



Nottingham Roman Catholic Diocesan Education Service

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Dr John Pye
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23 November 2021

Dear John,

Diocesan Canonical Monitoring Visit to De Lisle College, A Catholic Voluntary Academy

Following my visit to your school on 4 November 2021, I write on behalf of the Nottingham Roman Catholic Diocesan Education Service to report on my findings from the visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the college since the most recent diocesan canonical inspection.

The visit was the first since Catholic Life and Collective Worship were judged to require improvement following the diocesan canonical inspection on 12 December 2018. It was carried out under Canon 806 of Canon Law.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas judged to require improvement at the diocesan canonical inspection.

Evidence Base:

- Observation of 'standing assemblies'
- Meeting with the headteacher
- Tour of the school to observe the culture of the school, including lesson change over
- Meeting with key stage three pupils
- Meeting with the chair of governors (via MS Teams)
- Meeting with the sixth form Catholic Life committee and the Year 10 mission team
- Observation of lunchtime and movement around site, such as times when pupils line up
- Meeting with the director of performance and standards from the CMAT
- Meeting with the lay chaplain and CMAT lead lay chaplain
- Meeting with the deputy headteacher
- Form room visits to look the development of prayer boards
- Observation of the lay chaplain working with pupils planning Acts of Worship
- Visit to prep-time for prayer, followed by an observation of an Act of Worship and a hymn practice
- Review of evidence folders

The Diocesan Centre, Mornington Crescent, Mackworth, Derby, DE22 4BD

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Context:

The college became part of the St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi-Academy Trust on 1 September 2018. The headteacher took up post on the 1 September 2018. The lay chaplain is new to the school and started in September 2021.

Main findings:

The following areas were highlighted at the school's previous inspection:

Catholic Life

Involve pupils, staff, parents, and governors in creating a new college mission statement which should then become the cornerstone of college life.

- Since the diocesan canonical inspection, the headteacher has focused on building a positive, respectful, and supportive pupil behaviour culture across the college based explicitly on the 'De Lisle Way' which stems from the new mission statement; this is underpinned by Catholic values which are now the cornerstone of college life.
- Extensive consultation has taken place, involving pupils, parents, staff, and governors, focused on the new mission statement, 'I praise you Lord, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.' *Psalm 139:14*.
- College leaders have created a mission statement that links previous statements together such as 'We are together in Faith – we praise you, Lord' and, 'We are inspired to achieve – for we are fearfully and wonderfully made.' The consultation asked staff, parents, pupils, and governors what *Psalm 139:14* meant to them; the feedback was then used to create the new college mission statement.
- There are four terms that explain the mission statement; we worship, we learn, we value, and we grow. These are directly linked to the 'De Lisle Way,' which forms the cornerstone of the behaviour and culture in the school through the STAR, STEPS and SHAPE mantras.
- The establishment of the 'De Lisle Way' is the mission statement in action: this is introduced to pupils as part of their induction into the college. It is therefore the cornerstone of the excellent culture and behaviour in the college. Pupils are positive learners, exhibiting very good manners: the college is supporting them to shape and prepare themselves for their future.
- The college prayer links to the mission statement. This is shared daily by the pupils so that it is central to college life. Pupils can explain the college's mission and what it means to them.
- The mission statement is used in all policies: it underpins the revised behaviour policy for the college.

Provide more opportunities for a greater number of pupils to reflect on their faith and the teachings of Jesus Christ by offering more visits and implementing a programme of in-college retreats.

- Retreat days have been introduced through the Advent Jesse Tree and Lent reconciliation liturgies. In-college retreat days took place and others were planned, though these were paused due to Covid-19. The Briars team visited the college and led a retreat day, and a virtual programme of Acts of Worship was embedded into the prayer life of the college during lockdowns.
- Daily prayer continued during lockdown both for pupils in college and for those at home. The college did this by maintaining prep-time; Acts of Worship were then filmed in the college chapel.
- For this academic year, there are Year 7 and Year 9 retreats to the Briars planned and a Year 8 pupil retreat to Alton Castle.
- There are plans to take students to Mount St Bernard's Abbey and re-instate the year group in-college retreats.

Develop the college's physical environment so that it clearly reflects its mission and identity through concrete and effective signs of the college's Catholic character.

- The college environment now clearly reflects its mission and identity as a Catholic college with concrete and effective signs of the college's Catholic character: for example, the icon images in the hall and the visibility of the mission statement. Next steps are to develop the mural and further symbols of the Catholic faith around the college.
- There has been a complete refurbishment of the chapel. It is now more widely used and is an effective sign of the college's Catholic character.
- Curriculum areas have different saints with which they are affiliated. There are signs around the College explaining to which saint each curriculum area relates and a visible prayer that supports these connections. The next step is to develop the use of these saints in curriculum areas.
- In each form room there are prayer notice boards. The notice boards display the college prayer, liturgical calendar, the college mission statement and the house patron. These are being used by pupils and staff to reflect the Catholic character of the college. Many of the prayer boards have reference to prayers related to stewardship and the environment.
- Whenever new areas of the school are developed, now the Catholic identity of the school is always considered.

Ensure that all members of the college community, including pupils, parents, staff and governors contribute to leaders' evaluation and development of the Catholic Life of the college.

