

# La Retraite Catholic Girls' Secondary School

URN: 100637

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of Most Rev. John Wilson the Archbishop of Southwark

08–09 February 2024

## Summary of key findings

### Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

#### Catholic life and mission (p.3)

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission

#### Religious education (p.5.)

The quality of curriculum religious education

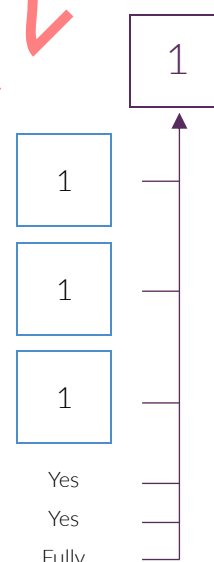
#### Collective worship (p.7.)

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection



## What the school does well

- Catholic life and mission permeate the entire school, Gospel values are known and lived by all members of the La Retraite community.
- Leaders and staff are exemplary role models, pastoral care and relationships are outstanding and embody the Church's preferential option for the poor and the development of the whole person as a child of God.
- Behaviour is exemplary at all times, students show respect for each other, for staff and for their school environment.
- Religious education is placed at the heart of the curriculum, students know it is important and value it as more than just an academic subject.

## What the school needs to improve

- Establish a parent body group that reflects all year groups: providing support for new parents in the transition to secondary school and Catholic life. Use this group to work in partnership with the school to practice the social work of the Church in and outside of the school.
- Increase the opportunities for enrichment activities that support the religious education curriculum.
- Continue to implement the new *Religious Education Directory* through Year 8 and 9, with the same rigour and creativity that has already begun with Year 7.

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## Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

### Catholic life and mission key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

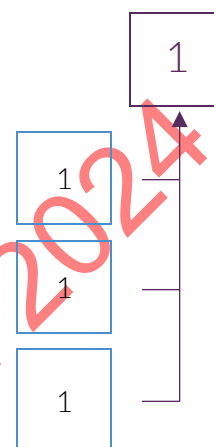
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### Leadership

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



Christ is at the centre of this community, words and deeds demonstrate that students are proud to be a part of the life and mission of the school and in turn the Church. Students can articulate the mission of the school and are proud of the part they play in its success, they embrace opportunities and know that with faith all things are possible. The school has a large and active student chaplaincy team, with representation from all areas of the school. The student chaplaincy team make a significant contribution to the planning, delivery and evaluation of the school mission. Students are happy and secure in the school environment and appreciate the special nature of their Catholic ethos. Students know their opinions are listened to, recognised and valid. Students from all faith traditions feel valued and safe to explore their own relationship with God, one Muslim student spoke of their sense of pride at being part of the La Retraite community and the lessons she has learnt from Jesus as a role model. Students are able to articulate and appreciate the role of chaplaincy in the school, stating that everyone is treated equally and fairly and all faiths are highly valued. Catholic social teaching is evident in many areas of the school, there is a thriving eco club, focusing on sustainability and stewardship and numerous opportunities to engage in works of charity. There are many opportunities for student leadership and personal development, and students know that when they partake they are developing into the person God intended them to be. The school has achieved participator level of the Oscar Romero award and have realistic plans for progressing to developer level.

The welcome at La Retraite is evident in many ways, not least the particular effort put into the translation of work and resources for EAL students new to the school. Staff go the extra mile for their students, enthusiastically modelling and truly living out the mission statement. Staff nurture their students to become capable independent learners. Community values permeate so many of the student's day to day experiences, Year 12 students provide reading support for younger students and know that this is done because they are part of one big family who support each other, this is also

evident in the Big Sisters club. Clergy and religious are a regular presence in the school building, and the celebration of sacraments is part of the ordinary rhythm of school life, students value the opportunity to interact with the Church on a formal and personal basis. A community Mass takes place every Friday morning in addition to the calendar of year group Masses and celebrations of feast days. During a Year 12 Mass celebrated on the feast of St Josephine Bakhita students participated with respect, reverence and genuine prayerfulness. The personal development programme ensures that relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) is effectively planned. Staff are trained to implement the programme in a way that gives students confidence to understand and appreciate healthy relationships. The school enrichment programme includes year group drop down days that are planned to enhance student understanding of virtues and Catholic social teaching.

All levels of leadership demonstrate energy, joyfulness and determination in their duty as guardians of the Catholic life of the school. Governors are clear that the Catholic ethos underpins all strategic planning. Since the last inspection an assistant head teacher has been appointed to oversee the Catholic life and mission of the school, this role has been pivotal in the transformation of student chaplaincy and the strengthening of relationships between school, home and parish. The senior leadership team know their school well and are able to provide strategic direction and support when necessary, staff feel overwhelmingly supported and affirmed by the leadership of the school.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

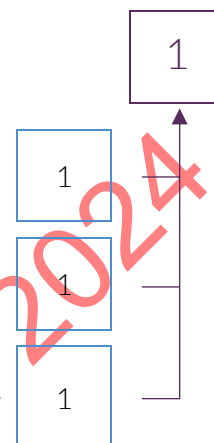
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education

#### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education



Students show great interest and enthusiasm for their religious education lessons and feel secure that their classroom is not only a place of academic endeavour but also spiritual development. Students gain inspiration from their teachers and their comprehensively well planned and resourced lessons. External exam results show performance above the national average and parity with the other core subjects. Students from all prior attainment bands (higher, middle and lower) make more progress in religious education than the national average and are in line with the school expectations for these bands. Students feel confident and well prepared for assessments and have high aspirations instilled by their teachers. The quality of work and presentation of exercise books is consistently high, students take pride in their work and ownership of their progress. Students demonstrate high levels of motivation, they receive positive reinforcement and encouragement from their teachers through skilful assessment and live marking. 6<sup>th</sup> form students follow a comprehensive Core religious education programme that is both dynamic and interesting, students value the opportunity to grapple with complex Catholic theology and build on previous knowledge in a safe and encouraging environment. As a result of a purposefully planned curriculum students are religiously literate. They are able to reflect spiritually, evaluate ethically and make theological judgements. During the inspection this was evidenced in a Year 13 A-Level lesson on Liberation Theology and the influence of Marxism.

