



ST. MARKS CATHOLIC SCHOOL

106 Bath Road, Hounslow, London TW3 3EJ

3-4 April 2014

A. Classroom Religious Education

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

Grade I*

The overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing students' religious literacy is outstanding. Typically, teaching is outstanding and never less than very good. There are strong structures to support and develop the quality of teaching. The rich curriculum, constantly under review, delivers an experience for students that empowers them to engage fully in the development of their understanding of the Catholic faith. Students have consistently excellent attitudes to learning and the impact of their application is seen in the outstanding examination results. Students with special educational needs also achieve highly, very well supported through the regular attention to their learning needs in lessons. The leadership of the department models excellent practice and the staff team works exceptionally well together for the benefit of the students. Moderation of work is rigorous, both internal and through diocesan meetings. Departmental self-evaluation is accurate and summarises very well the strengths and areas for development which are clear and closely followed up. Curriculum religious education makes an excellent contribution to the Catholic life of the school.

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?

Grade I*

Students are offered an excellent quality and experience of Catholic education. They are provided with an outstanding range of experiences of what it means to live according to Catholic teaching and traditions. Religious education is valued as the core of the curriculum as is evidenced by the allocation of curriculum time, a dedicated chapel, discrete accommodation, generous staffing and resources and rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures similar to those of other key subjects. Worship and prayer are seen as integral to the school day and year. Links with the parish, the deanery and the diocese are strong and there are excellent links with other Catholic schools. Students lay an excellent foundation for their understanding of their contribution to the Common Good and their activities are well grounded in the Church's social teaching. Students flourish at St Mark's. Senior leaders demonstrate a very strong Catholic vision for the education provision at the school. Governors are very active and effective in supporting, monitoring and evaluating the Catholic life of St Mark's.

Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent two days in school, visited seven lessons, an assembly, the end-of-term liturgies and carried out six interviews with school staff, students and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, discussion with local clergy, scrutiny of a sample of students' work in lessons, observation of students in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of St Marks, Hounslow, was carried out under the requirements of the Canon 806 and Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework 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.

Inspection Team

Mrs Sheila Nolan	Lead Inspector
Ms Mary Coyle	Associate Inspector
Ms Janice McGurrell	Associate Inspector

Description of School

The school is a six form entry in the LA of Hounslow. The school serves a wide range of parishes, mainly within the deaneries of Hounslow, Upper Thames, Hillingdon and Ealing. One hundred percent of students in the main school are baptised Catholics as are 85% of post-16 students. The proportion of students who are from other Christian denominations is 6% and from other Faiths 9%. The proportion of Catholic teachers in the school is 63% and all staff teaching religious education have a Catholic qualification.

There are 1163 students on roll, with 27 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 also well above average. There is a below average rate of families claiming free school meals. One hundred and fourteen students are in receipt of the Pupil Premium. St Mark's, a founder member of the Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust Company, is heavily over-subscribed.

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DFE Number:	3134800
URN Number:	137995
Headteacher:	Mr Paul Enright
Chair of Governors:	Dr K Sullivan
Date of previous inspection:	29 January 2009

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 has improved in classroom religious education since the last inspection?

At the last inspection, the school was asked to increase the challenge for the more able. Since then academic results in GCSE examinations have improved significantly reflecting the increasing challenge for able students as well as other groups. Over 50% of students gained the highest available A*/A grades in religious education in the last examination series, for example. Access to learning has also improved through the school's effective use of new technologies and the revisions to the curriculum for religious education are on-going, particularly in the sixth form and at Key Stage 3. The frequency, accuracy and impact of assessment procedures have also improved. The school's work in religious education demonstrates a strong trend of improvement and an equally strong capacity to improve further.

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

Grade 1*

The religious education curriculum has been thoroughly revised at each Key Stage to ensure it is carefully aligned with the requirements of the Curriculum Directory. Content and resources are clearly mapped out and also take excellent account of the examination specifications. At Key Stage 4, as well as covering the content of GCSE examinations, there is meticulous attention to the study of other world religions as well as elements of a secular worldview that include moral education and aspects of philosophy of religion, as directed in the 14-19 Curriculum Guidance. Post-16 courses develop further some of the content of the earlier Key Stages, ensuring clear progression that sustains the students' interest and deepens their religious literacy. In particular, general sixth form religious education focuses on Catholic belief and practice, not least through the Faith in Action course. The implementation of the curriculum in the daily life of the classroom demonstrates the team drawing regularly on scriptural, traditional and current sources to engage students in understanding the impact of their study in daily life.

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

Grade 1*

Students' achievement in religious education is outstanding. Students surpass their excellent achievement in other core subjects. There is also a sustained trend of improvement at post-16 with all students completing Level 3 of a general course and both results in advanced and advanced subsidiary examinations rising.

All groups of pupils consistently make fast progress from their starting points in religious education. This is confirmed not only through external public examinations but in moderation within the school and in conjunction with diocesan advisers. The school has much statistical data to confirm such progress and makes excellent use of the diocesan attainment targets to support both staff and students in assessing work and understanding how it can be improved. Students' enthusiasm in lessons and the quality of their written work in exercise books and in extended projects reflects their very willing commitment to apply themselves fully to their learning in religious education as well as in other academic studies. They have an excellent grasp of religious language and participate actively in all aspects of class work, including homework.

