



DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT

incorporating Section 48 and Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf
of the Archbishop of Southwark

URN 100637

La Retraite

Atkins Road

London, SW12 0AB

Inspection date: 26th & 27th June 2018

Chair of Governors: Mrs Linda Collins

Head Teacher: Mr Dominic Malins

Inspectors: Mr Damian G Fox

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EDUCATION COMMISSION

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Director of Education: Dr Simon Hughes

Publication Date 7th September 2018



Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

La Retraite is an oversubscribed voluntary aided Catholic School located in the London Borough of Lambeth. It is situated in the Lambeth Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. The principal parishes the school serves are: St Bede's, Clapham Park; St Anne's, Vauxhall; St Mary's, Clapham; and the Polish Church of Christ the King, Balham. Pupils join the school mainly from the Catholic primary schools in Lambeth. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is approximately 56%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10% in Key Stages 3 and 4. In the Sixth Form, the General Religious Education provision is 5%.

The school takes pupils from 11 to 19 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 1019, including 244 in the Sixth Form. The attainment of most pupils on entering the school is broadly average. The proportion of pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium is 45% and for Free School Meals (FSM) is 10%. Both are above the national averages. Around 16.9% of the pupils receive extra support in class and 8% have a designated Special Education Need (SEN) status. The number of pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Educational Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is below the national average at 1.4%. The percentage of pupils whose first language is not English is above the national average at 48%. The majority of students are from ethnic minority backgrounds: 45% Black African; 14% Black Caribbean; 13% South American; and 6% Portuguese.

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SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

La Retraite School is an Outstanding Catholic school because:

- it provides a highly effective holistic education for its pupils which is deeply rooted in Gospel values and the teachings of the Catholic Church. Leaders and managers at all levels show a genuine devotion to pupils and their families.
- the headteacher has articulated a clear vision for the education and welfare of pupils. He is supported by senior staff who are highly effective in developing the Catholic life of the school and improving standards of teaching and learning.
- the Governing Body plays an active role in supporting and developing the Catholic nature of the community. The leadership ethos is one of service to the pupils to enable their spiritual, social and moral development through Christ's love. Governors are supportive of the school and are fully informed of progress and areas for development. They have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and demonstrate excellent leadership in all areas.
- pastoral care is outstanding. Pupils were happy to talk about how they actively seek to support one another and about being part of a family where everyone is valued, respected and cared for. The school's commitment to pupils, staff, families and the wider community manifestly demonstrates its central mission of service firmly based on Gospel values and the teachings of the Catholic Church.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

- Continue to develop greater consistency in teaching and assessment across key stage 3 that will lead to a greater challenge of learning appropriate to each pupil.
- Continue to develop the pupil-led chaplaincy groups and to include more opportunities for the younger pupils to participate more fully.



Overall Effectiveness

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.

1

Catholic life

1

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school.

1

The quality of provision for the Catholic life of the school.

1

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school.

1

Religious Education

1

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.

1

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.

2

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

1

Collective worship

1

How well pupils respond to and participate in the schools' collective worship.

1

The quality of provision for collective worship.

1

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship.

