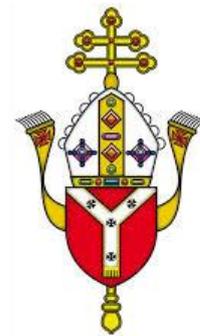


Westminster Diocese Inspection Report



St Joseph's Highgate

Highgate Hill, Islington London N19 5NE

Date of inspection: 24 April 2015

A. Classroom Religious Education

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

Overall Grade I

The faculty style of leadership and management provides robust challenge to all staff, whilst empowering their pupils who are incredibly well versed in religious language, right from the very start of their time at St Joseph's. The highly effective delivery of the composite model in religious education, clearly linked to the requirements of the Curriculum Directory, is providing outstanding effectiveness in religious education. Religious education is given high status and is at the heart of the curriculum. All teachers have high expectations, excellent subject knowledge and deliver well-planned imaginative, creative and stimulating lessons. The assessment, monitoring and tracking is as robust and rigorous as for other core subjects. The religious education faculty team, ably and dynamically led by the headteacher, combined with the commitment of all staff, ensures pupil achievement is outstanding. The accurate completion of their self-evaluation, in partnership with the Governing Body, portrays their strategic and visionary direction for their mission in Catholic education.

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

Grade I

The Passionist Order, as Trustees of the school, represented by the school Chaplain, provides significant and substantial guidance and support to all. The Governing Body, in partnership with the headteacher, ensures the highest quality of education and expectation is sustained throughout the provision in this outstanding catholic school. The leadership and strategic direction is highly significant in bringing the school to this highly effective state of development. They ensure full compliance with the requirements of the Curriculum Directory and the 10% coverage of religious education. They seek to inspire their pupils to 'see God in all things' and this is at the 'heart of their teaching.' The place of prayer and faith is central and integral to all aspects of the daily life of the school. Pupils are confident and articulate in how they know and understand their role to promote social justice, whilst flourishing as they develop their personal responsibilities. The priority and high profile given to providing an inspirational, vibrant and dynamic learning environment, includes the refurbishment of the accommodation, the range of creative displays which permeate the whole school site to an extremely high standard. This is worthy of note.

Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent one day in school, visited 15 lessons and 2 acts of worship, and carried out 5 interviews with school staff, pupils and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, discussion with local clergy, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of St. Joseph's, Highgate 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. Tina Cleugh	Lead Inspector
Mrs Ann Staunton	Associate Inspector
Mrs Amanda Crowley	Associate Inspector
Mrs Evelyn Ward	Shadow Inspector

Description of School

This Voluntary Aided, school is a two form entry in the LA of Islington and the locality of Highgate. The school serves the parish of St. Joseph's, Highgate and St. Gabriel's Archway. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 90.5%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 4.2% and from other Faiths 5.3%. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 71%.

There are 431 pupils on roll, with 3 pupils with statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health & Care Plans (EHC). The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average. There is a well above average rate of families claiming free school meals. 135 (31.3%) of pupils receive the Pupil Premium.

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DFE Number:	206 3483
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Headteacher:	Miss Clare Mc Flynn
Chair of Governors:	Dr. Paul Lasok

Date of previous inspection:	April 2009
Previous Inspection grades:	Outstanding

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?

Following a review of the leadership and management system for religious education, the responsibility is now being led through a 'faculty' system. This system of leadership and management for religious education and the Catholic Life of the school includes the headteacher and two deputy headteachers. The school has introduced the composite model planning system over the past few years. This has ensured a more rigorous structure to the study of scripture and planned higher order questioning in religious education. The introduction of 'pupil conferencing' and 'critical thinking' approaches to learning has enhanced the range of creative learning experiences for pupils, leading to higher levels of expectation and attainment. The appointment of pupils as school chaplains through a rigorous selection process, is recognised and respected by other pupils. One of the pupil chaplains described their role as 'like a religious school council or a spiritual one.' They had a significant impact on the review of the Mission Statement and lead the Rosary and Stations of the Cross in the Chapel.

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

Grade I

The religious education curriculum is fully compliant with the requirements of the Curriculum Directory and through the Agreed Understandings of the Levels of Attainment the school is measuring the different rates of progress to ensure all pupils make rapid progress from their starting points. The well planned use of resources is relevant and appropriate to meet the needs and challenge to pupils across the phases. The most effective use of ICT was evident in books, portfolios, on the website and on display, both in classrooms and in the public areas of the school. The religious education curriculum is evaluated through robust half-termly monitoring systems and strategies carried out by the faculty leaders. This includes the coverage of other faiths such as Judaism and Islam right across the school. Pupils are encouraged as 'critical thinkers'. The Wednesday Word is effectively used as a research homework tool which empowers the older pupils to further develop their understanding and knowledge of the links from Scripture to their everyday lives. The home-school links are further enhanced through the 'prayer bags/ teddies,' which the younger pupils take home to share and pray with their families.

