



Diocese of Westminster

GUMLEY HOUSE CONVENT SCHOOL FCJ

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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: 24 - 25 April 2013

Date of previous inspection: 18 - 19 October 2006

Reporting Inspector: Mr J. Coyle

Associate Inspector: Mr M. Dell

Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, students and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent two days in school, visited nine lessons, attended Mass, an assembly, and carried out learning walks around the school, conducted eight interviews with school staff, students and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, discussion with local clergy, scrutiny of samples of students' work, observation of students in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of Gumley House Convent School FCJ (Faithful Companions of Jesus) in the London Borough of Hounslow was carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework and Schedule 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.

Description of School

The school is a six form entry girls' school in the London Borough of Hounslow. The school serves 63 parishes drawing students from 60 Catholic feeder primary schools across the Dioceses of Westminster and Southwark. The proportion of students who are baptised Catholic is 96.81%. The proportion of students who are from other Christian denominations is 2.48%, from other Faiths 0.61% and those from no faith background are 0.08%.

There are 1129 students on roll of which 156 are in the sixth form and 13 students with statements of Special Educational Need. The proportion of students from ethnic minority groups is well above average. The number of students speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average. There is a below average rate of families claiming free school meals.

Key for inspection grades:

Grade 1: Outstanding;*
Grade 1: Very Good;
Grade 2: Good;
Grade 3: Requires improvement;
Grade 4: Causing Concern.

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

Overall Grade: I*

The overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing students' religious literacy is outstanding. This is due to the impressive work that leaders and teachers in the religious education department have done in promoting Catholic practice and a community ethos. The Curriculum Directory has been mapped into the department's schemes of work, particularly in Key Stage 3 and very good teaching provides positive engagement for students of all abilities. Lessons and students progress are checked. The department is well resourced and Mass, liturgies and assemblies are key features of its work with a well qualified Chaplain. Leaders and teachers maintain external links to ensure that up to date information and Diocesan updates are incorporated into classroom practice. As a result students gain highly successful results at GCSE and at Advanced Level. In addition, students' attitudes to learning are very positive as they learn about their place in society and the Catholic response as they progress through the school and into adulthood.

What has improved in classroom religious education since the last inspection and what should the school do to further improve in classroom religious education?

At the last inspection, the department was asked to continue to develop assessment for learning and continue to monitor the quality of teaching and learning.

There has been significant attention given to assessment for learning with the result that staff now share lesson plans, learning objectives and expected outcomes, based on age appropriate levels of performance with students each lesson. In this way students can track progress and check weaknesses and identify areas for improvement.

During the inspection book scrutiny highlighted examples of marking and feedback that does not match the best. It was recognized that students do not always respond actively to teachers' marking, thus missing opportunities to advance their skills and knowledge.

The department should now take the following steps to further improve classroom religious education:

Further develop the quality of marking and written guidance given to students so that they know what to do to improve and thus make faster progress.

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

Grade I*

The religious education department has a central role in the school in promoting Catholic practice and a community ethos and the excellent curriculum it offers provides a systematic study of God, the life and teaching of Jesus, the Church, the central beliefs that Catholics hold, and the relationship between faith and life. Examples include Curriculum Extension days when science and RE are combined for Year 7 and faith in God as creator is explored as well as the scientific view, a Year 9 history day reflecting on the Holocaust and prejudice, discrimination, choice and what it means to support the common good and human rights and in Year 11 work on Catholic teachings on marriage and family forms a discussion on relationships and sexuality and coverage of moral and spiritual issues.

The Curriculum Directory has been very imaginatively and comprehensively mapped into the schools' schemes of work. The curriculum is outstanding in Key Stage 3 where there is a strikingly innovative approach to structuring learning around a narrative for each year. Over the course of the year, students are encouraged to put themselves 'into a story' which supports the attainment target two; 'learning from religion'. The narrative gives a structure for each year that provides a significant sense of coherence to the learning. The impact is that the engagement and attitudes of students of all abilities to learning in Years 7, 8 and 9 are very positive as they learn about their place in society and the Catholic response as they progress through the school. For example students in older year groups describe their lessons as memorable and report that it helped them with their further studies in religious education. It also allows for continuous updating against the Directory, creative teaching and developing resources.

Students say that this engagement has the longer term benefit when they move to further study and examinations at GCSE and Advanced Level as they remember key content and with the support of highly qualified and supportive staff, are literate and confident about applying it very effectively in order to gain very high grades, in high numbers.

In the sixth form, the general course uses the NOCN examination specification to provide a programme that links the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development to opportunities for both studying about, reflecting on and putting into practice their commitment to the Common Good through: charities, supporting younger students or work in an old peoples' home.

