



DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT

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

URN 100859

Notre Dame Catholic Secondary Girls' School

118 St George's Road

London

SE1 6EX

Inspection date: 22-23 May 2019

Chair of Governors: Colin Garvey

Headteacher: Sr Anne Marie Niblock

Inspectors: Peter Ward

Catherine Burnett

EDUCATION COMMISSION

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Interim Director of Education: Dr Simon Hughes

Publication Date 3rd July 2019



Key for inspection grades

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

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Notre Dame School is an oversubscribed voluntary aided school in the Trusteeship of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur situated in the Cathedral Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark and maintained by the London Borough of Southwark. The principal parishes which the school serves are St George's, Cathedral; English Martyrs, Walworth; Our Lady of Sorrow, Peckham; St Anne's, Vauxhall and Sacred Heart, Camberwell from which 19% of students are drawn. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 51%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 8.8% in Key Stage 3 and 10.3% in Key Stage 4.

The school takes girls from 11 to 16 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 618. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is below the national average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The percentage of students who receive extra support in class is 17%. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.

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SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

Notre Dame is an Outstanding Catholic school because:

- Notre Dame provides an excellent integral holistic contemporary Catholic education in the tradition of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur that enables its students to grow and flourish.
- The Headteacher provides outstanding Catholic leadership of a school where staff are excellent role models for students.
- Students make excellent progress in Religious Education and become religiously literate as a result of outstanding teaching and their own positive attitudes to learning.
- The school provides outstanding pastoral care and supports its members as each grows in their own faith and belief .

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

- Ensure that curriculum time meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales as set out in the Religious Education Curriculum Directory
- Promote student learning by ensuring that all teaching and assessment builds upon the best policy and practice in the Religious Education department
- Develop a whole school framework for prayer and worship

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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.

1

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

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CATHOLIC LIFE

1

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

- Notre Dame school provides an excellent integral holistic contemporary Catholic education in the tradition of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur that enables pupils to thrive in a supportive, secure and inclusive community. As a result, pupils grow and flourish spiritually, academically and socially and become confident young people.
- Pupils live out and realise the aspirational mission statement of the school which reads 'At Notre Dame School our mission is to contribute – in partnership with the home and parish – to the development of Christian women who are confident, can think for themselves, who understand the concepts of equality and justice and can play a full and responsible part in a changing and multicultural society'.
- Pupils told inspectors that they enjoyed being part of the school community because it is so inclusive. Pupils are drawn from many communities but identify very strongly with the school. More than one pupil explained that her family had moved many miles from Southwark but she had chosen to continue her education at Notre Dame.
- Pupils are rightly proud of their school, are keen to support the school community and readily volunteer to serve it in a very wide range of roles that contribute the Catholic life of the school. They celebrate their participation by wearing distinctive specialist badges that are linked with their particular contributions. In addition to chaplaincy roles, there are opportunities to promote pupil well-being with senior students acting as 'big sisters' while numbers serve as peer mediators and peer mentors, after appropriate training.
- They also contribute to school life by undertaking a range of roles as monitors and prefects besides serving on committees including catering and charities and on the student council composed of form representatives. The student leadership teams have a key role in enabling pupils to contribute to the life and mission of the school and in facilitating a real dialogue with the school leadership as the school continues to evolve.
- Pupils are committed to promoting the wider common good by fund raising for local and national charities and collecting for the local foodbank, as well as supporting Notre Dame schools in Peru, Nigeria and Kenya



- Excellent relations among and between pupils and staff manifest a belief in the dignity of the individual made in the image and likeness of God. Pupils appreciate the commitment of staff to furthering their education, respond positively to their high expectations and exhibit excellent behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school which they view as one community that recognises its collaborative role with parents in the education of their daughters. They instanced the termly meetings with form tutors that enable parents to build relations with staff and focus on supporting the progress of their children.
- Parents very much value the excellent pastoral care which embraces the whole family in order to support the educational progress of pupils. They particularly appreciate the personalised approach to pupils with additional learning needs and the nurturing environment that contributes to their flourishing.
- Parents who had moved into the area after the normal transfer age of 11+ and were anxious to find a Catholic school for their daughter spoke glowingly of the welcome, help and support that they received from the headteacher and her staff. Parents appreciate being kept well informed by an efficient range of media including a digital school 'app' providing relevant news and a termly newsletter.

