

The London Oratory School

Seagrave Road, Fulham, London SW6 1RX

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 14 - 15 February 2019



Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education is good

- The department meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory at all key stages. The core Religious Education programme in the sixth form is strong with some creative approaches to curriculum construction
- The GCSE results are significantly above the national average, with a high proportion of pupils achieving the top grades. Attainment in A level Religious Studies is also very strong, with many students achieving their target grade or above.
- Teaching is judged to be good with examples of consistently good, and even outstanding lessons and results in most pupils making good progress and achieving well over time.
- The department has worked hard to successfully address the previous inspections issues of action. The head of department has a clear vision for Catholic religious education that encompasses both a dedication to achieving excellent academic outcomes for pupils as well as preparing them for the demands of religious commitment in daily life.

Classroom religious education is not yet outstanding because

- The religious education curriculum needs adaptation to meet the challenge of the timetable revision.
- In religious education lessons there are not enough opportunities for pupils to be stretched and challenged.
- Religious education lessons need to ensure all pupils are catered for in the planning and delivery.

B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- The school now fully meets the diocesan requirement of 10% curriculum time.
- The experience that pupils receive from Catholic worship is outstanding. The liturgy provision demonstrates that worship and prayer are central to the life of the school. The school has an ambitious and highly successful music tradition that makes a significant contribution to the liturgy experienced by pupils.
- The sacramental life of the school is vibrant. The Eucharist is a significant feature of the experience of pupils; there are abundant opportunities to attend Mass. The chaplain is a visible presence in the school, establishing very strong relationships and he communicates the Oratorian charism clearly.
- The school has a dynamic understanding of the calls to 'human flourishing' and provides many opportunities for pupils to engage in acts of service, both within the school and outside of it.
- The school has a very strong partnership with the Brompton Oratory. This is most visible in the weekly contribution of the school's main choir, the Schola, which sings at the Saturday evening Mass. This is a highly significant service from the school to the parish that is an example to other Catholic schools.
- The recently appointed headmaster is a driving force in the school's commitment to educate young people with a coherent Catholic vision of growth into wisdom. The headmaster is highly ambitious for the school and instils in staff and pupils the desire to strive for excellence as an effective Catholic school.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

In the previous inspection, the religious education (RE) department were given a number of issues for action. Firstly, develop assessment practice further so that there is greater consistency of marking, making sure that the written guidance given to students supports them in improving their work. In addition, the school were asked to make sure that students always respond to teachers' useful guidance. This has been met. The quality of marking is a positive feature of the department. Pupils regularly have their work marked and get clear guidance on how to improve. Secondly, ensure that the post-16 core religious education programme always provides stretch and challenge for all students and that their progress is tracked throughout the year. This has been met in a number of ways, for example using diocesan material on science and religion. Finally, further the rate of progress in A level courses to ensure students continue to achieve outstandingly well as at Key Stage 4. This also has been successfully met.

The content of classroom religious education is good

The department meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory (Bishops' Conference, 2012) (RECD) at all key stages. There has been evidence of mapping the schemes of work to the RECD. The curriculum is planned so that pupils experience a systematic programme of study organised around the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, the Church, its beliefs, celebrations and way of life of Catholics who follow that teaching. The teaching of Islam and Judaism are studied at Key Stage 3 which supports the aim of fostering interfaith dialogue. At Key Stage 3, the curriculum is ripe for review given the recent changes at Key Stage 4 and 5. There is also partial evidence from lesson observation that the content of some aspects of Key Stage 3 could be improved to increase stretch and challenge. There is an opportunity to further develop the schemes of work to support teachers in the planning of their lesson, especially in light of the changes to the school's timetable for September 2019. At GCSE the Catholic Christianity is studied as well as Judaism in line with the Bishop's requirement. At A level the OCR exam board is followed, studying Christianity, ethics and the philosophy of religion. The core RE programme in the sixth form is strong with some creative approaches to the curriculum construction, for example use of Dante's Inferno as a basis for exploring the response to spiritual crisis is to be commended.

Pupil achievement in religious education is outstanding

When joining the school, pupils' level of attainment is typically above average and they continue to make expected progress throughout the key stages. At Key Stage 3, the school has a rigorous system for tracking pupil progress through termly tests undertaken in exam conditions. As a result, the RE department intervene as necessary to ensure all pupils are well prepared for public exams further up the school. The majority of pupils make outstanding progress at the end of Key Stage 4. The GCSE results are significantly above the national average, with a high proportion of pupils achieving the top grades. Given the high levels of success at GCSE, it is a testament to the department that recruitment for A level is very good. Attainment in A level Religious Studies is also very strong, with many students achieving their target grade or above. Pupil's attitudes to learning are very positive, they like their teachers. Pupils generally display a desire for learning and actively participate in lessons. A particular strength of the RE department is the excellent results achieved at GCSE and A level which are a testament to both the pupil's and teacher's hard work.