There have been significant improvements in the students' achievements at post-16 in both the advanced level courses and in the general religious education programme. Although progress is generally very good at A- and AS-level, the school is striving further to ensure even more students gain the highest available grades at A2. Students following the general religious education programme have well-considered opportunities to follow a

range of certificated courses, all of which are supported by the diocese. These courses are pitched to ensure students make at least very good progress from their generally high GCSE grades.

The quality of teaching

Grade I*

Typically, the quality of teaching is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations of all students, monitoring their progress excellently in lessons and using this information very well to adapt their teaching. Learning is planned effectively using creative and imaginative teaching strategies with regular very good use of differentiation. This was clearly demonstrated in a Year 11 lesson on racial harmony where students' responses, both written and oral were carefully orchestrated to engage students of all abilities. Questioning is used very effectively in lessons to stretch students' knowledge and understanding and to encourage them to work independently and creatively. A Year 9 lesson focusing on the qualities of a Christian disciple using the example of Maximilian Kolbe as a modern day disciple illustrated this excellently. In all of the lessons observed, there was active engagement of students as well as quality time for students to reflect on Gospel values and their own faith journey. In another excellent Year 9 lesson, students were able to reflect on scriptural sources and newspaper reports to consider the impact of the concept that we are made in the image of God.

Specialist staff have excellent subject knowledge and teach with both confidence and enthusiasm. As a result, students use and develop a variety of skills exceptionally well, engage fully in lessons, learn very well and make excellent progress. There is very effective collaboration within the department and ideas and resources are shared. Students place religious education consistently high in terms of enjoyment of their subjects. In a Year 13 lesson students developed an understanding of the philosophical challenges to God's omnipotence because they were confident enough to explore their thinking and had time to reflect on their own faith journey and Gospel values. In another Year 7 lesson on World Religions, the students were carefully guided to recall earlier learning and showed real enthusiasm for their tasks because of the interesting way material was presented to them.

Students' work is marked regularly and students receive excellent feedback on how to improve their work. A new initiative of dialogue on work has started between teachers and students. However, not all students are yet taking full advantage of teachers' excellent guidance on how to improve. The written work in their books alongside their oral responses demonstrates high levels of religious literacy.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade I*

The leadership and management of religious education are given the same high priority as other areas of the school. The school's very clear vision for religious education is exceptionally well implemented through the dynamic and creative approach of the departmental team which is very ably led. Departmental expectations, self-evaluation procedures and improvement plans are regularly shared across the team with each member giving real assent to the importance of the school's work in religious education. This is excellently demonstrated in the consistency of practice in classrooms and in the students' response to work in lessons.

The subject leader for religious education nurtures and uses very well the talents and interests of his large team of teachers, most with other whole school responsibilities. Team meetings draw on the excellent practice among the staff with the collective experience contributing to solving challenges arising either in respect of individual students or groups of students. The impact of this work is also evident in the excellent examination outcomes. Monitoring and evaluation of the team's work is rigorous as is moderation of key assessments throughout the year.

The department is very well resourced. Dedicated classrooms are vibrant with stimulating displays and artefacts. Staff benefit from much continuing professional development, including that provided by the diocese. The Church's educational mission is at the forefront of the department's work. This is excellently implemented

by the team and its impact seen in the attitudes of students, including those involved in the Faith in Action group within the sixth form.

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

Both of these areas have been identified by the department as in need of deeper development.

- In order to develop even further, the department should devise ways to ensure that each student responds actively to teachers' very good marking and consistently does the very best to improve through the guidance given to them.
- Raise even further the outcomes in A2 examinations, building on the already greatly improved AS results.

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 has improved since the last inspection?

The school has sustained the high quality of its provision for its Catholic life since the last inspection. It has gone on to deepen and strengthen even further its work in this area. Students participate exceptionally well in assemblies and the liturgy, contributing confidently to music to enhance worship. There is a very successful music liturgy group that rehearses and performs on a weekly basis and was much in evidence in religious celebrations at the end of term. In discussion, students reported that they really responded well to the reflective and imaginative way that the Catholic life of the school was promoted.

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

Grade 1*

The religious education curriculum securely receives its full allocation of 10% of the timetabled time. At post-16, students receive their full entitlement of 5% of curriculum time. The budget is well on a par with the other core subjects and the allocation of staffing to religious education, both in the classroom and at whole school level, is generous. All of the seven staff are specialists in their field and the school employs a full-time lay chaplain. There are discrete classrooms for religious education. In spite of tight accommodation, the school has preserved a dedicated space for the Chapel where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. This is close to the religious education classrooms. Governors and the school leadership team continue to offer outstanding support and active guidance for reviewing and developing the place of religious education in the school. They also give excellent support to the leadership of religious education and to the development of the department. Catholic life is at the centre of the annual professional development programme. New staff including, newly qualified teachers and those in training, receive excellent support on the distinctive nature of a Catholic school.

