

**ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK
COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS & COLLEGES**



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the
Archbishop of Southwark and inspection of
Denominational Education under Section 48
Of the Education Act 2005
URN 100638

Bishop Thomas Grant Secondary School
Belltrees Grove
Streatham
SW16 2HY

Chair of Governors
Headteacher
Inspectors

Miss Kathy Robinson
Mr Louis Desa
Mrs Maureen Todd
Mr John Lydon

Inspection dates

20th & 21st March 2012

**ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK
COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS & COLLEGES
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Introduction

Description of the school

The school is voluntary aided. It is situated in the Lambeth Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is maintained by Lambeth LA. The principal parishes which the school serves are St Andrew's, Thornton Heath; St Bartholomew's, Norbury; St Chad's, South Norwood: English Martyrs, Streatham; Corpus Christi, Brixton Hill; St Bede's, Clapham, Park; Virgo Fidelis, Upper Norwood and St Matthew's, West Norwood. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is approximately 88%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10% in each of the key stages.

The school takes pupils from 11 to 19 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 1,076. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is broadly average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Around 8% of the pupils receive extra support in class. The number of pupils with a statement for their special educational needs is above average. The percentage of pupils whose first language is not English is above average. Black or Black British - the majority belonging to the African community - predominate, alongside pupils from Hispanic, Portuguese and Polish communities as well as Irish and White British.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness as a Catholic school

Bishop Thomas Grant is a good Catholic school. The Catholic life of the school is highly visible and Gospel values permeate through its structures, strategies, policies and practices. The school benefits from the strong leadership of the Headteacher, Senior Leadership team and the Governing Body - ably assisted by the Chaplain. Leadership at all levels is ambitious for excellence. The Headteacher has a passion for and a belief in the transformational nature of education. Two students who had been excluded from other schools spoke in terms of being 'redeemed' by the school's inclusion policy. Pupils enjoy being at the school and display a real love of and pride in being part of this faith community. Opportunities abound for the pursuit of excellence in many extra curricular areas, in particular sport, art, drama and music. Since the last inspection the school has addressed successfully most of the issues raised in the report. The Governing Body has since attached a link governor to the Religious Education department. This Governor closely monitors standards in Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school. Regular visits to the Religious Education Department take place and the Head of the Department attends the Governors' Curriculum Committee, reporting on examination results. The Religious Education curriculum time has increased from 7% across Key Stage 3 and 4 to 10% - in keeping with the requirements of the Bishops Conference of England and Wales. The departmental marking strategy is now being applied more consistently across the various teaching groups and throughout all key stages. Schemes of work are being developed which meet the needs of all pupils. Some differentiated activities and good assessment for learning techniques are in evidence. The self evaluation form reveals an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and the governors fulfil their role as critical friends. There is a relentless drive to improve performance and the inspectors believe the school has excellent capacity to improve and develop further.

Grade 2

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

In order to improve even further the Governors and senior leaders should:-

- increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching in Religious Education by ensuring that the learning needs of all pupils are met
- create a Chaplaincy team to work alongside the Chaplain
- monitor the quality of the daily act of worship during form time

The Catholic life of the school

Leadership and management

Grade 1

The school's leadership and management team is deeply committed to the Church's mission of education. They are energised by the task of living out their mission statement in everyday life. The leadership team is a source of inspiration for the whole community, who in turn appreciate, value and desire to emulate their example. More than one student shared that they had been personally affected by the faith commitment of staff members, including the Headteacher, who was described as a 'visible sign of Christ in action'. His energising and constant presence was noted by many parents and carers. They wrote that they felt all the children in the school were known by name and were being educated in a learning environment which prioritised safety, personal fulfilment and academic progress. The Governing Body makes a highly significant contribution to the work and the Catholic dimension of the school. The Chair of Governors has a wealth of experience in education and shared her belief that the Catholic ethos at Bishop Thomas Grant 'dripped out of every pore'. The Governing Body act as critical friends and have a clear understanding of their roles. Gospel values impact and inform on a daily basis and can be seen through works of charity at home and abroad, for instance the excellent programme of training Year 8 students to act as 'Bully Buddies' and the ongoing sponsorship of a school in Sri Lanka. Both these activities, and many more, impact positively on the degree of maturity and empathy displayed by the students to each other and towards their own learning experiences. The behaviour of all pupils seen around the school was exemplary.