The quality of teaching is good

Teaching is consistently good with examples of good, and even outstanding lessons and results in most pupils making good progress and achieving well over time. A key strength of the department is that teacher's own subject knowledge is often very strong and the department is well resourced. For example, in an A level lesson on euthanasia excellent use of case study material enabled pupils to consider the ethical dilemmas of the topic. Where teaching is at its best, teachers have high expectations, tasks are varied and questioning inspires deep engagement. For example, in a lesson on justice, pupils made rapid progress in examining Catholic social teaching with reference to biblical texts. Behaviour for learning is positive and pupils are respectful of their teachers. Setting of homework is a strength in the department and marking is consistently completed so that pupils receive regular guidance on how they improve. Pupils are appreciative of the opportunities to express their opinions and the time given for critical reflection and discussion. Where teaching was less effective, the planning and delivery of differentiation needed to improve in order to successfully engage all pupils. In some lessons pupils are ripe for stretch and challenge, sometimes this is due to the limited range of tasks set or the slow pace of the lesson.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education is good

There has been recent staffing turbulence in the leadership of the RE department. The situation is now stable and the current head of department has a realistic appreciation of the steps needed to take the department to the next level. The department has worked hard to successfully address the previous inspections issues of action. The head of department has a clear vision for Catholic religious education that encompasses both a dedication to achieving excellent academic outcomes for pupils as well as preparing them for the demands of religious commitment in daily life. The department works well as a team which not only enhances the students' academic learning but also strongly supports the Catholic life of the school. There are good systems in place that monitor teaching and support teacher's professional development. There is an opportunity to strengthen these systems in order to further improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Highly effective structures are in place to frequently monitor, track and ensure pupil progress based on a programme of termly tests and reports. The monitoring of the marking of pupil exercise books is effective as a strong feature of the department is that pupils receive regular feedback on their work. The head of department is proactive in working with colleagues in other secondary schools and engaging with diocesan advisors.

What should the school do to develop further in classroom religious education?

- Adapt the RE curriculum to meet the challenge of the timetable revision.
- Create more opportunities for pupils to be stretched and challenged.
- Ensure all pupils are catered for in the planning and delivery of engaging lessons.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

The last inspection had two action points: (i) Ensure that the school offers 10% of curriculum time for religious education in Key Stages 3 and 4; (ii) Develop the post-16 RE curriculum to allow for the 30 hours recommended time from the Bishops' Conference. Both of these have now been met.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

is outstanding

Since the last inspection the recently appointed headteacher and the governors have made significant progress in addressing the deficit in the RE curriculum time. The school now fully meets the Bishops' Conference requirement of 10% curriculum time in an imaginative way which, as an interim measure, is to be commended. As such it is evident to all - staff, parents and pupils - that RE is the core of the curriculum. The governors and leadership team offer strong support to RE department. The department is well resourced both in terms of specialist staff and appropriate materials.

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

is outstanding

The experience that pupils receive from Catholic worship is outstanding. The liturgy provision demonstrates that worship and prayer are central to the life of the school and the school has established a very powerful culture of prayer. There are numerous opportunities for communal and individual prayer; for example, every Thursday a decade of the rosary is prayed throughout the school in tutor time. The prayer resources produced by the chaplain for tutor time prayer are of a very high standard. There is further scope for the development of pupil engagement in the planning and preparation in the liturgical life of the school, for example in tutor time prayer. The sacramental life of the school is vibrant. The Eucharist is a significant feature of the experience of pupils; there are abundant opportunities to attend Mass. The chaplain provides a comprehensive programme of Masses that develop different themes to support the RE curriculum. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered weekly and is appreciated and used well by pupils. The chapel is an excellent resource that is utilised effectively, for example with the weekly Exposition of the Holy Eucharist. The headmaster's weekly assembly is regarded highly by both pupils and staff. Assemblies are well prepared by staff, and often include community singing. The school has an ambitious and highly successful music tradition that makes a significant contribution to the liturgy experienced by pupils. The retreat programme is comprehensive and regularly reviewed to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils. The chaplain makes a significant contribution to the Catholic life of the school; he is a visible presence in the school, establishing very strong relationships and he communicates the Oratorian charism clearly.

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

is outstanding

The school has a dynamic understanding of the call to 'human flourishing' and provides many opportunities for pupils to engage in acts of service, both within the school and outside of it. There is a clear expectation that students in the sixth form engage in local community service, for example in visiting care homes, supporting The Passage (for the homeless), local primary schools. The school has a strong house system that facilitates many fundraising activities that support such charities as Aid to the Church in Need (ACN). There is a well-established link with a charity for street children in Rwanda that the school supports through financial aid as well as encouraging volunteers to go out

and work at the project. The range of different opportunities for service is impressive and pupils are very strong on the theological underpinning of their actions.