1



CATHOLIC LIFE

1

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- Pupils appreciate, value and participate actively in the Catholic life and mission of the school. They benefit from being part of a Christian community that is committed to the common good. Pupils know they belong to a school that recognises and respects the uniqueness of each person as created in the image of God. They contribute to making a community that values differences. The pupils are happy, confident, articulate, kind and tolerant.
- Under the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, together with other senior leaders, pupils work and play in a safe and caring environment where each person is valued and encouraged to achieve their full potential. Pupils spoke warmly of the caring and prayerful ethos of the school. One pupil said the school 'kept her grounded'.
- A significant feature of the school is the high level of inclusion of pupils of different faiths and abilities.
- Pastoral care is outstanding. Pupils respond positively to very high expectations of staff who consistently act as excellent role models. Mature and respectful behaviour in lessons and around the school makes a significant contribution to the learning environment and the strong Catholic ethos that permeates the school. Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent and are based on mutual respect and a belief that they are there to serve rather than be served.
- Student leaders support staff around the school, for example in assemblies and at lunchtime. Ambassadors visit primary schools and local parishes with the Headteacher. The Student chaplaincy group is for all pupils, although the school acknowledges that there is capacity for developing this further with younger pupils. It provides an excellent service to the community. Student Chaplains work with senior staff and younger pupils in providing a range of opportunities for prayer and worship.
- Pupils are sensitive to the needs of others who are hurt and upset in school or because of other circumstances. As one pupil said, "nobody is left to be lonely or upset". Pupils explained that this is what they understood by Catholic values. The impact is evident in the harmonious community where pupils are instrumental in addressing each other's concerns and looking out for everybody. Examples include, peer mentors, who play an important and valued role in the community and the Year 8 buddies for new pupils in Year 7. Pupils confirmed that these older peers help them settle in and feel more confident.
- Students have a well-developed understanding of Catholic Social Teaching and respond well to those less fortunate. The school has raised significant sums of money



for good causes. For example there are: an annual own clothes day for CAFOD; Macmillan coffee mornings; and a sale of knitted bunnies and chicks for the Trinity Hospice. In response to the Grenfell fire, pupils raised funds through wearing green for Grenfell and with bake sales. A Year 7 tutor group was moved by a report they had read about foodbanks and visited a local foodbank to donate basic household goods and food.

- Next year, several pupils are going to Peru to join a house building project. Pupils also show initiative in response to the needs of others. One pupil collected food, blankets and clothing and went to serve the people in the Calais camps. A Year 13 pupil is going to a Catholic Rwandan mission to teach and provide food.
- The young carers group is an impressive and moving support for carers in the school. They are inspired to support each other and raise awareness of the harsh realities they face. They spoke openly about their experiences. One pupil spoke with pride about meeting the Prime Minister and speaking on the radio to explain the work of the group. They have held a young carers awareness day for pupils. It removed any misgivings they had about people knowing. The response of others bears testimony to the ethos of the school, one which is built on care and mutual respect.
- The school makes excellent use of the Chapel, the local parish church and the neighbouring Convent for Mass and assemblies. The Sisters are always on hand for pupils to go and talk to. The Sisters support students and staff during Retreats and have the opportunity to promote vocations at the school's annual Careers Fair.
- Gospel values are the cornerstone of the school. Teachers from other departments offered their reflections on why the school does what it does. One talked about the "Christ-centred curriculum." Another said, "data is numbers. They are only useful if used to help girls." They share the mission of the school. A member of staff of another faith happily described the ethos as tolerant and compassionate.

The quality of provision of the Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- The Mission Statement is a clear expression of the school's vision for a life where staff and pupils 'act justly, love kindness and walk humbly with God.' The ethos drives the expectation that staff are the pupils' primary role models. The result is a school that is calm and courteous. There is a strong sense of community.
- The school is distinctly Catholic. Religious images are prominent throughout the school. The Chapel is at the centre. It is always accessible for staff and pupils.
- Pastoral care plays an important role in supporting all pupils in the daily challenges they face both in and out of school. Several pupils spoke of the supportive and encouraging way teachers go out of their way to help.
- The enrichment programme is being extended to give pupils a wider range of opportunities to participate in activities that will increase resilience and self-esteem. There is an audit of need to inform teachers of how each pupil might best be served.



Pupils complete a portfolio of their experiences which helps inform pupils and staff of how best to broaden their skills.

- There is a strong bond between the school and parish that enables a broad range of liturgical opportunities, including Year 7 and Year 10 students processing to St Bede's Parish Church for Mass with the Parish on key feast days and each form group having a Mass with the Sisters in the local Convent.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school is outstanding.