Quality of provision for personal and collective worship

Grade 1

The quality of provision for private and collective acts of worship is excellent and plays a central part in the life of the school. The belief in the 'power of prayer', a phrase used regularly by the Headteacher, is a tangible reality with lessons and form time beginning with a prayer. A range of liturgical and sacramental opportunities is offered to the students and staff. Formal and informal prayer opportunities occur in assemblies, Religious Education lessons, form periods and at the start and or ends of staff and Governing Body meetings. Following an outstanding assembly on 'the hidden life of St Joseph the Worker' - during which the students listened attentively, participated with interest and behaved impeccably – both staff and students applauded in spontaneous appreciation. Priests have a regular presence within the community and witness to the respect they receive from the pupils and the reverence shown during acts of worship. There are good links with parishes and priests are invited into Religious Education lessons to speak about vocations and other appropriate topics. The weekly voluntary Mass is led by a Religious Education class and accompanied by the excellent Chapel Choir with additional staff, students and Governors in attendance. Reconciliation services occur along with seasonal devotions such as the saying of the Rosary and Stations of the Cross. The chapel contains memorial photographs of deceased staff and student members. Parents feel welcome to attend services and receive due notification of special or additional events. Retreats and away days occur on a regular basis and the programme arranged by the Chaplain, a Salesian Sister, is popular and inclusive. The school benefits from the presence of the dedicated Chaplain who is committed to developing even more retreat and prayer opportunities. In order to realise this aim a Chaplaincy team needs to be developed to facilitate the vision of the Chaplain.

Community Cohesion

Grade 1

Bishop Thomas Grant is an inclusive school. Indeed it is a school for all nations. It is welcoming to all pupils irrespective of difference. Within the school nothing is allowed to present itself as a barrier - either to learning or to the building of excellent relationships. Instead Bishop Thomas Grant adopts a "relational" approach to individuals and bodies, including external agencies. It reaches out to others – through works of charity, prayer, educational programmes and social events – irrespective of faith, ethnicity, academic and/or social background. The Gospel values which underpin these virtues are strongly promoted within the Religious Education programme with its emphasis on loving one's neighbour. The school works closely with its near neighbours and local communities, for instance in fundraising for St Christopher's Hospice and Spires and internationally by re- building a school in Sri Lanka. Pupils are encouraged to research and select their own projects for Lent. Each of the pastoral houses is currently supporting a range of worthy causes of their own choice - from the special care baby unit at Mayday Hospital to the work of the Salesians Sisters. These pupil-led initiatives result in a highly motivated and informed work force, all striving for the Common Good. Last year pupils raised over £10,000 for similarly good causes. This is

an admirable achievement in itself but also because many come from very mixed socio- economic circumstances themselves. The school offers translators for parents' evenings as well as translations of key texts including prayers for pupil use. The school choirs have participated in a variety of music festivals including those hosted at Keble College, Oxford and Eton as well as having performed for their own local senior citizens at Lambeth Town Hall. These and many other examples, support the judgement that Bishop Thomas Grant is a community where mindfulness of 'the other' is part of their exemplary daily practice and strong Christian witness.

Religious education

Achievement and standards in religious education

Grade 2

The standards in Religious Education are broadly in keeping with pupil's age and abilities levels and attainment is overall, satisfactory. The GCSE results in recent years have lacked the progress shown in other subjects but the reasons for this downward trend have been addressed. Moreover, robust intervention strategies are now in place and the staffing within the Religious Education Department is currently stable with a high degree of specialist knowledge. Pupils are aware of their levels at Key Stage 3 and their targets at Key Stage 4 and 5. Self assessment and peer review are common practice and there is evidence of effective dialogue between pupils and teachers as well as the formative marking of written work. Where applied consistently these strategies should impact positively on raising attainment and improve the 2012 GCSE Religious Education results. The NOCN accredited General Religious Education programme in Key Stage 5 has been successfully introduced in recent years and appreciated by the pupils. At AS and A2 levels Religious Education is an increasingly popular choice. There is much evidence at each key stage of enjoyment and engagement in Religious Education. Student behaviour is exemplary – respectful, tolerant, open and interested. Good opportunities are offered to them to develop their thinking on ethical and theological issues. Pupils are encouraged to link the content of Religious Education lessons with their everyday life and faith experiences. The majority of pupils welcome opportunities to extend and deepen their religious learning, are confident in their use of specialist vocabulary and demonstrate good religious literacy. In a recent school survey pupils identified Religious Education as one of their favourite subjects. Their lessons successfully contribute to the moral, social and cultural development of all pupils.

