

Westminster Diocese Inspection Report

St George's Catholic School

Lanark Road, Maida Vale, W9 1RB

Date of inspection: Wednesday 16 March 2016 – Thursday 17 March 2016



A. Classroom Religious Education

What is the overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing pupils' religious literacy?

Overall Grade I

Overall, classroom religious education is highly effective in promoting students' religious literacy. Pupil achievement in each key stage of religious education is outstanding and current pupil progress indicates achievement and attainment will continue to rise. The Curriculum Directory forms the foundation of the content of relevant and interesting schemes of work. Effective classroom teaching, combined with personalised, frequent intervention and revision, enable all students to succeed. Teachers' high expectations and excellent specialist subject knowledge help to ensure students are positive about their experience of religious education. Furthermore, the impressive behaviour for learning displayed by students facilitates an assiduous learning culture. The leadership and management of the religious education department are very good. The newly appointed head of department is working collaboratively to realise his clear and exciting vision for religious education. The positive working relations and the development of effective policies and procedures will further aid the development of religious education and, in turn, have an even greater impact on the religious literacy of students.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What is the overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing?

Overall Grade I

The overall effectiveness of the school in developing students' experience of the richness of the Catholic way of life and belief is outstanding. The staff work with the common aim of creating a Christ-centred community where students flourish. Students are equipped with the knowledge, skills and confidence necessary to make a valuable contribution to wider society. Prayer and worship, skilfully orchestrated by the spiritual director, are a fundamental part of daily life at the school. Links with the diocese, with sister schools, with local schools and parishes are excellent as is the school's commitment to the Common Good. Parents work in partnership with the school and are very positive about the manner in which the school upholds the Catholic life. The students are appreciative of the holistic education they receive and the subsequent opportunities it presents.

Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, executive headteacher, head of school, staff, students and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent 2 days in school, visited 16 lessons, an assembly, and carried out 12 interviews with school staff, students and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, discussion with local clergy, scrutiny of samples of students' work, observation of students in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of St George's, Maida Vale was carried out under the requirements of the Canon 806 and Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Archbishop of Westminster. The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation.

Inspection Team

Mrs Nancy Conoboy	Lead Inspector
Mrs Tina Cleugh	Associate Inspector
Mrs Sharon O'Donovan	Associate Inspector
Mrs Kathleen Sorrell	Associate Inspector

Description of School

This 11-18 Catholic academy school is part of the Cardinal Hume Academies Trust. It is a five form entry school in the Local Authority of Westminster and the locality of Maida Vale. The school serves a number of parishes but more locally the parishes of Sacred Heart, Quex Road and The Church of Our Lady, St John's Wood. The proportion of students who are baptised Catholic is 69%. The proportion of students who are from other Christian denominations is 18% and from other Faiths 13%. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 42%. There are 891 students on roll, with 23 students having statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health & Care Plans (EHCP). The proportion of students from ethnic minority groups is well above average as is the number of students speaking English as an Additional Language. There are an above average number of families claiming free school meals with 347 students qualifying for the Pupil Premium.

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Executive Headteacher:	Mr Martin Tissot
Head of School	Mr James Martin
Chair of Governors:	Mr Martin Morton

Date of previous inspection:	1 November 2010
Previous Inspection grade:	1

Key for inspection grades:	<i>Grade 1</i>	<i>Outstanding</i>
	<i>Grade 2</i>	<i>Good</i>
	<i>Grade 3</i>	<i>Requires improvement</i>
	<i>Grade 4</i>	<i>Causing concern</i>

A. Classroom Religious Education

How religiously literate are pupils in the teachings and traditions of the Catholic faith and how well do they know, understand and appreciate the importance of religious faith and practice in everyday life?

What has improved in classroom religious education since the last inspection?