- Leaders and governors are deeply committed to the Church's mission in education. Service to all members of the community is at the heart of their work. They have a clear vision and are ambitious for the growth and impact of the Catholic and spiritual life of the school. One Governor described their work as giving pupils a "depth of spirituality in their lives so that they can grow with a purpose and make a difference."
- Governors monitor the quality and effectiveness of Catholic life through formal reports from the link governor and the headteacher. They formally visit once a term, but also regularly attend Mass and assemblies. The Parish Priest is the link governor and is in the school at least once a week for Mass and discussions. The links between the school and parish are very strong.
- The headteacher's personal faith and humanity are manifest in his own relationships with students. The "Gospel in action" permeates throughout the whole school.
- The headteacher is supported by teachers who demonstrate their own deep understanding of service in the way they conduct themselves and ensure that all students are included and cared for. They are an integral part of the fundraising that is a significant part of school life. The whole community willingly participates in ensuring that the needs of others are recognised and addressed.
- Chaplaincy continues to provide outstanding service to staff and pupils in engaging them in the preparation of and participation in collective worship. The headteacher has worked with other schools and the Diocese to sustain the effectiveness of chaplaincy provision. The Parish Priest is very supportive.
- The school is totally inclusive of students with different strengths and offers unstinting support to their families. Year leaders are an integral part of the pastoral provision. They demonstrate great empathy with the challenges pupils face that might have an impact on learning. The school has employed a counsellor to support this work to ensure every pupil has somebody to turn to. Pupils themselves affirmed their deep gratitude for this.
- Staff organised and ran a retreat for staff in Catholic schools in the deanery. This will happen again next year.



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is outstanding

- The GCSE A*/A figure of 57% in 2017 is impressive and above the average for other core subjects. Progress in Religious Education is higher than the overall average in other subjects.
- Disadvantaged pupils attain an average half a GCSE grade higher in Religious Education than the national average and better than they perform in other subjects. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) make the same exceptional progress, over one grade better, as they do in other subjects. All students perform better in GCSE Religious Education by at least a quarter of a grade than they do in other subjects, with the exception of a small minority of special educational needs (SEN) pupils. The school is aware that pupils of other ethnic groups perform considerably better than the national average but not as well as their peers in school. In response to this, the school has increased the number of teaching sets in Religious Education to equal those in English.
- At A level, Religious Education consistently performs well in achieving the top A* grades and in grades A*-B compared to other subjects with a similar cohort and numbers. The Value Added at A level is consistently higher than or comparable to similar subjects. Uptake of the subject at A level is growing. This year the number is 17 in Year 13 and 18 in this year's Year 12.
- Pupils told inspectors that their lessons were enjoyable. They had debates, quizzes and were challenged and supported when they needed it. One pupil said she was motivated by the challenge teachers gave and the periodic assessments to help her understand her progress and targets.
- Pupils were attentive and engaged during lessons. Behaviour throughout the inspection was excellent.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is good

- The time allocated to Religious Education meets the 10% required by the Bishops' Conference.
- There were some examples of outstanding practice in lessons which were characterised by excellent pace and high-level challenge. The recent transition to a new Head of Religious Education will bring about greater consistency in monitoring teaching and building on the good practice inspectors saw in lessons.
- Assessment procedures are in place. There are four data collection points at Key Stage 3 and five at Key Stages 4 and 5. This information is analysed and shared with Year leaders who have a detailed understanding of each pupil's context. The school



acknowledges, however, that consistency in assessment at Key Stage 3 and more effective use of marking by teachers are areas that require further development.

- At key stage 3, pupils follow 'The Way, The Truth and The Life programme' with aspects of the scheme 'People of God', and the school's own resources. At GCSE the school has chosen to follow the AQA Catholic specification. Judaism is the second religion studied at GCSE level. At A level, pupils follow the OCR specification.
- The General Religious Education programme for Sixth Form, is being developed to combine the already existing volunteering opportunities, with other aspects of the current Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education (PSHCE), into a level 3 ASDAN course. This new course will strengthen the links between charitable works and the reasons underpinning them. It is a more challenging course that stimulates thinking and research into "Leadership with Faith." The aim is to give students an opportunity to develop their faith and understand the faith of others. Sixth Form students said that they enjoyed the General Religious Education course because of the range of opportunities to learn and undertake charitable works.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is outstanding