The quality of provision of the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- The mission statement is prominently displayed throughout the school and in key publications and is embedded in the systems and standards of the school. Staff know and support the school's mission because it is introduced as part of their induction and revisited as part the regular programme of professional development. An impressive feature is that over fifty percent of teachers have completed the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies' (CCRS) qualification and gained a significant insight into Catholic Christianity as part of their professional development.
- The well-chosen range of opportunities for leadership and service within the school enable pupils to serve in form, year and school roles and so grow in confidence while contributing to the flourishing of the school. The student leadership teams and school council provide valuable opportunities for pupils to share in the constant evaluation of school life and its development.
- Opportunities for service are wide and inclusive, allowing all to share their talents for the common good and include, for example, translating in class for those not yet fluent in the English language, welcoming the local Catholic primary schoolchildren who attend the breakfast club and being a member of the 'Cathedral team' that organises the logistics when the school is involved in events at nearby St George's Cathedral.



- Prayer and worship are core to the life of the community, daily prayer and liturgical celebrations being key events in school life. Significant chaplaincy provision supports and promotes the Catholic life and mission of the school and the spiritual and moral development of pupils.
- Pastoral care for all members of the school community is a particular strength. Staff welfare is recognised as a key issue. Pupils benefit from the provision of five tutor groups in this four-form entry school, with morning and afternoon registration enabling tutors to know their pupils very well.
- Excellent pastoral systems are available to support pupils, with additional help from the chaplain (pastoral) and school counsellor. The special circumstances of looked-after children and young carers are addressed, for example with an afternoon theatre visit in school time for young carers who would otherwise have no such an opportunity.
- The pastoral curriculum has a high priority. An excellent personal, social and health education programme is complemented by thoughtfully designed and carefully planned Relationships and Sex Education reflecting Catholic teaching provided through Religious Education and Science lessons and tutor time.

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

- Outstanding leadership by the highly experienced and respected headteacher has led to a shared vision of Catholic education in the spirit of St Julie Billiart which imbues the whole school community. Governors and staff are committed to the full flourishing of each pupil irrespective of their personal circumstances and work collaboratively to that end.
- The headteacher and school leaders have a secure knowledge of their pupils and of the socio-economic circumstances of the communities served by the school. This informs key features of the school including its being open with a breakfast club from 7.30 am, until 6pm, and the curriculum providing distinct pathways to provide support, challenge and aspiration for each pupil.
- Leaders also have a very accurate understanding of the mission of the school which informs a challenging yet realistic school development plan to support pupils' education. In the past year chaplaincy provision has been significantly enhanced. The governing body share the vision of the headteacher and hold her to account. Governors are regular visitors to the school and regularly attend liturgical celebrations.
- The school continues to develop successful strategies for engaging with almost all parents and carers, many of whom have challenging circumstances. Digital and print



media are complemented by phone-calls and home visits as well as regular opportunities to visit the school. Regular parental surveys are undertaken to monitor families' views as part of its commitment to education being a shared enterprise, recognising that parents and careers are the first educators.

- The school is committed to promoting Catholic education, particularly across the diocese and among Notre Dame schools. It finances the annual Diocesan secondary headteachers' conference. It encourages staff and pupils to participate in Diocesan events and those of Notre Dame schools while the headteacher regularly responds to invitations to speak on Catholic education. In addition, the governing body continues to support the headteacher being the executive headteacher of the local Catholic primary school.
- The induction and professional development of staff ensures that they have a good understanding of the aims and purpose of Catholic education in general and the mission of Notre Dame in particular. They share its distinct purpose and are actively involved in fashioning and realising it.