- The school improvement plan is a three-year document whose first strategic objective is to improve Catholic Life and Collective Worship in the college. The post DCI action plans are clear and effective; they have enabled college leaders to implement change that has had a positive impact; all these actions have been implemented in a timely fashion.
- Governors are involved in supporting and challenging college leaders to make improvements in the Catholic Life of the college.
- Parent forums were held once a term before Covid-19: now parents can provide regular feedback through parental surveys.
- Staff surveys demonstrate the impact of improvements in the Catholic Life of the college.

Collective Worship:

Build on the recently overhauled programme of Collective Worship by increasing the variety of worship so that it does not always follow the same format.

- All Collective Worship uses the 'word of the week from the *Extra-ordo-nary*' document, which acts as a calendar for young people in the diocese in relation to the Church's liturgical year. This word or theme underpins the focus for the week in prep-time prayer and Acts of Worship. The college is using the 'Let us pray 2gether' resources to support the planning of Acts of Worship.
- The college has improved the variety and style of Collective Worship. A mixture of both contemporary and traditional hymns are used; pupils talk about a variety of types of Collective Worship. The college, where possible, links Acts of Worship to social justice.
- There is a variety of contemporary and traditional prayer. Pupils appreciate the different types of worship in the college.

Ensure that a greater number of pupils are more actively involved in the planning, resourcing, delivery and evaluation of form time worship, acts of worship and whole college liturgies and Masses.

- The college has had a reduced capacity in lay chaplaincy: however, the appointment of the new lay chaplain and ongoing support from the lead lay chaplain from the CMAT is having a positive impact. Lay chaplaincy is effective in supporting pupils planning Acts of Worship.
- Behaviour during prep-time worship, Acts of Worship, whole college liturgies and Masses is excellent. In terms of delivery and participation, all pupils participate fully, as observed during hymn practice and the year group Act of Worship.
- There has been an increased evaluation of *prep-time worship* by pupils completing google forms to provide feedback. The next steps are for the lay chaplain to make changes based on this feedback.

- The college's mission team has been trained to evaluate the form prayer boards and the next step is to train further pupils to evaluate larger year group Acts of Worship. This evaluative practice now needs to become more embedded in the college.

Establish greater strategic leadership of Collective Worship at senior leader level through more rigorous and effective planning, monitoring and evaluation, which should be reviewed regularly by the local governing body.

- The deputy headteacher has a strategic role in leading the development of Collective Worship, which is scrutinised by governors.
- Senior leaders are visible during Collective Worship and there is evidence of increased monitoring and evaluation of Collective Worship. This monitoring is taking place in partnership with local governors. However, it is not yet fully embedded in order to create further change and improvement.
- To develop this further, monitoring and evaluation needs to be more systematic and scheduled as part of the college's quality assurance processes, so that it does not appear to be 'ad hoc'. Any weaknesses identified need to be addressed rapidly.

Work closely with effective Catholic schools within the St Thomas Aquinas CMAT and the wider diocesan community to learn from outstanding practice around the key areas of Catholic Life and Collective Worship.

- The college has worked closely with St Martin's Catholic secondary school - and in particular their lay chaplain and deputy headteacher.
- The college has worked closely with St Paul's Catholic secondary school to learn from their outstanding practice in Catholic Life and Collective Worship.
- There is continued, effective support from the lead lay chaplain and director of performance and standards to check on progress towards the key strategic aims of improving the Catholic Life and Collective Worship in the college.
- College leaders are linking with The Becket school in Nottingham to share good practice on Virtues.

Key Findings:

The headteacher has brought about swift and rapid improvement since the last inspection: staff and pupils have been transformed under the excellent leadership of the headteacher. Behaviour and culture are firmly rooted in Catholic values and leaders are making sustained improvements at the college in both Catholic life and Collective Worship.

Next Steps:

Catholic Life

- Re-launch the mission group and re-establish this effective Catholic Life group in the college.
- Develop and support the new Lay Chaplain so that he is effective in leading retreats for all year groups.
- Ensure there is consistency across the college in form prayer boards, such as the word of the week and consider providing further resources to support prep-time prayer for example a prayer table with resources on it so that it forms a focal point for class prayer.
- Consider further development of the house system so that it provides greater opportunity for pupils to contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.

Collective Worship

- Embed pupil leadership and evaluation of Acts of Worship and prep-time prayer. Further embed pupil leadership of Acts of Worship to ensure that a wide variety of pupils have the confidence to take a leadership role.
- Develop a cycle of monitoring Catholic Life and Collective Worship at leadership and governor level so that it is carefully scheduled and part of the college quality assurance cycle, ensuring that the monitoring leads to a positive impact.
- Further develop the college environment with some investment in an outside chapel space/ or prayer garden at the centre of the college.

This letter will be copied to the Director of Education, the Deputy Director of Education, the Chair of Governors, and the CEO of the Catholic Multi-Academy Trust.

Yours sincerely,



Chris Maher
Diocesan Canonical Inspector

cc. Mr Neil Lockyer, CEO of the St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi-Academy Trust
Mr Peter Giorgio, Director of Education
Mrs Fionuala Boucher, Deputy Director of Education
Ms Catherine Danaher, Chair of Governors, De Lisle College, A Catholic Voluntary Academy