Since the last inspection, the SEND department has devised a system of support and guidance across the fifteen hours of allocated in class support. The impact of effective differentiation in class has over time resulted in a significant increase in the percentage of high grades at GCSE and narrowed the achievement gap for all students and, most particularly, those students who are disadvantaged. The school has widened its partnership network to include moderation opportunities across both the academy trust and neighbouring diocesan schools. This has been beneficial in raising standards and sharing models of excellent practice. The school is justly proud of its rising roll and, most particularly, that the 2016 Year 7 intake is predicted to be 100% Catholic. In this way, the school is reaching out to provide excellent secondary Catholic education for its Catholic primary feeder schools. In addition, the school's membership of the Cardinal Hume Academies Trust has allowed, through succession planning, the appointment of the current leader of RE who is being ably supported by the experienced senior leadership and religious education teams.

How well does the content of classroom religious education meet the requirements of the Curriculum Directory?

Grade 1

The content of classroom religious education is outstanding. The requirements of the Curriculum Directory are evidently met by the department. Schemes of work are logical and progressive, highlighting the links to the four key strands of the Curriculum Directory. The GCSE and A level programmes build on students' prior knowledge, whilst affording students the opportunity to develop high levels of religious literacy. The sixth form core religious education programme is viewed positively by the students and is externally verified annually. The department's termly assessment cycle allows for the tracking of pupil performance and determines the complementary academic support. Students articulate their views on religion and faith easily, and can use a range of complex religious and theological vocabulary appropriately. The department plans in an inclusive manner, so that students from other Faith traditions are able to participate fully in lessons. The departmental team works collaboratively to cultivate an environment where every opportunity is utilised by staff and students to embrace scripture, doctrine, practice and tradition.

Pupil achievement (as well as attainment and progress) in religious education

Grade 1

Overall, students' achievement in religious education is outstanding. The progress students make, relative to their starting points, is excellent. The Key Stage 4 and 5 examination results compare well with the other core subjects on the A*-C measure. However, a decline in Key Stage 4 performance in 2015 brought the level of attainment below the national average. The Head of RE, supported by the SLT, has addressed this and current in year progress indicates that attainment will rise in 2016. It is worthy of note that the whole cohort is entered for GCSE. Last year's value added for A level religious studies was particularly impressive and has led in part to a projected increase in student numbers for next year. Effective use is made of the Year 7 diocesan baseline assessment as both a diagnostic assessment tool and a means by which to measure progress at Key

Stage 3. Termly assessments are moderated within the department and across the other schools in the trust. By using the SEND department to best effect, the school ensures that those who find learning difficult achieve their potential. Effective differentiation, intervention and extension homework has had a marked impact at Key Stage 4, with the percentage of high grades doubling to 24%.

In all lessons, students are able to engage fully since behaviour for learning is excellent and any incident of low level disruption is swiftly dealt with. Students are able to articulate and demonstrate extremely high levels of religious literacy. In a Key Stage 5 lesson on life after death, for example, students were able to use confidently the terminology of five of the major world religions. However, some students do not avail themselves of the opportunity to respond consistently to teachers' marking and feedback on work and therefore miss learning opportunities.

The quality of teaching

Grade 2

Teaching is improving rapidly under the direction of the new head of department who is implementing a range of strategies to ensure consistency for all students across the key stages. Teaching is typically good with examples of some outstanding lessons, which results in students making good progress and achieving very well over time. Teachers track students' progress and use the information to adapt their teaching and intervention programmes accordingly. Where appropriate and relevant, the department group students according to their ability and needs. In the best lessons, teachers use probing questioning to move students to deeper reflection and reasoning in religious education. However, students would benefit from more opportunities for greater consolidation of learning and more frequent checking of their learning. It is evident that target grades are used effectively.

Students know what they have to do in order to achieve their next target, however, their responses to teachers' written feedback is variable. The school has implemented a number of effective strategies to tackle pupil responses to learning, such as 'PEEL' to systemise the information they are presenting. This provides some very good examples that show teachers are encouraging students to improve on their learning. Students are well motivated to increase their knowledge and understanding of the Catholic Faith. Year 7, for example, were keen to share their views on their closeness to God, as the teacher carefully coached their responses. In a Year 11 revision lesson, the group work was skilfully organised so that students made rapid progress. Homework is regularly set across all key stages. It is effectively used to both extend learning and to tackle underperformance in class. The use of voluntary extension in homework is providing an independent opportunity for more able students to extend their learning. The department has specialist, well qualified staff and the head of department is encouraging collaboration to ensure expertise is shared and deployment is effective.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 2

The quality of leadership and management of religious education is good. The head of department has a strong sense of the educational mission of the Church and a clear vision of how this can be achieved in the religious education department. There is a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development in religious education. Self-assessment is largely accurate but there should be greater conflation of the SEF and departmental action plan.

