



Diocese of Westminster

INSPECTION REPORT

Field Heath House School

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DCSF Number: 312 7006

Headteacher: Sr Julie Rose

Chair of Governors: Mr Marius Sykes

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of inspection: 26th January 2009
Date of previous inspection: 8th September 2005

Reporting Inspector: Mr Anthony Clark

Description of School

Pield Heath House School is a Catholic non-maintained special school founded in 1901 which prepares young people between the ages of 7 – 19 years 'for life in a challenging and changing world'. The school is in the trusteeship of the religious Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary and provides for pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties, additional speech and language difficulties and more complex needs. Pupils come from a number of London boroughs and all have a Statement of Special Need. There are 71 pupils on the school roll of whom 29 are Catholic. Two teachers have the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies. The school describes itself as an 'educational community, holistic, encompassing excellence and placing great value upon the individual'.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Pield Heath is an outstanding Catholic school. It lives by the principles it proclaims. There is a high level of support for pupils and the quality of relationships across the school is very good. The provision for prayer, worship and religious celebration is outstanding with special mention being made of the use of 'Signalong' which enables improved communication for all. The school has a distinct community spirit, based on its religious foundations and on its high expectations of all pupils. The Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary lead, assure and maintain the school's Catholic ethos. The school is committed to being a centre of excellence. It has a dedicated staff whose focus is the well-being and achievement of pupils to their full potential. The school is strongly affirmed by the parents and pupils for its commitment to inclusion and to full human development.

Grade 1

Improvement since the last inspection

Effective steps have been made since the last inspection to address the three issues identified. The curriculum framework and resources for learning in religious education have been developed. There is now increased focus on the outcomes of religious education and pupil progress. There is increased use of gesture, symbol, music and sensory communication.

Grade 1

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The systems are in place for constant and regular review of the progress being made by means of the Individual Educational Plans. The constant two way communication with parents ensures that there is regular review of current practices and policies, ensuring that what can be done to improve the learning of the pupils is seriously considered and put into effect. The school has to be regularly reviewing its provision as different education authorities consider whether to send pupils to the school. The age profile of the pupils has changed in that over half the pupils are in 6th form and the severity of learning difficulties encountered has increased.

Grade 1

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue developing Signalong language in liturgy and in religious education teaching and programmes
 - Complete the establishment of the designated religious education area
 - Develop the potential of the KS3/4 religious education teacher to be religious education curriculum leader
 - Review the religious education curriculum time in the light of the Bishop's expectation of 10% at KS1-4 and 5% at 6th form
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The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

The school is very well led by its inspirational and experienced headteacher. She ensures that there is the proper team cooperation at all levels to ensure that students, staff, parents and governors all feel that they can and have made their appropriate contribution to the common good and progress of the pupils. Members of the Governing Body are actively involved in the school and make their appropriate contribution to promoting and monitoring its Catholic life. The Chairman of Governors has recently taken on the role and he is currently taking effective steps to ensure that he is fully apprised of his duties and the life of the school. There are a number of recent and newly appointed teachers and the school ensures that their induction and understanding of the school's specific ethos and spirituality are known.

Grade 2

The Prayer Life of the School

Prayer is woven into the life of the school at every turn – in the assemblies, in the grace before meals, in the intercessions and short prayers in class. The school finds a strong sense of corporate prayer and identity in the weekly Mass or non Eucharistic assembly each week. The spread of the knowledge and use of Signalong has made a very significant contribution to the quality of pupil, staff and parent participation in the liturgy, fulfilling in a special way what the Vatican Council called for in the liturgy, 'active participation'. The visible sense of everybody speaking together with their hands, even if not always with their voice, during the assembly is powerful. The style of music at assembly was very accessible to the pupils who found it very easy and inviting to sing along to. The pupils are called to think of others, of the deeper virtues and of the beauties of nature in a variety of ways. The generosity and devotion of so many of the staff and carers which they experience, linked with the firm structures and expectations of the school mean that the pupils receive constant help in their spiritual development. There is a clear system of rewards and demerits and all pupils are helped to grow in their moral awareness and sense of right and wrong. The sense of social awareness is fostered regularly. The theme in religious education during the inspections was Journeys and one religious education lesson very effectively revolved around a journey from the classroom to Marian House and chapel in the adjacent building belonging to the Sisters, with a pilgrimage of looking at statues and the beauty in the garden on the way there and back. There are religious and prayer focus displays in each classroom.