The introduction of the new *Religious Education Directory* in Year 7 and a review of the Year 8 and 9 provision has led to a stronger focus on academic writing. Religious education has become a leading department on the strategy of academic writing, feeding in to the whole school focus of challenge for the more able students. The religious education department has focused on the quality of assessments ensuring that knowledge and skills are appropriately monitored. Examples of assessment and feedback provide students with excellent guidance, allowing them to make continuous progress. Understanding of mark schemes and the use of green pens allows students to correct misconceptions and enhance outcomes. Teachers use assessments to inform future planning, ensuring any

misconceptions or gaps in knowledge are addressed. The GCSE scheme of work has been re-sequenced in response to a departmental review, this has facilitated the opportunity to teach some topics at greater depth. Questioning is a strength, of the religious education department, teachers skilfully direct questions and adapt to the needs of individual students.

Leaders and governors are diligent in their duty to ensure that the religious education curriculum follows the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and has parity with other core subjects. The religious education link governor has visited the department providing support and challenge. The religious education department is line managed by the head teacher and it is clear that it is the "core of the core curriculum". The subject leader has a clear vision for the department, high expectations are set for the students and the staff. Monitoring and evaluation are an integral part of department practice and feed into development plans ensuring well targeted improvements further enhance the provision. The subject leader carried out a staff subject audit, using the results to plan training and professional development opportunities. The subject leader is outward facing working collaboratively with the diocese, other Catholic schools and the external exam boards, demonstrating a constant drive for high expectations.

## Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

### Collective worship key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

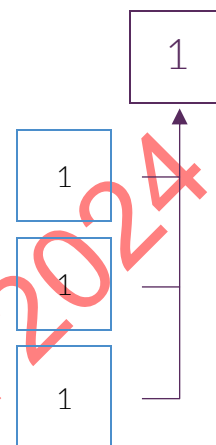
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

#### Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

#### Leadership

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



Prayer and engagement with scripture is an intrinsic part of daily life at La Retraite, students respond to these opportunities with reverence and respect. The "we gather, we listen, we respond" sessions observed showed students genuine engagement with the gospel and a commitment to make it active in their lives. The experiences of prayer and liturgy provided by the school allows students to confidently engage in their own relationship with the divine, observations of liturgy showed deep reverence and conscious participation. Students were happy to share how meaningful reflective opportunities are to them, they appreciate the value that prayer and liturgy brings to their school experience. Prayer and collective worship are well planned, they follow the liturgical year and contribute to the spiritual development of the students. Students have the confidence to pray the traditional prayers of the Church but also to compose their own spontaneous prayer, examples of which are shared and valued among the school community. Students know that prayer is important and it underpins their daily experience in school, they are also able to articulate how their prayers are not just words but a true engagement with the divine. During student discussion it became evident that there is a strong association between the power of prayer and how this impacts on the loving relationships students have with each other, they care about the wellbeing of their community and the wider world. In a Year 7 assembly marking mental health awareness week, virtues were used to underpin important messages. In the same assembly prayer and silent time were given to students enabling them to focus on their own wellbeing and the impact of their actions on others.

For daily prayer, form tutors use high quality resources provided by the assistant head for Catholic life and mission, these provide a structure that is then personalised to the strengths of a particular group. Students responded to form time prayer with reverence and joyful participation, they were keen to share how important this part of the day is for setting the tone for all that they do. The students chaplaincy group are a strong and visible part of school life, they have been well trained and with the support of staff are confident to plan, prepare and lead acts of prayer and liturgy. Celebration of Mass

is part of the regular rhythm of school life and students appreciate the opportunity and participate with reverence and respect. The school has a number of different choirs who beautifully lead the music for Mass and assemblies, the students involved take pride in their service to the Church through music. A member of the choir was able to articulate the prayerfulness that she feels when singing sacred music and participating in the mass. The respectful relationship between staff and students means that students really do listen and take on board the modelled behaviours of staff.

Leaders and governors ensure that the policy for prayer and liturgy is practical and fit for purpose, staff are clear about what is expected of them. Careful planning of the school year ensures that worship and liturgy are not only integral but a priority. Leaders ensure that provision is well planned, resourced and evaluated. Consequently, staff feel well supported and confident in their delivery and growing knowledge of Catholic prayer and worship. The programme of assemblies is planned and reviewed by the leadership team to ensure that important messages are delivered with a theological underpinning, the current cycle of assemblies are enlightened by the promotion of values and virtues. Previous themes have included "put your hand in the hand of God", the Beatitudes and Gospel values. These themes are also used in the prayers of staff briefings, the start of year staff liturgy and staff Catholic life and mission development opportunities.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	La Retraite Catholic Girls' Secondary School
School unique reference number (URN)	100637
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	2085400
Full postal address of the school	La Retraite Catholic Girls' Secondary School, Atkins Road, London, SW12 0AB
School phone number	02086735644
Headteacher	Dominic Malins
<b>Chair of Governors</b>	Sue Woodman
School Website	laretraite.co.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Girls, with some boys admitted into the 6th form
Date of last denominational inspection	June 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Grade 1 Outstanding

## The inspection team

Rachael Shields  
Ciaran Graham  
Bridget Durrant

Lead Inspector  
Team Inspector  
Team Inspector

## Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement