



Pield Heath House School

Pield Heath Road, Hillingdon, Middlesex UB8 3NW

Date of inspection: 12 December 2014

A. Classroom Religious Education

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

Overall Grade I*

Overall, the effectiveness of classroom religious education is excellent. The quality of teaching is typically very good and often outstanding. The schemes of work are well informed by the curriculum directory and support the students' engagement in good learning. As a result, students' progress in acquiring religious literacy is generally as good as it can be. The calm but stimulating environment, the wide range of artefacts and other multi-sensory materials, the emphasis on all forms of communication, the rich curriculum and the very carefully planned teaching all add up to outstandingly good provision for the students. As a result, they engage as well as possible in classroom religious education and develop their religious literacy very well from their varied starting points. Excellent leadership and management ensure that staff training needs are met well and that there is effective support where necessary. All students feel valued both by staff and governors. The school is driving forward its work to ensure that the most able students have sufficient challenge to reach the highest levels in religious education of which they are capable. It is also striving to find effective ways that will empower students to respond to teachers' helpful feedback on their learning. At the same time, it is looking at ways to refine the P-level criteria so that they more fully show the progress that the students make. Governors have a very clear grasp of the strengths of the school and of where it can improve even further.

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 I*

This is an outstanding Catholic school in its effectiveness in developing students' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing. The Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary ensure a clear Catholic ethos is evident in all of the school's activities. The executive principal, senior leadership team and governors, supported by local clergy, ensure that worship, prayer and sacramental celebration are central to the life of the school. The celebration of the Eucharist takes place every month with students' participation in the preparation according to their abilities. Religious education is valued and recognised as the core of the curriculum and is given a very good range of resources, including a designated classroom. The sense of community and social awareness is fostered through giving students many opportunities to develop personal responsibility and engage in action to support those in need locally and in the wider world. Governors play a major role in the life of the school and show strong support for its Catholic Life. There is a strong appreciation of being part of the diocese of Westminster.

Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, principal, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent one day in school, visited an assembly and the two available lessons. They had discussions with senior staff, the religious education coordinator, and two governors. The chaplain spoke by telephone with an inspector. Inspectors also spoke with students. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire and a telephone call, through scrutiny of a sample of students' work, observation of students in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of Pield Heath House School, Hillingdon, 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

Sheila Nolan	Lead Inspector
Pam Brannigan	Joint Lead Inspector

Description of School

Pield Heath House School is a non-maintained, mixed, special day and residential school for students from 7 to 19 years of age in the local authority of Hillingdon and the locality of Uxbridge. Besides links with the local religious community, the school links with the Uxbridge parish of Our Lady of Lourdes and St Michael. Students include those who have severe and moderate learning difficulties, those with autistic spectrum conditions and associated speech, language and communications difficulties. All students have complex needs and have a statement of special educational need. They come from across the London Boroughs. Sixth-form students are educated in the school's Victor Braun Centre. The school is in the trusteeship of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

The proportion of students who are baptised Catholics is 23%. Other Christian denominations make up a further 34% of the students. Of the remainder, 29%, are from other Faiths and 14% have no acknowledged religious affiliation. Five of the 13 teachers are Catholics but only two teach religious education. Three staff have a Catholic qualification.

There are 73 students on the school roll, some of whom are boarders. There are 32 students in the sixth form. There are more boys than girls and the majority of pupils are of White European origin. There are a small number of students with Black African or Asian heritages. The proportion of students from ethnic minority groups is average and a small number come from homes where English is not the first language. One student is in receipt of the pupil premium.

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Chair of Governors:	Mr Marius Sykes

Date of previous inspection:

26 January 2009

Key for inspection grades:

<i>Grade 1*</i>	<i>Outstanding</i>
<i>Grade 1</i>	<i>Very Good</i>
<i>Grade 2</i>	<i>Good</i>
<i>Grade 3</i>	<i>Requires improvement</i>
<i>Grade 4</i>	<i>Causing Concern</i>

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?

Since the last inspection, the school has developed staff skills in communication techniques, including signing in lessons and at liturgical celebrations. The religious education room is now situated in a more central location than previously and is used exclusively for religious education. The current religious education coordinator is well qualified academically for the role. Of the taught time, religious education now receives the allocation expected of 10% in the main school and 5% in the sixth form. All issues from the previous inspection have been dealt with successfully.

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

Grade 1*

The school has adopted a published scheme which is closely aligned to the current Curriculum Directory. It is not content, however, to assume that all four themes are covered sufficiently well for the students in its charge. Detailed planning and a helpful curriculum map demonstrate clearly the links. Curriculum information sheets are published termly highlighting topics to be covered, the activities for students, and the key vocabulary. Topic key vocabulary is identified meticulously so that it can be readily shared among staff, students and parents so that all can work together to promote to the maximum possible, the students' religious literacy. Words are very well matched with signs and symbols to aid communication. All aspects of the curriculum are carefully differentiated to meet the different learning stages of the students. Some students cover work for accreditation in religious education, for example. Resources are excellent, displaying an exceptional range of creative approaches to support understanding and communication with the students. The study of other faiths is well covered by the scheme of work which encompasses visits and links with places of worship other than Christian. Celebrations of major festivals contribute much to the students' understanding.

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

Grade 1

The school's baseline on students' achievement in religious education when they join the school demonstrates clearly that the majority of starting points are well below the expected levels for their ages. Target setting looks carefully at the best possible outcomes for the students from when they enter the school. Generally students achieve very well, making small steps in understanding and communicating their grasp of topics. Their achievement in Attainment Target 1 is much stronger than that in Attainment Target 2 because of the challenges for the students in reflecting on their own views, explaining their ideas, and in communicating what they learn. They find it particularly difficult to make links and express feelings and the impact of beliefs and behaviours on others. Their achievement in religious education is similar to that in the other core areas.

The diocesan levels of attainment for P-levels form the basis of the school's systems for moderating and assessing students' learning. These are then cross-referenced with the main school assessment tools. The coordinator is working on the diocesan descriptors to break them down further into even smaller steps to improve the accuracy of these assessments. An integral part of celebrating and

capturing information on the students' achievement is through school liturgical celebrations, including the celebration of Mass. There are well-considered plans to share the moderation and assessment of work even further with the partner special school, St John's, Chigwell.

The quality of teaching

Grade I

The quality of teaching is never less than very good and sometimes outstanding. This is confirmed by the annual cycle of lesson observations. A major strength of the teaching is the exceptionally detailed planning so that for every level of attainment in a group, tasks, vocabulary resources and visual cues are very well attuned to needs. On-going oral assessments in lessons mean that work is rapidly adapted as situations change. Imaginative and stimulating activities engage the students very well, be it in their written work on the story of Christmas, for example, or in the exciting 'ginger bread decoration'. Support staff are very well deployed in caring for the students and managing their behaviour. Nevertheless, opportunities for recording tiny steps in learning can be missed as their involvement in assessing learning is less clear. Although students' learning is assessed very well, teachers are grappling to find meaningful ways to give feedback to students to which they can respond other than orally. A further significant strength of the teaching observed is the calm, purposeful ethos, clearly established, where students know their routines and the high expectations of staff.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education.

Grade I*

The leadership of religious education is excellent and is reflected in the creative and purposeful approach to teaching and learning, and in the support for other staff teaching religious education. This is particularly so with regard to the planning and moderation of students' work. The subject leader demonstrates a deep understanding of the distinctive ethos and identity of the school. Lessons are carefully monitored and evaluated and relevant support and training put in place when needed. There is a strong desire to improve further, particularly in the assessment of the students' learning and in the creation of even better resources to further their understanding. The subject leader understands very well the importance of liaison with speech and language therapists and music staff in preparing banks of words, signs and symbols for use in the delivery of religious education. In this, she is very well supported by the senior leadership team.

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

- Build upon and improve current assessment procedures even more so that support staff are more fully involved in recording tiny steps in learning in lessons.
- Further develop marking practice by finding ways to empower students to respond to teachers' feedback on their learning.
- Continue to refine the P-level criteria for religious education in conjunction with the diocese.

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?

Since the last inspection the school has continued to evaluate provision and opportunities for prayer and worship in partnership with students and their families. Staff have been well supported in adapting and interpreting worship to meet the needs and abilities of the students. Links with parents have been strengthened by sending home the 'Thought for the Week' which has enabled a greater understanding of the Catholic life of the school. The school constantly seeks to become a centre of excellence by striving to ensure that students achieve their maximum potential. The students' mission statement, 'Courtesy, Concern, Care', is demonstrated by the whole school community in its daily life.