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

Grade I

Achievement in religious education is outstanding. Teachers accurately and confidently use the agreed understandings of the levels of attainment. Termly data tracking provides sufficient detail to monitor progress not only across classes but also against other core areas. As a result, attainment in religious education is at least as good as, and at times better than, other core subjects. The school moderates internally as well as at deanery and diocesan level. A portfolio of securely moderated work is updated on a half termly basis. Different groups of pupils make excellent progress in religious education, including those entitled to pupil premium funding. The consistent progress of SEND pupils was particularly impressive and to be commended. Teachers have high expectations and stretch pupils of all abilities. Aspirational mottos, such as, "Be the Best you Can

be” and opportunities such as the “Chilli Challenge’ encourage pupils to consistently aim high. Exercise books and displays demonstrate that pupils value religious education and are proud of their achievements in this area. In particular, the “Pegs of Pride’ displayed wonderful examples of religious education work chosen by the pupils themselves. In the early years, differentiated teaching strategies enable pupils to make rapid progress, and their use of religious vocabulary was impressive. The high number of pupils in Year 6 working at a Level 5 demonstrates an incredibly high standard of religious literacy developed over recent years. The introduction of pupil conferencing for the most able pupils, engages them with their own target setting, which informs them in a most personalised way, of what their next steps in learning are.

The quality of teaching

Grade I

Teaching is never less than good and often outstanding. This enables pupils to make excellent progress over time and to learn exceptionally well. The way in which doctrine is presented empowers pupils to further develop their critical thinking skills. Teachers use open ended and challenging questions and encourage discussion with talk partners to deepen and enhance learning. Support staff play a crucial role in lessons, ensuring that pupils with additional needs are well catered for. Reference to scripture is used very effectively to engage pupils’ interest and enhance learning. Clear and consistent marking across the school, with constructive feedback, along with innovative pupil conferencing, empowers higher levels of attainment in religious education across the school. This develops pupils’ higher order thinking skills and enables them to understand how to improve their work. Pupils really enjoy their RE lessons. A pupil in Year 4 said, “I love RE lessons, they help bring me closer to God as I learn about my faith”. The content within the units in the composite models has ensured that with effective teaching throughout the school pupils are guided to develop their religious literacy, particularly at upper key stage two. Support for new teachers from the religious education faculty team is excellent. Planning is very systematic and detailed and takes account of pupils’ prior learning. The impact on pupils’ progress is evident in their work in books and in the lessons observed. Resources throughout the school are excellent, creative and imaginative and there is detailed attention to vocabulary and language development. The parables from Mark’s gospel displayed on classroom doors throughout the school provides a rich, dynamic and inspiring environment, where it is truly evident that St Joseph’s pupils ‘learn, love and grow with God at the centre’.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade I

The faculty model of leadership has influenced and supported the school’s improvement agenda. This includes designated roles of the phase leaders. Faculty leaders work in partnership with the senior leadership team to drive the ethos and mission of the school. They influence the sustained high expectations. In particular, the current priority is to move pupils on from their pupil conferences to develop higher order thinking skills and move them towards more critical thinking. The ‘Triad’ system of staff ‘peer support’ empowers excellence and expertise to be shared and modelled. This is effectively delivered through a range of well planned strategies for ongoing improvement in the quality of teaching, to impact on effective learning in religious education. The performance management systems are clearly set out and apply equally for all staff. The high quality range of continuing professional development includes that delivered from senior advisors and officers from the diocese. These opportunities are woven through the school improvement plan. All staff new to the school and newly qualified teachers, are well guided and supported to deliver highly effective religious education for all pupils.

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

- The school has identified its intention for ongoing consolidation of the use of 'Caritas in Action' to further develop and enhance the critical thinking skills in religious education for all pupils
- Continue to develop the school as a model of excellence in Catholic education for other schools in the diocese

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?

The Chapel as the centre of prayer and worship in the school building is a significant addition since the last inspection. There is a display that celebrates the school's delight in Archbishop Vincent Nichols formally blessing and dedicating the Chapel. The ceramic Stations of the Cross, creatively made by pupils, the lime wooden sculptures, the gift of the Tabernacle and the impressive stained glass window, all demonstrate the importance of this special and holy, sacred space, as the centre for worship and reflection in the school. The stained glass window depicts the whole community of the school, St Joseph's parish church and the local area of Highgate. This is complemented by the prayer garden in the expansive grounds. The addition of the 'Tree House,' which is also regularly used by pupils, staff and parents for reflection, is an oasis of calm, tranquillity and peace for all to access. The use of the 'School House' which is being developed into the library is another key feature. The extremely high quality range of opportunities to be still, appreciate the wonder and awe of creation, the faith and sense of belonging, abounds within the interior and exterior of the school site. Governors, when they met inspectors, were justly proud of their investment in the stimulating, colourful and exquisite furnishings inside the building, and the external grounds development. They are committed to ongoing funding to continue providing outstanding provision for all in the school community to benefit from and enjoy.