The strategies implemented to address the areas for development are having an impact but are not yet embedded with regular evaluation to ensure consistency and excellent progress. The head of department has a realistic understanding of the strengths of the team and the need to focus on

teaching and learning to ensure that all lessons consistently maximise learning. The head of department regularly communicates high expectations to the team, as evidenced by well organised department meetings and regular book reviews. The department and students benefit from the focus on continuing professional development and the adoption of Teach First and School Direct. The school's new tracking system enables levels of progress between key stages and the half termly tracking of students across all year groups but there is greater scope for using on-going formative assessment data to inform planning. There are clear procedures for internal and external moderation of levelled work and this is a well embedded aspect of the work of the department.

What should the school do to develop further in classroom religious education?

- Further develop the monitoring procedures of marking to ensure students are responding consistently to the teachers' marking and feedback.
- Allow further opportunities for the department to use ongoing data to inform planning to ensure all learners across all groups enjoy parity of experience.
- Support the newly appointed leader of RE through line management to ensure teaching and its impact on learning is at a secure outstanding level.

B. The Catholic life of the school

How well do pupils experience the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing through all areas of school life?

What has improved since the last inspection?

Since the last inspection the retreat programme has been successfully extended. Every student from each year group has participated in a retreat, delivered in conjunction with the Oblate Youth Centre situated in the Sacred Heart Parish. Students are very positive about the retreats and welcome the opportunity to reflect and discuss. The school now has an annual pilgrimage to Rome and this year will be taking students to Lourdes on the Diocesan pilgrimage.

The formal monitoring and evaluation of the Catholic life of the school has been greatly strengthened by the appointment of an RE link governor. Specific training has been provided for the RE governor and a series of fruitful lesson observations, learning walks and meetings have taken place to ensure there is a continual evaluative dialogue with the governing body about religious education and the Catholic life of the school. In addition, the school has developed its website to include a section on Catholic life. The site is regularly updated with reflections, prayers and events, ensuring the whole community are kept updated on Catholic life at St George's.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum – time, staffing, accommodation, resources, budget

Grade I

The school more than meets the requirements for curriculum time in Key Stages 3, 4 and 5. At Key Stages 3 and 4, 10% of time is dedicated to RE and at Key Stage 4 there are also extensive additional revision, holiday and support sessions. At Key Stage 5, students receive 5% of curriculum time. The students' experience of religious education is further enhanced by a wide range of related activities that promote the Catholic life of the school. The religious education department has a generous budget, equal to that of other core subjects. The department is staffed with eight specialist, well qualified teachers and staff have a dedicated office.

The RE classrooms are in the new building, providing a modern, well-furnished, vibrant learning environment. The display boards and iconography around the school are of a high quality and further demonstrate that RE is the core of the curriculum. An impressive feature of the entrance area is the living liturgical table which is updated to highlight feast days and the seasons of the Church. During the inspection the liturgical table was dressed with a crown of thorns on a purple cushion for Lent and then changed for St Patrick's Day. The SLT, governing body and, more specifically, the RE link governor work closely with the department to develop and review the place of religious education in the school.

The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community

Grade I

The experience of Catholic worship is outstanding. Prayer and worship are central to the life of St George's. The relocation of the Chapel to the most central position available demonstrates the value placed on prayer and worship. The leadership and RE teams are publically active in promoting the prayer life of the school. The school has a programme of regular formal and informal worship, including a weekly voluntary Mass. Morning worship is a well-established practice across the school.

During our visit one tutor group took part in a session on the importance of Gospel Values and the impact they can have on daily life.