- Governors and school leaders are very ambitious for maintaining improvements in Religious Education. The school's self-evaluation is honest and accurate and reflects the progress made and areas for further development.
- Governors are highly effective in their role in both supporting and challenging senior leaders. They are kept fully informed through the Headteacher's reports and regular visits to the school. They have seen good teaching and the passion of teachers during their drop-in visits. They have ensured the increase in teaching groups at key stage 3 is covered by a full complement of qualified Religious Education teachers.
- The high levels of GCSE achievement and progress in Religious Education reflect the effective leadership of Religious Education. The experience and expertise of the deputy headteacher are instrumental in delivering sustained improvements in outcomes.
- Data is collected and used to set targets for the department and for students across the ability range. Assessment procedures also ensure greater focus on highlighting underachievement of pupils of all abilities. Interventions are appropriate and quickly put in place.
- The school is aware that there needs to be more consistency in teaching and assessment at Key Stage 3 and are working to address this issue. They have developed links with other Catholic schools to share good practice in teaching, moderate pupil work and further develop their assessment procedures. They are refining the system to ensure assessment in Religious Education is consistent with other departments.
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COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

1

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's collective worship and prayer life is outstanding

- Acts of worship engage pupils' interest and inspire them to pray and reflect with reverence. Pupils said everybody is included, regardless of their faith background. In an assembly, pupils in Year 7 listened attentively as the significance of John the Baptist was shared. They prayed in silently unity.
- Pupils are actively involved in preparing class Masses which take place throughout the year. They prepare the Mass with their Religious Education teacher which enables them to develop an understanding of the parts of the Mass. They choose the theme and readings and compose bidding prayers.
- The Parish Priest confirmed that pupils participate as readers and through the offering of gifts. Pupils said they enjoy singing which is an integral part of collective worship. This was evident in an assembly that was enhanced by beautiful singing from the Gospel choir. Pupils responded with rapturous applause.

The quality of provision for collective worship and prayer life is outstanding

- Collective worship is central to the life of the school and its pupils, whatever their own particular faith background. Praying together is part of the daily experience for all staff and pupils.
- During form time, pupils pray and reflect using the prayers prepared by the Chaplaincy team. Pupils spoke of the anonymous prayer boxes. Prayers are selected and read out for the class to pray.
- The celebration of Mass is a major feature of school life. There is a programme of Masses throughout the year, including major feast days, which all pupils have opportunities to attend. Pupils in year 7 have a welcome Mass and an opportunity to attend Mass in the local parish. They also have a dedicated year 7 Mass in the convent of the Handmaids of Mary. Pupils in years 8-13 have a year Mass once a year. Throughout the school each class prepares and celebrates a Mass with their Religious Education teacher.
- Year groups have regular worship assemblies. During Advent, Lent and at the end of the year, a day is given over so that the each year group can have their own tailored liturgy. A yearly highlight is the whole school Advent Liturgy for pupils and parents. Last year, almost 500 attended.
- A comprehensive programme of retreats offer pupils the opportunity to spend time in prayer and reflection. Pupils' evaluations were overwhelmingly fulsome in the impact retreats had on them. Comments such as, "We were able to come out of our



comfort zone” and “You cast all your anxiety onto God,” reflect the value of retreats for pupils.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship and prayer life is outstanding

- Leaders and governors are deeply committed to the delivery of high quality acts of worship. They have a sound knowledge and a deep understanding of the importance of prayer and worship in a Catholic school. They ensure that the school follows the Church’s liturgical calendar and celebrates the major feasts of the year.
- The headteacher is passionately committed to building a praying and worshipping community. He works effectively with the deputy headteacher in maintaining a strong and effective chaplaincy. Further development of collective worship is a key part of the school improvement plan.
- The headteacher and senior leaders regularly meet the student chaplaincy team to plan and evaluate prayer and liturgies. The effectiveness of chaplaincy is evident in the range of opportunities for pupils to celebrate Mass and seasonal liturgies. Morning prayer in the form rooms is monitored in the same way as lessons.
- The Parish Priest offers excellent support to the school in providing acts of worship. He is a regular and welcome visitor who is committed to working with school leaders in providing spiritual and meaningful acts of worship.

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