The partnership with parents, school and parish, and collaboration as an integral part of the diocese through its relationship with the diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf

is outstanding

The school works closely with parents and carers to develop a shared understanding of its mission. The diocesan parents' questionnaire demonstrated very high levels of satisfaction with the school, with a significant number noting the positive impact of the headmaster on the Catholic life of the school; his spiritual reflections, which are sent to parents, are very much appreciated. One parent commented, 'There is a true spirit of faith, respect and inclusivity', another stated, 'Our son has flourished in a school that upholds the Catholic faith'. There is vibrant sense of connection and partnership between past and present pupils with a focus on the Oratorian charism, this was most recently expressed through the 150th anniversary celebration Mass at the Cathedral. The school has a very strong partnership with the Brompton Oratory. This is most visible in the weekly contribution of the school's main choir, the Schola, which sings at the Saturday evening Mass. This is a highly significant service from the school to the parish that is an example to other Catholic schools. The relationship between the school and the diocese is good. The school not only actively participates in the services offered by the diocese, but puts itself at the service of the diocese in a variety of ways.

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

is outstanding

There is a very well thought out understanding of what it means to be a Catholic school that permeates all aspects of school life from policy to every day practice. Pupils have a clear sense of the school's distinctive understanding of itself as a Catholic school. The school motto, *Respice Finem*, ('look to the end') is understood as 'to live wisely' and pupils feel that they are guided to this end. The headmaster is a driving force in the school's commitment to educate young people with a coherent Catholic vision of growth into wisdom. He is highly ambitious for the school, instils in staff and pupils the desire to strive for excellence as an effective Catholic school and has made significant progress in renewing the school's Catholic life. The reflections by heads of departments on their subject's contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils demonstrate the understanding that all members of staff have a role in contributing to the Catholic vision of education. The governors provide very strong support to the school through their relentless and unanimous commitment to the Catholic tradition. The development of Catholicity is central to their thinking, and provides their *raison d'être*, within the tradition of the school's Oratorian charism. The chair of governors is supported by a team of highly skilled members, who work very effectively with the leadership team in safeguarding and promoting the Catholic life of the school. There is support in place for the induction of new staff, however there is scope for more creative ways to assimilate staff into the Catholic life of the school. The school environment is outstanding and inspiring, in terms of how it is used to promote the Catholic life of the school. Other school communities should be encouraged to visit this school, especially if they are preparing to build or refurbish their school environment. The chaplain is very effective in promoting the Catholic life of the school, and as such is highly regarded by pupils and staff.

What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?

- Further develop the liturgical life of the school by providing more opportunities for pupils to be involved in preparation and planning.

- Further develop the induction programme for new staff.

Information about this school

- The school is a six-form entry Catholic Voluntary Academy in the locality of Fulham.
- The school serves the parish of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Brompton Oratory), Brompton. In total pupils come from over 400 parishes across London.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 99.9%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 0.1% and from other faiths is nil.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 70.6%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is four.
- There are 9.95% of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 25 have statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average.
- There is a below average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 129 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (9.7%).

Department for Education Number

205/5400

Unique Reference Number

137157

Local Authority

Hammersmith and Fulham

Type of school

Secondary

School category

Academy

Age range of pupils

7-18 (this inspection focused on 11 – 18)

Gender of pupils

Male (Mixed in Sixth Form)

Number of pupils on roll

1326

The appropriate authority

The London Oratory School Academy Trust

Chair

Mr Paul Thimont

Headteacher

Mr Daniel Wright

Telephone number

020 7385 0102

Website

www.london-oratory.org

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Date of previous inspection

25-26 June 2015

Grades from previous inspection:

Classroom religious education

Outstanding

The Catholic life of the school

Requires improvement

Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out (i) under the requirements of the Canon 806 and (ii) in accordance with the Framework for Diocesan Inspections 2015 approved by the Archbishop of Westminster and (iii) under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 and (iv) in accordance with the Funding Agreement between the Secretary of State for Education and The London Oratory School Academy Trust.

- The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection.
- During the inspection 23 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended a number of acts of worship.
- Meetings were held with school staff, pupils and governors.
- Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

Mr Matthew Dell

Lead Inspector

Miss Catherine Bryan

Associate Inspector

Mrs Louise Gammage

Associate Inspector

Mrs Alison Berwick

Associate Inspector

Information about inspection

The purpose of Diocesan inspection is to report to and advise the Archbishop on the quality of classroom religious education and the Catholic life of the school. The inspection report is also used to inform parents and carers, and the wider Catholic community. Inspection provides an opportunity to support, challenge, evaluate and promote the work of Catholic schools. It also assists schools in the work of self-evaluation and improvement, and enables the Diocese to celebrate with schools their sense of identity and their strengths as Catholic schools.

Inspection Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

This report is published by the Diocese of Westminster and is available at:

<http://rcdow.org.uk/education/schools>

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