As a result, the content of classroom religious education is judged to be outstanding in meeting the requirements of the Curriculum Directory.

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

Grade I*

When students join the school their levels of attainment are well above average in the key subjects. As they move through the school they all make very good progress including those requiring support. As a result, their attainment in religious education is outstanding with GCSE results above English and mathematics notably at A*-A grades. Assessment for learning has been a developmental priority and has proved to be of benefit to students as well as providing challenge and key data on their progress. Monitoring of groups and individual students maintains a regular reporting cycle based on shared target grades, resulting in regular and final assessments against national levels of attainment, which show that at the end of Key Stage 3 over a third of students are reaching Level 7 or above.

In the sixth form, whilst recruitment to religious studies has fallen from an historically high figure due to the introduction of philosophy at Advanced Level, good numbers still achieve very well at A2 with well over half gaining A*-B grades, which are above the national figure.

The general religious studies programme is valued by the students as it builds relationships with teachers and each other, allows for reflection and discussion on moral and religious issues and a range of speakers, including charities, develops their understanding of the Common Good. Evidence of written and oral feedback is carefully used by teachers and the Chaplain when evaluating success and progress in students' knowledge and understanding of religious concepts.

The quality of teaching

Grade I

Overall the quality of teaching and students learning is very good. The judgements made by inspectors supports the school's own evaluation with teaching never less than good and some which was outstanding. All teachers are subject specialists and have a strong commitment to updating and professional development. As a result of effective collaboration, all teachers prepare lessons that provide challenge for students across years and for those with specific weaknesses. Their Catholic faith journey is shared consequently students are engaged in their learning as well as developing friendship and companionship; key features of the schools Gospel vision to help each other.

This support was observed in an outstanding Year 7 lesson on the Resurrection where the teacher's manner and the relationship with the students were excellent. The teacher obviously knew them well, and good planning provided differentiated worksheets in order to target the full range of ability, also allowed for adaptation in response to students' needs. A video of the history of the FCJ fitted into the topic well and reinforced the idea of sacrifice on behalf of friends. As a result all students have excellent levels of engagement and make very good progress. Marking of students work is frequent; advice and guidance, both oral and written, on how to improve is readily available and targets for improvement are set. However, there are examples of marking and feedback that do not measure up to the best and this is an area that the school recognises as an area for improvement.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 1*

Leadership and management of religious education is outstanding. The department models its leadership approach on the FCJ vision of fostering good relationships and are therefore excellent Catholic role models for students. This focus on relationships combined with the commitment to create communities of personal and academic excellence means that the well qualified, experienced team plan and develop innovative teaching resources to support each other and which are shared across the department.

Systems are in place to track students against their targets and lesson observations and book checks check teaching, learning and student progress. The department is extremely well resourced and very good use of technology was evidenced in dedicated RE classrooms, Mass, liturgies and assemblies. External links provide examination board insights to specifications, Diocesan updates and visits from the RE advisor. Professional development takes place within the department with staff adopting action research as a way of developing their own expertise and sharing good practice in teaching and learning.

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 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

The school's overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing is very good. The school cannot be outstanding as it has yet to fulfil the Bishops' Conference requirements of 10% curriculum time for R.E. across all year groups

The governors, headteacher and senior leaders and those responsible for religious education ensure that the FCJ mission is shared by all staff and students. However, they the leadership have still to meet fully the requirements of time for the delivery of Religious Education. Systems are in place to check on how well students develop in their faith journey and how staff develop as members of a Catholic community. Professional development opportunities are in place to develop and enhance a Catholic ethos amongst all staff and students.

What has improved since the last inspection and what should the school do to further develop the Catholic life of the school?

At the last inspection, the department was asked to address the shortfall in time for the delivery of Religious Education and to further develop the role of Chaplain.

The implementation of a new curriculum model that will allow for the requirements of the Bishops' Conference is still to take place and is under development for implementation in September 2013, in the meantime there remains a shortfall in time for the delivery of Religious Education.

The role of Chaplain has been developed with marked success. This has impacted on the quality of liturgies, the involvement of students in liturgies and the increased use of the chapel for Mass and quiet worship outside of curriculum time.

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

Grade I

The school has still to meet fully the requirements of time for the delivery of Religious Education. At Key Stage 3 Year 7 spends 10% of the available timetable time on Religious Education and Years 8 and 9 spend 8% of the available timetable time on Religious Education. At Key Stage 4 Year 10 spends 12% of the available timetable time on Religious Education and Year 11 spends 8% of the available timetable time on Religious Education.

In the sixth form, as well as specialist AS and A2 courses, students have 5% of curriculum time for Religious Education.

