and evaluated. The college is committed to working in partnership with other organisations and providers. There is a close and productive link with schools through the Faith Partnership initiatives. These include support for schools in curriculum areas, for example, helping schools develop vocational courses for pupils who might otherwise drop out of the system; financial contributions, for example by helping provide IT equipment to support a virtual learning environment and providing money for one school to start up a vocational course in hairdressing; and, developing transition arrangements with college staff, for example, attending parents' evenings in partnership schools. There are plans to develop a joint inset provision for all staff involved in the partnership, though this has not yet been finalised. Through the leadership team, the college has worked with the Welsh Assembly Government, participates in the Metropolitan Learning Conference, attends conferences organised by the Catholic chaplains and sends representatives to the Cymfed, (Catholic Youth Ministry) conferences. Some staff attend courses run by the Archdiocese, and the college has helped organise events for the Archdiocese, as well as hosting the MA programme for Catholic school leadership, taught by St Mary's University College, Twickenham.

There is a common sense of belonging within the community and a strong sense of family. The values articulated by leaders are clearly understood by all. Leaders respect difference, value diversity and ensure equal opportunity for all. The

addition of the honours programme, and the inclusion of Level 1 students, demonstrates the college's commitment to developing the potential of all students. Students from different backgrounds are welcomed within the college, their progress is monitored and they are given opportunities to work together. The value the college places on inclusion makes explicit the belief that every individual is created in the image of God and is to be respected. Respect for others is modelled to students through college life and enables them to take a full and active part in their neighbourhood. Relationships among students are positive. Students interviewed say that no bullying takes place within the college. During the inspection, students commented on the quality of their relationships with staff, saying they felt valued, supported and respected. There is excellent provision to enable pupils to develop an understanding of the role they, and others, play in society and the world. This is demonstrated through opportunities offered to work on projects in the developing world, to become more aware of global needs and to show solidarity with others through their engagement with different charities. Prayer and worship are inclusive in nature, with all students offered the opportunity to take part in days of reflection.

Evidence Base

The inspection took place over two days with one preliminary visit to the college. There were two inspectors. A total of 16 lessons were observed. Seven interviews with adults took place, including governors and staff. In addition, there were three interviews with different groups of students and a variety of documentation was considered.