Teaching and learning in religious education

Grade 2

Teaching and learning in Religious Education is generally of a good standard. A range of learning strategies is employed to ensure enjoyment, engagement and progress. Specialist teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject matter. They display a strong and enthusiastic commitment to the teaching of the Catholic faith alongside the raising of standards of religious literacy. Evidence of building on prior knowledge was

seen and pupils were encouraged to approach all learning with a 'can do' mentality. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and the use of topical religious issues encourages pupils to think for themselves, to question and to articulate their thoughts in a safe and accepting learning environment. In a debate concerning Euthanasia pupils were able to give inspired yet varied responses to the complex issue. Where teaching is highly effective the pace is fast, activities are varied and pupil progress is evident from the comprehensive and accurate levels of feedback not only to the teacher but also to each other. High order questioning is common practice. In less successful lessons there is insufficient challenge, the pace is too slow and the activities do not match the ability level of the class. Assessment for learning is developing and now informs the planning within the Religious Education curriculum. The Department is a relatively new team and time needs to be spent on ensuring consistency of practice, embedding differentiation within schemes of work and matching the subject content to all pupil needs.

The religious education curriculum

Grade 1

The Religious Education curriculum meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory and the time allocation set by the Bishops Conference. It allows for opportunities to deepen the spiritual and moral development of all learners across the key stages. Moreover, within a citizenship lesson a focus on the themes of responsibility, community and care deepened the priorities contained in Religious Education lessons. The curriculum includes an in depth study of St Mark's Gospel at Key Stage 4, currently a priority area within the Diocese and delivers a General Religious Education programme in the Sixth Form of a nationally accredited status. This is an age appropriate course which ensures challenge and provides opportunities for religious and spiritual growth. Pupils met agreed that the course was a popular one. The Department is well resourced. The accommodation allows for a stimulating learning environment and the budget allocation reflects the needs of the curriculum. Teachers make effective use of the availability within all the classrooms of information communication technology (ICT). Coherent schemes of work exist and are regularly re visited in order to create opportunities for enjoyment and engagement. The take up at AS and A2 levels continues to increase. The practice of enrichment visits to places of religious interest or significance supports formal learning. The school has in place a very good tracking system to identify underachievement. The Religious Education Department uses rewards and praise generously which pupils appreciate and find motivational. The majority of pupils are entered for religious education at GCSE. The Department needs to work towards increasing the proportion entered but all receive a stimulating curriculum 'diet' which affords valuable opportunities to reflect on moral and ethical issues.

Religious Education is clearly at the heart of the curriculum and recognised as such by the pupils who name it as one of their most popular subjects. The Head of Department has a strong and positive presence throughout the school. He promotes the Gospel values in his leadership and management of the Department to the benefit of staff and students alike. Relationships between members of the department are supportive with the sharing of good practice a regular feature of meetings. Morale is high. There is a clear vision, in keeping with the educational mission of the Church, informing the Departmental plan. The subject is managed well and quality assurance procedures are in place. Corridor displays celebrate the achievements of pupils especially at GCSE level. Classroom displays contain bright and interesting material but need more examples of pupil work. Good use is made of data to identify underachievers. Tests and examination results are thoroughly analysed, including by teaching groups, to inform planning. There is an awareness of the need for a strong focus on improving standards. To this end expectations of staff and pupils are high. Teaching and learning is supported by effective professional development within the school and increasing attendance at Diocesan level events.

It is the belief of the inspectors that with continued professional development, a sharing of good practice and a focus on raising standards, the Religious Education Department at Bishop Thomas Grant School has the capacity to become outstanding.