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

1

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

- Pupils make very strong progress taking into account their starting points when they join the school, 13% of whom do so after September Year 7, many in Year 10. As a result their achievement is very high. School data shows this strong progress is common among all groups in all year groups within the school.
- Pupils respond positively when prompted to reflect spiritually and think ethically and theologically and demonstrate steady progress in becoming religiously literate. Pupils from several year groups engaged reflectively when an inspector sought to explore their understanding of the Eucharist and of the role of Mary.
- In 2018 over 20% of students achieved GCSE grade 7 (A*/A), the highest proportion of pupils at this grade for any core subject in the school. This reflects the strong progress of pupils in the subject in the most recent years for which information is available.
- Pupils are keen to learn and very readily engage with teachers in order to develop their knowledge and understanding. Some pupils knew the standard of their current work and the next steps to take in order to improve while others referred to the summative tracking sheet in their exercise books. Pupil behaviour observed by inspectors in lessons was excellent enabling high level interactions between pupils and teacher. The positive attitudes to learning displayed by pupils and the formative assessment by teachers contributes significantly to their progress and to the grades that they achieve.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is outstanding.

- Overall, the quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is outstanding. During the inspection all teaching observed was at least consistently good, some being outstanding.
- Outstanding teaching was observed in a Year 10 lesson on euthanasia, the teacher guiding pupils at an appropriate pace to explore the topic in a way that provided stretch and challenge for every pupil. The strategies used enabled pupils to explore the topic in depth and prepared them for extended exam questions.
- Religious Education department members have a thorough knowledge of the subject and of effective teaching strategies to enthuse pupil learning. They use accurate and comprehensive pupil data to plan lessons that promote pupils' learning and increase their knowledge and understanding of the subject.



- This leads to lessons that are well-planned to engage and motivate pupils and which pupils said that they enjoyed. Teachers have high expectations and encourage pupils to participate in class by use of appropriate praise and affirmation. Pupils without a command of English are very well supported by proficient bilingual students who readily provide assistance and so gain a secure knowledge of the specialist vocabulary used in Religious Education.
- Marking and assessment follows the school policy. Formative assessment takes place midway through each unit of work with feedback by means of 'whole class feedback'. Summative assessment takes place at the end of each unit when pupils are provided with a feedback sheet with grades linked to 'dedicated improvement and reflection time' follow up.
- The school flightpath assessment framework is used for Religious Education. This provides a clear progression structure for pupils of all abilities and enables them to monitor their own progress. It also allows the school to have an overview of all pupils studying Religious Education as well as each pupil's performance in all subjects. This information is used appropriately to provide support and challenge specifically addressed to each pupil.

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

- Leaders and governors recognise the centrality of Religious Education as 'the core of the core curriculum'. The Chair of Governors is the link governor for Religious Education and regular meetings with the head of department and regular departmental reports ensure that the Governing Body are able to monitor and review Religious Education to ensure outstanding outcomes in the subject.
- The Head of Department is passionately committed to the value of Religious Education and its importance in the contemporary world. She has a clear vision for the subject and is resolute in enabling each pupil to gain their best possible understanding of Religious Education and their highest possible grade in GCSE Religious Studies [RS] through high standards of teaching and learning.
- She is one of three specialist Religious Education teachers who are complemented by additional senior staff, each with the CCRS, who each teach one form group. Teaching is undertaken in three centrally located classrooms apart from Year 7 which has its own teaching block. Thus the department has parity with other core curriculum subjects in terms of staffing, accommodation and resourcing, with funding allocated on a formula basis.



- Rigorous assessment and tracking are undertaken in line with school policy to promote pupil progress. It is also used by leaders and governors to review the performance of the department and plan future improvement
- The curriculum structure is that Years 7-9 follow the 'People of God' programme devised by members of the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers and the GCSE RS specification will be Eduqas route B from September 2019.
- Initially the Governing Body adopted the new AQA GCSE RS Catholic specification in September 2016, but concern with its content led to a switch to the AQA GCSE RS Christianity specification which, unlike the Catholic specification, does not set out to cover the content of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD). Current pupils are following this syllabus but earlier this year the Governing Body determined that the Eduqas route B Catholic specification will be used by all pupils starting GCSE RS in September 2019.
- The policy of early GCSE RS entry for some pupils at the end of Year 10 was reintroduced in 2016 after a pause to allow teachers to prepare for the new GCSE RS specifications. This means that early-entry pupils complete only the first two years of the Years 7-9 key stage 3 RECD programme. During the inspection, inspectors attended the briefing of early-entry pupils who had sat their GCSE RS in Year 10 on the three course options in Year 11. These comprise the Catholic Youth Ministry Federation (CYMFed) Faith in Action award, Faith Friends which involves planning Religious Education lessons to present to St George's Junior School pupils, and Art and Music in the Life of the Church. Inspectors were told that it was envisaged that topics included in the RECD Year 9 programme will be covered during the coming Year 11 activities.
- Curriculum time meets the RECD requirement of 10% of taught curriculum in Years 10-11 but falls slightly short at 8.8% of curriculum time in Years 7-9.
- Governors are mindful of their responsibility that the Religious Education curriculum meets the requirements of the RECD and diocesan bishop and the school continues to work with the Diocesan Education Commission to ensure that this duty is fulfilled.



COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

1

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.

- The pupils' response to collective worship is outstanding. Pupils always fully participate through prayer, singing and quiet reflection. Pupils told inspectors that they were respectful during prayer and reflection and how much they enjoyed the school's liturgical celebrations, including Mass. Overall behaviour is of the highest standard.
- Pupils in Year 7 are introduced to daily reflection and prayer and quickly accept it as the norm. They are eager to participate in all forms of prayer and worship including class prayer and whole school liturgies, and do so with confidence.
- Prayer monitors in each form ensure, with the form tutor, that prayers are said daily in tutor time. Every Religious Education lesson also begins with a prayer and an inspector was present when the prayer monitor led the opening prayer before her respectful class ahead of the arrival of the subject teacher.
- Pupils also volunteer to serve on the student chaplaincy committee and join the teams of altar servers and readers while senior pupils have the opportunity to train and be commissioned as special ministers of the eucharist. They learn to plan, prepare and participate in school liturgies with staff and contribute to evaluating them.
- Pupils also spoke positively of the range of opportunities to pray including the student prayer groups in advent and lent and honouring Mary in May and October.
- Prayer and worship and liturgical celebrations are an integral element of school life and contributes significant to the spiritual and moral development of pupils.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.

- Prayer and worship are integral to the rhythm of the daily, weekly, termly and annual life of the school. They are central to pupils' experience of Notre Dame, whatever their own particular faith or belief, and form the heart of every school celebration.
- Praying together is part of the daily experience for all pupils and staff in form time, most commonly by reciting the Lord's Prayer, weekly collective worship and annual liturgical celebrations. Mass of the Holy Spirit is celebrated in St George's Cathedral at



the beginning of the school year and there are other celebrations of Mass and other liturgies celebrated in the Cathedral during the year.

- The headteacher and many school leaders have an excellent understanding of the Church's liturgical year and are committed to ensuring that this is shared with pupils through high standards of liturgical celebration.
- These events are carefully and effectively planned by a team of staff including the heads of Religious Education and music and the school chaplain, supported by numbers of pupils. A broad range of musical styles are drawn upon, reflecting the choral tradition of the school with the established repertoire of the Notre Dame Singers and the contemporary repertoire of the Gospel Singers, along with many instrumentalists and cantors from both staff and pupils.
- The school chaplains play a key role in the life of the school. They are based in rooms adjacent to the new school chapel which is being developed and it is hoped will soon host reservation of the Blessed Sacrament. The chaplains and head of Religious Education support and develop the members of the student chaplaincy committee to improve their understanding and skills in devising and leading prayer and worship and then evaluating it in order to ensure that it remains relevant and engaging for students.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.

- The overall vision and policy for prayer and worship is set by the Governing Body in conjunction with the headteacher and head of Religious Education who with the school chaplain and others have expert knowledge in how to plan and present liturgy in an accessible manner that reflects the liturgical year. There is a proposal for an annual policy review of prayer and worship by the Governing Body beginning in the next round of meetings.
- The annual pattern of prayer and worship is an integral part of the school calendar and significant funding is included in the chaplaincy budget. Clear areas of responsibility enable all to collaborate effectively. This facilitates reverential and engaging occasions of prayer and worship.
- The student chaplaincy committee and prayer monitors enable good practice to be shared with pupils and provides a framework for promoting and providing opportunities for pupil leadership of prayer and worship and its evaluation.
- The headteacher, school chaplain and other school leaders are very visible as leaders of collective worship and models of outstanding practice. The liturgical formation of



all staff is a significant part of the professional development programme, including by means of the CCRS.

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