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

Grade 1*

Prayer and worship are central to the life of St Mark's and a key part of each day which starts with prayer in tutor time. All tutor rooms have a 'prayer corner' with a range of resources to support prayer and reflection. Staff pray together before meetings and briefings and students also pray together before important events such as examinations. The richness of Catholic tradition is promoted through a range of practices, including rosary devotions and the Stations of the Cross, assemblies and above all through the liturgy in class and whole school Masses. Students are actively involved in preparation and in leading events. The very few students of other Faiths are well involved in the school's spiritual life and take an active part where they can, reading at Mass, for example, or taking part in the Lenten Passion Play or Remembrance services. All students have experience of retreats, both on and off site. Sixth formers act as Special Ministers and there are half-termly prayer meetings for parents. The Chapel is open to students throughout the school day. The school's own survey of the Catholic life of the school to capture staff, parents' and students' views is very positive but the school recognises that there is even more it could do in encouraging even wider participation in the prayer life opportunities on offer.

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

Grade I*

The schools' commitment to the Common Good is outstanding. Students are very active in their service to others and are very clear as to the importance of social justice. There is a dynamic and creative understanding of the call to human flourishing and the call to justice and service is embedded in the work of year groups, religious education lessons, assemblies, and across the wider curriculum. Respect and value for the individual is central to the way the school manages the students and those they come in contact. There are many wide ranging opportunities for students to actively engage in services to those in need, including a Fair Trade fortnight, refugee week, CAFOD soup days and a 'Cupid day' for 'Smile Train'. Students are enthusiastically involved in both local and global charities and keen to put their faith in action.

All staff are involved in the school's selected charities and staff speak at assemblies about their own link with individual charities. Among the many charities students' support through their year groups are the Jumbulance, the City of Hope Project in Uganda and the Hounslow Shelter Project. There is an active Saint Vincent de Paul group that works in local schools and with senior citizens. A structured programme of visiting speakers develops students' understanding of justice and service. The school regularly celebrates Black History month and commemorates Holocaust Memorial day. Students are given opportunities to reflect on ethical and moral issues linked to wealth and poverty, particularly through the Year 10 Youth Philanthropy Initiative. Service and responsibility are hall marks of the sixth form. Students participate in the St Vincent de Paul and justice and peace groups as well as Faith in action projects and the annual HCPT involvement. Sixth formers organise an annual Christmas party for local residents. There is very secure evidence of students in all years actively engaging in acts of service but also of students having an excellent understanding of the theology that underpins their actions. Students speak about the exceptional relationships that exist with the school. One student commented on 'how staff encourages us to develop our god given potential' and another student commented on the excellent guidance students were given from staff on their faith journeys. All students spoken to commented on the strong Catholic identity of the school, highlighting the emphasis on living by the school motto of Veritas -Truth. Students also spoke highly of the cultural events that celebrate difference such as culture week and the international evening. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.

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's excellent provision for partnership with parents, local and deanery schools and the Diocese enhances greatly its work with the students. The school is keenly aware of being part of the Diocesan community of schools and is active in professional development activities, in conferences and participates fully in such as the Good Shepherd Mass. Links with diocesan advisers are strong. The headteacher, together with the Chaplain, attend Masses, Confirmations and other events within the deanery schools. Relationships with the adjacent St Michael's parish are excellent and the parish priest is an active member of the governing body. Local Catholic primary schools have strong links with St Mark's, many taking part in an annual choir festival held at the school. Sixth-form students, through the Faith in Action programme, visit local primary schools to lead religious education sessions. Parents are much welcomed to the school to events and celebrations and surveyed regularly to elicit their views. There were 159 returns to the latest questionnaire. All but 1% of those who responded were universally positive. One comment, for example, said, 'a great Catholic school that offers an excellent Catholic education. The theatre groups are an amazing way of getting across the Catholic message.' A very small percentage considered they could be even better informed about what is taught in religious education lessons. However, this information is clearly displayed on the school's website and readily available for parents.

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

Grade I*

The senior leadership and governors at St Marks are fully committed to the Church's mission in education. Their dedication is evident in the way the students respond to the school's Catholic identity, to its vision of itself in the community and in living out the mission statement. Outstanding leadership enables the whole school community to experience the richness of opportunities of a Catholic way of life. The governors, through the very active Catholic Life Committee, monitor and evaluate the work of the school as a whole and also of the religious education department, and the chaplain. The school's self- evaluation is a very informative and accurate reflection of a school where rigorous monitoring, analysis and challenge are the norm.

There are excellent systems in place to support the induction of new staff, to develop and enhance the contribution of existing staff and to involve those members of the school community who have other Faiths and traditions. School leaders seek to act as role models and witnesses of their Catholic faith . Pupil Progress Leaders and form tutors lead worship at assembles and provide students with a vision of what discipleship means for life. The chaplain receives strong support from governors, senior managers and parish clergy. All staff at St Mark's are exceptionally well motivated to do the very best to ensure that students flourish and develop into well-informed Catholic citizens.

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

- Find ways of encouraging even greater participation by all sectors of the school community, including parents, in the prayer life of the school.