Grade 1

How effectively does the school /college promote community cohesion?

The school is very effective in promoting community cohesion. Over the years the schools has built up a great variety of links with other churches, synagogues, schools, special schools, parishes, business enterprises which make any reading of 'Where did we visit last term?' a whirl wind of activity. The school's staff and pupils are themselves from a wide variety of cultures and the very awareness of their own diversity, which is regularly referred to and celebrated, is itself a powerful catalyst of community cohesion. The pupils are encouraged at every turn to be inclusive themselves, as they experience the inclusivity of the school's policies and practices. Activity days celebrate the diversity of both the school community and the wider surrounding community – with a number of outside groups coming in regularly over weekends to use the schools facilities. The school celebrates its links with a penpal, Meseret, in Ethiopia and St Lawrence's 6th form in Lusaka, Zambia. The pupils are encouraged to think both locally and globally in their choice of charities to support, and are able to channel their views through their elected representatives on the School Council.

Grade 1

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

The majority of the pupils achieve progress in the P scales in religious education. The pupils who are working towards National Curriculum levels in religious education, mainly around Levels 1 and 2, are stretched and challenged equally with those students who are moving, sometimes from a very basic level, up the P scale. Progress is monitored and recorded. The pupils are involved to the degree their ability allows in lessons, and full measure is given to those pupils who cannot express their progress in written or spoken ways, but who can indicate they have understood by other means. Here again the ability to communicate so widely and effectively in the school through Signalong aids this. Achievement will be further helped when Entry level courses from both the AQA and Welsh boards are in place for the KS4 and post 16 students. It is important for the school that the scales of both the P levels and the 'B' squared assessments are used in conjunction with each other.

Grade 2

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

Lessons are carefully planned to both the needs of the curriculum and the specific needs of each individual pupil. There are good levels of support from the teaching assistants. Three religious education lessons were seen in the course of the inspection, all of which were good and some outstanding. Pupils' work is carefully marked and inserted into their religious education folders, which benefit from extensive use of photography allowing the inclusion of photos showing what has been achieved through the artefacts or displays created. There is careful analysis of the progress made by pupils in religious education which is entered into each pupil's notes so that their progress across the curriculum can be assessed in one place. It was very impressive to see the level of challenge to pupils to make the next step in religious education. There are regular newsletters to parents and carers, outlining what is being covered in religious education and making suggestions for complementary activities at home. The active use of ICT and interactive whiteboards is well integrated into lesson planning.

Grade 2

Quality of the Curriculum

The curriculum is under review. The 'Here I am' Programme has been adopted and adapted for Key Stages Three and Four, while the programme 'Moving On' is used in the sixth form. Links to other areas of the curriculum are documented and picked up in class as appropriate. Religious education is taught as a subject in its own right. The school needs to review its provision of curriculum time for religious education which the Bishop of the diocese expects to be 10% at KS1-4, and 5% at KS5. World faiths are given appropriate time in the religious education curriculum and are specially supported by the presence in the school of pupils from all the main world faiths except currently Judaism. There is evidence of good adaptation to the particular needs of the individual pupils. Pupils enjoy religious education and speak of what they know with confidence. The planning of the religious education curriculum and specific religious education lessons is clearly adapted to the specific needs of individual pupils – thus fulfilling the expectation of 'personalised learning'.

Grade 2

Leadership and management of Religious Education

The religious education curriculum leader, who has also been instrumental in introducing and training both staff and pupils to Signalong communication, is leading and managing the teachers of religious education very well. The team works well together and communication regularly takes place to ensure that both progress and obstacles to progress are regularly reviewed in a constructive manner. Her devotion and love of the subject means she is able to offer support and guidance to staff who are involved in cross curricular themes from religious education or with the understanding of the specific Catholic ethos of Pield Heath. The current KS3/4 religious education teacher has the skills, ability and insight to become the religious education Curriculum leader. With opportunities to meet religious education curriculum leaders in other Catholic schools and follow the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies, at some point, she will develop further. She has the capability of taking on the role now, and would be able to provide effective leadership in religious education teaching.

Grade 1