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

Grade I

The school fully meets the 10% requirements of the Bishops' Conference. The generous funding by the governing body has ensured the school is very well resourced to deliver high quality religious education and to enhance the Catholic life of the school. Training is carefully planned for all staff to meet the identified priorities. This is reflected in the encouragement provided to all staff without the CCRS accreditation to be supported financially by the school to achieve it. In this way, staff are being skilled and trained to deliver high quality religious education. Their studies take many forms, including the teaching of Scripture, such as 'Prepare to hear the Word' and then 'Encounter the Word' processes, for responding to scripture in different ways, for its relevance to the pupils in their daily lives. The governing body are kept well informed through the regular reports from the headteacher. Parents receive weekly and termly updates on the varied activities, celebrations, worship opportunities and the annual report on the progress of their children in religious education and their spiritual journey.

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

Pupils were articulate in describing how much their faith means to them and how the school has influenced the way their faith is developing. They were eager to share the many aspects of the role of the pupil chaplains in leading them to reflect in the Chapel, in the prayer gardens and to celebrate the wonder and beauty of God's creation. Some of the chaplains described how 'we make a spiritual difference to our school'. This was endorsed through the interviews with the parents, the governors and many members of the staff. The sacramental life of the pupils is nurtured through the partnership with the parish and adjacent access to the Church. Pupils in key stage two receive the sacraments of the eucharist and reconciliation during Advent and Lent. They follow the traditional liturgical events, including the recitation of the rosary, May Procession, Stations of the Cross and their recent 'Easter Breakfast. Year three worship, observed during the inspection, demonstrated

how the pupils are clearly familiar with responding to stillness. They are reflective and participate in hearing the word of God through the Gospel passage with reverence, in contemplation and silence, 'listening to God in their hearts'. The richness of the prayer life on offer both internally and externally reflects the warmth and calm which pervades all aspects of the day. The governors outlined how the 'forward thinking' of the headteacher is 'bringing God everywhere in the school'. The mission statement, 'to love, learn and grow with God at the centre,' which is well known and referred to by pupils, encapsulates everything about this outstanding Catholic school.

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

Grade I

The generous fundraising programmes across the academic year, provide opportunities for pupils to know and understand their role in promoting social justice and service to others. The school has begun using the 'Caritas in Action' programme. Their support and action for both secular and catholic agencies, locally, nationally and globally, for example the Catholic Children's Society, Barnardos and Action Aid, informs their commitment to developing and instilling in pupils the importance of social justice and human flourishing. Some year five pupils described how they are 'helping poorer children from different countries to show love to others as God loves us'. The planned strategies to support these agencies include pupils carrying out research, defining the purpose and their response as their witness to their faith in action. This multi-cultural school celebrates its diversity through a well planned cross-curricular programme throughout the year, including special celebration events during the year. The chef provides meals reflecting the different nationalities and the parents' events highlight the opportunities for celebrating the school's diversity. Pupils are inspired to explore the uniqueness of each individual and the appointed 'chaplains' were able to describe how their role is significant in reaching out to the pupils across the school. This also applied to the pupils spoken to and how they explained how active all pupils are in keeping their school 'as a safe and lovely place to learn' As a 'Rights Respecting School', behaviour and attitudes to learning are indeed outstanding across the board. Pupils from the youngest ages act independently and responsibly and demonstrate a 'tangible' pride in their school.

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 well established strong links through the triple partnership of home, school and parish, is evident and described by one of the parents who met the inspectors. She outlined how the school provides a 'definite linkage between the parents and parish community which creates the ambience of an 'extended family'. Another parent outlined how their child's school experience makes them 'more inquisitive and curious when in church.' The exemplary behaviour, both in classrooms and around the school site, was endorsed by one of the parents who described the 'moral compass' by which the foundation of their children's attitudes are based on 'religious principles,' with 'Jesus at the centre.' The attractive and informative website keeps parents up to date on all aspects of the school, on a weekly basis. Diocesan and Deanery links are vital to the ongoing sustainability of excellent practice. Governors appreciate the wide range of training, guidance and support from the Diocese at all levels, in particular how they have been instrumental in influencing some challenging decisions which had to be made over time. The headteacher's skills and expertise are used throughout local authority and diocesan networks and the school's outreach programmes, which are bringing benefit to other school communities.

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

Grade I

The clear vision and purpose of the pro-active governing body, in partnership with the headteacher, through the faculty model of senior leadership, provides outstanding leadership and management for all in the community, promoting the Catholic Life of the school. The strategies and action plans clearly define what the school is about and how it will move forward to sustain its highly effective systems and procedures. The very accurate and impressive self-evaluation is evidence of how the school is determined to sustain their highly effective practice, whilst identifying their action points for continued development and improvement. The headteacher is a nationally accredited Leader of Education, a trained Ofsted Section 5 and Section 8 Inspector. Her experience and expertise in education has brought significant benefit to the current excellent stage of development of the school. She is ably supported by her pro-active and dedicated governing body, leaders and colleagues in the school. The Diocesan advisor described how the Headteacher, 'leaves no stone unturned and is determined to get to the root of any issue.' The headteacher was described by some pupils in an upper key stage two lesson, as a 'Pentecostal Person' who is determined 'to get things done.'

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

- The school has identified their intention to empower pupils who are chaplains to develop these skills further through their parish network
- Develop more pupil planned and led class and year group worship opportunities