The department is allocated a budget that is in line with that of other core subject areas. It has outstanding staff allocation and accommodation with eight specialist teachers a dedicated suite of rooms and an office. The department is very well supported by the Chaplain and there is a dedicated chapel.

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

Grade I*

Inspectors agree with the school when it says that prayer and worship are central to the life of the school and a key part of every school celebration.

The key annual school liturgies at Advent, Lent and summer, map onto the liturgical year and the Chaplain provides visual stimulus with ever changing displays, reflecting new beginnings, harvest and Holy Souls etc. Each term ends with liturgies for Year groups.

All staff briefings start with reflection and prayer. This is mirrored in classes where each morning prayer is offered following a programme themed and organized by the chaplain. Assemblies are held weekly and are led by students, supported by senior leaders and form tutors. The observed assembly included prayer, reflection and a key message about how we can all be great if we serve others. Year 7 and their parents are welcomed early in the first term and sixth form leavers say good bye with Masses at the start and end of the year. The Parish Priest spoke about his involvement with offering the sacraments of Reconciliation and Confirmation in collaboration with the school. Class Masses are a feature during the year and liturgy students who work with the Chaplain, are involved in their planning. The observed Mass in the chapel was reverential and well organized, readings are at the appropriate level, students participate throughout in prayer and song and behaviour is exemplary. The chapel is open throughout the school day and available for quiet prayer and reflection.

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

Grade I*

The schools' commitment to action for social justice is outstanding. Its vision statement calls for love in action and generosity in service to others. The well organized curriculum combines religious education and personal, social health and ethical education, with community days and speakers including those from political groups so that students get to understand that as a citizen they have a duty to answer the call to serve as well as opportunities to become involved. Students speak about the exceptional relationships that exist with the staff and each other, which create an atmosphere that makes school different, they point to cultural events that celebrate difference such as black history month as examples. Charitable events allow students to share their diversity by dressing in traditional clothes and performing, through dance, drama, music reading and art.

They are given opportunities to reflect on ethical and moral issues linked to wealth and poverty notably Year 7 fair trade cake stalls, whole school boxes for local families in poverty at Christmas and impressively a CAFOD project in South Sudan. Service and responsibility are shown in school through sixth form mentoring, annual HCPT involvement and work in the local old peoples' home.

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 school has a close relationship with the local parish and works well with the parish priest to the benefit of both the school and parish. The school is aware of the large number of parishes from which the students come and seeks ways of engaging with them. At key moments the parish priest hosts the welcome Mass for Year 7 and the leavers Masses for Years 11 and 13. With students coming from a large, diverse number of parishes the local church has become a prime focus for many students and is used extensively outside school times. For example past students return to marry and have their own children baptized.

There is an active parents association and the school has effective systems, including a newsletter, to ensure parents understand its mission. The overwhelming number of responses to the parental questionnaire with 731 completed returns indicates an impressive endorsement of the work this

Catholic school is doing on behalf of their daughters. Parents commented on what excellent role models teachers were and the sense of community and empathy that pervaded the school. They were aware of the difficulty that the wide catchment area presented for parish links and supported the school in its ambition to involve parents more in collective worship.

The sisters of FCJ order are located on site and from time to time students are given the opportunity to develop an understanding of what it means to be part of the global FCJ community. The school has participated in deanery Masses and has celebrated whole school Mass, including parents, on two occasions at Westminster Cathedral. Links with two Catholic partner schools develops and enhances the religious studies offer for those students. The Headteacher and religious education subject leader attend diocesan meetings and conferences. The school enjoys a productive relationship with the diocesan adviser.

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

Grade I*

The Governors, senior leaders and those with responsibility for religious education all share the FCJ mission and ensure that it lies at the heart of all that they do on behalf of staff and students at the school.

To this end they have established systems to monitor and review how successful they are at carrying this out. This reflection and evaluation process seeks to judge how well students develop their spirituality and put it into action as well as make academic progress. It also seeks to ensure that staff are confident in their roles as members of a Catholic community through performance management and professional development designed to develop and enhance a Catholic ethos amongst all staff and students.

All staff following appointment are inducted into the school community. With this comes the expectation to take part in school liturgy and prayer events and thereby support the Catholic life of the school. The Governors maintain strong links with the local Catholic university college in order to ensure recruitment of Catholic staff as and when the need arises. They instigated and support the Gumley News, a paper which provides regular features on the work of the school to the school community.

Finance and resources are well deployed so that leaders and managers are effective and efficient in promoting the Catholic life of the school.



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A. Classroom Religious Education

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

Overall Grade 1*

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

Grade 1*

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

Grade 1*

The quality of teaching

Grade 1

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 1*

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 1

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

Grade 1

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

Grade 1*

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

Grade 1*

The 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 1*

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

Grade 1*