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

Grade 1*

Religious education receives 10% of curriculum time at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 and 5% at Key Stage 5. It has a similar budget to other core subjects. Resources are excellent and are constantly reviewed and replaced when necessary. Five teachers are Catholic, two have Catholic qualifications, and two more have begun a course. The learning environment is outstanding with attractive displays and a prayer table in each classroom. A designated religious education room in a central location, used by almost all groups, emphasises the centrality of religious education to the life of the school. School leadership offers very good support in developing and reviewing the quality of religious education. Experienced governors play a major role in the life of the school and contribute to the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan. Support is also given by clergy from local parishes. One of the clergy has been associated with the school for more than thirty years.

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

Grade 1*

The provision for prayer and worship is outstanding and at the heart of the life of the school. Prayer and worship are part of daily life through class prayer times, grace before meals, intercessions and assemblies. Students are encouraged to contribute their own prayers which are compiled in special books for use in class. The use of 'Signalong' makes a significant contribution to the quality of participation in prayer and liturgy. The careful choice of songs and music also encourages participation in assemblies where the sense of community for staff and students is very strong. Students are given frequent opportunities for spiritual development through meditation and reflection, often round a candle in their class groups. Visits to the chapel and sisters' oratory also encourage an understanding of Catholic devotions. Where possible, students are engaged in the planning and preparation of worship. Groups lead singing, signing and music in weekly assemblies where occasions of kindness and service are celebrated. Visits are made to the parish church which gives students an understanding of being part of the local church. Parents and families are invited to masses and other liturgies and value these opportunities to share the faith life of the school. Sacramental preparation for Baptism, the Eucharist, Reconciliation and Confirmation is offered every year. The devotion and commitment of all staff ensure that students receive constant help in their

faith journeys. The school is seeking to develop opportunities even further through a retreat programme for staff and students.

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

Grade I*

The school's commitment and contribution to the Common Good are excellent. The school is a most welcoming community which promotes respect for all faiths, beliefs and backgrounds. Provision is made for students from other faiths, and the gifts and uniqueness of each individual are recognised and celebrated in class and through assemblies. The school makes every effort to encourage and enable students to develop a sense of service and understand their responsibility for social justice. They are given opportunities to understand the work of CAFOD through a guest speaker linked to fundraising for Harvest Fast Day. Other charities are supported throughout the year, including Macmillan Cancer Care, the Catholic Children's Society, and Guide Dogs for the Blind. Students are given many and varied opportunities to develop as members of the school community. School council members gave examples of the way students help the staff and each other. One student said, 'Everyone is kind here. We help each other and our teachers help us'. The school is also involved with the local community through participation in events with local mainstream schools. There are many links with schools, churches, synagogues, parishes and businesses, enabling students to see themselves as part of the wider community. The Speech and Language team plays a major role in helping students to communicate in and out of school.

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*

Partnerships between parents, school and parishes are very effective and are promoted at every opportunity. Parish links are very good with the school frequently offering its premises for a range of events. Visits to the parish church of Our Lady of Lourdes and St Michael help students and parents to see the Church as a vital part of school life as does the involvement of one priest who has been on the governing body for many years. The school works closely with parents and families and keeps them very well informed through newsletters, daily home-school diaries, questionnaires, frequent meetings and consultations. The school supports parents and families by hosting a monthly 'Parents Forum' with a range of visiting speakers as well as a Breakfast Club for students who have a long journey to school each day. There is a high level of attendance by families at masses and liturgies. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the provision offered by the school. Many thoughtful and appreciative comments were made on the diocesan questionnaires. Links with the diocese are very good. Senior leaders and governors attend diocesan conferences, in-service and courses offered by the Westminster Education Service. The school works closely with the diocesan advisers and St Joseph's Pastoral Centre to share expertise and support families and students.

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

Grade I*

Leadership is outstanding. The experienced executive head teacher and two associate head teachers are fully committed to the Church's mission in education. They demonstrate this by providing an excellent curriculum with spiritual and moral education at its heart. Catholic life is central to the work of the school and leaders ensure that all aspects reflect the richness of a Christian way of life.

Leaders ensure that all staff have the skills and opportunities to contribute to the Catholic life of the school and there are excellent systems in place to induct and support new teachers. Students are given every opportunity to know the life and teachings of Jesus as well as an understanding of their own uniqueness as children of God. Governors are fully involved in the work and Catholic dimension of the school. They have a high level of expertise and fully understand their role as governors of a diocesan Catholic school.

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

- Introduce a programme of retreats for students to support even further their spiritual life.