Greater student participation in the planning of the liturgy is currently being addressed by the Director of Spirituality and, to that end, students are invited to take on leadership roles in this area. Students respond to prayer and worship with immense respect. An impressive Lenten service was observed which gave students the opportunity to lead prayer and reflect. Throughout Lent students also had the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The students reported that events, such as the 60th anniversary of the school, are marked in a memorable and meaningful way. Parents are invited to key celebrations, such as the beginning and end of year Masses. There is an annual retreat programme for all students and other opportunities for reflection are encouraged, especially during Advent and Lent. Students value these opportunities to develop their spirituality. One student stated that St George's was 'the right environment for you to grow up in your faith.' The school is a very inclusive community. Students and staff of other faiths are embraced and respected and play a role in the prayer life of the school. The Spiritual Director has identified the need to more systematically monitor review and evaluate provision in this area.

The commitment and contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice

Grade I

The school's commitment to the Common Good is outstanding. Students and staff possess a deep and vibrant understanding of the call to 'human flourishing' and there are rich and varied opportunities for students to celebrate their gifts and talents. The excellent relationships formed between staff and students underpin the holistic development of each individual, whilst the extensive range of opportunities afforded students help them to raise their aspirations and realise their potential. Of particular note are the aspiring stars programme, student council, achievement assemblies, the e-praise initiative and the wide range of clubs available.

Respect for and value of the individual is central to all aspects of the life at St George's and this is evidenced by the students' deep understanding of the school's mission statement which includes the values of community, justice and integrity. Students are able to explain how these values link with the way in which we are 'all made in the image and likeness of God'. It is clear that students regard helping others as a matter of 'justice and fairness'. This attitude permeates all aspects of school life. There is an excellent understanding and appreciation of the Church's call to action for justice and peace. The students are sensitive to the needs of different groups in society. This is evident locally in the work with the homeless and on a national and international level with the Catholic Children's Society, Easter Egg Project, Penny Giving, Mary's Meals Project and the planned pilgrimage to Lourdes. Furthermore, students are encouraged and supported in their own independent charitable initiatives, for example the establishing of a fair trade stall by the sixth form. Staff go above and beyond in ensuring individual students experiencing difficult circumstances are supported pastorally and financially where necessary.

Enabling the authentic partnership between parents, school and parish as an integral part of the Diocese, particularly through its relationship with the Diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf

Grade I

The partnership between parents, school and parishes is outstanding. Relationships with local parishes are creative and strong. Partnership with the Sacred Heart Oblates Religious Community pervades all aspects of the Catholic life of the school. The Spiritual Director works with the religious

community to plan for whole school Masses, the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the retreat programme.

The school works closely with parents and carers to develop a shared understanding of the mission of the school. Parents are encouraged to participate in school events, such as whole school and transition Masses, as well as information evenings. The school regularly seeks parents' views and actively looks for ways to nurture its partnership with them. A significant majority of parents are confident that the school delivers a distinctively Catholic education.

The school recognises the parish as the main experience of Church for Catholics and actively explores ways to engage with the students' parishes. The students who serve on the altar in their local parishes, for example, are involved in the liturgical life of the school and in January served the Cardinal at the anniversary Mass.

The school has very strong links with the diocese and is one of three schools in the Cardinal Hume Academy Trust. St George's has a culture of sharing best practice with others, thus strengthening the leadership and supporting the development and provision of Catholic education.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school

Grade 1

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The mission statement permeates all aspects of school life from policy to everyday practice by all. The students speak eloquently about the manner in which St George's prepares and equips them for life beyond school. The leadership is fully committed to the Church's mission in education. This is evident through its work as founder of the Cardinal Hume Multi Academy Trust and extends beyond this to other Catholic schools in the diocese. There are creative and dynamic examples of living out the rich experience of Catholic life, such as the innovative Penny Project charity campaign. No aspect of the daily life of the school is left unobserved in reflecting on its mission.

What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?

- Put in place systems and procedures to monitor, review and evaluate the impact of prayer and liturgy in the school.