



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for **La Sainte Union Catholic School**

URN: 100059

Carried out on behalf of the Most Rev. Vincent Cardinal Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster on:

Date: 4–5 May 2023

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The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops’ Conference	✓
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	✓
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- La Sainte Union (LSU) serves a diverse community and students are clear that LSU is an inclusive school with a culture of welcome for all.
- Students are able to articulate the social teaching of the Church and as a result, seek opportunities to serve those in need.
- Leaders and governors are conscientious in their role as custodians of the heritage and mission of the LSU tradition which results in a distinctly Catholic vision of education.
- Teachers at La Sainte Union are committed to the value of religious education and consequently relationships between staff and students are strong.

- Students value the opportunities available for collective worship and can articulate why this is an important and beneficial part of their school experience.

What the school needs to improve:

- Embed and extend the formation programme, so that that students share ownership of the LSU motto and charism.
- Ensure that all teachers have high levels of subject knowledge and teaching expertise.
- Empower students to plan and lead collective worship across the whole student body.

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

.....

2

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

.....

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

.....

2



The distinctive Catholic identity of the school is obvious to all who enter La Sainte Union. The school motto of 'Each for all, and all for God' is valued and lived out by students and staff. One student stated that the mission of the LSU charism was to 'spread Catholic values in a modern world'. Students understand the history of the LSU congregation and appreciate the opportunities that exist for global connection with other LSU schools through assemblies and the work of the Heritage Group. La Sainte Union serves a diverse community and students are clear that LSU is an inclusive school with a culture of welcome for all. Students are happy, confident and feel valued by the school. Students can articulate the social teaching of the Church and as a result seek opportunities to serve those in need, demonstrated by the recent fundraising activities for those affected by the Ukraine conflict and the humanitarian disasters in Turkey and Syria, alongside supporting the national and global work of CAFOD.

Staff at all levels and in all roles show love and care for students. Staff are fully committed to all students, especially the most vulnerable. There is a comprehensive range of support available including a school counsellor who provides mental health support all year round. Relationships between staff and students are strong; students told inspectors they view the school as a place of safety in which they are well cared for. The school environment witnesses its identity, mission and distinctive LSU charism. There is a dedicated chapel which is central to the life of the school, and Mass is celebrated on a weekly basis. The school buildings and grounds reflect its distinctive Catholic identity and are well maintained. Students value the school's chaplaincy provision and a

number actively seek to participate in the opportunities it provides. The RSHE programme meets all the statutory and diocesan guidelines.

Leaders and governors are committed to a distinctly Catholic vision of education through the LSU charism. They are conscientious in their role as custodians of the heritage and mission of the LSU tradition. The school works closely in partnership with other LSU schools to ensure the charism remains strong and visible to all. Governors are ambitious for the school and have taken action in recent years to address the wider local issue of falling school rolls by working in ever closer partnership with local parishes and primary schools. The school successfully engages with parents and as a result, parents are supportive of the school's mission. One parent commented 'the school embodies everything that I would want my children to know of the Catholic faith and what it means to live and be in line with Catholic values'. Leaders have prioritised Catholic Social Teaching within the wider curriculum with the development of a whole school cross-curricular project. This project shows promise in its formative stages and leaders have ambitious plans for its future. The school's policies and structures ensure that staff are well supported and that there is a tangible commitment to both the physical and mental wellbeing of all workers. Leaders have developed a range of professional development opportunities so that all staff and students can share in the ownership of the LSU motto and charism. This work is yet to be fully embedded across the school and leaders acknowledge that this is an area for further development. Leaders know their school well and include the views of students in the planning of whole school improvements. Leaders are committed to supporting new staff via effective induction programmes and consequently staff have a clear understanding of their role in the mission of the school. One member of staff said, 'the school supports everyone in its mission to put the last first, and promote social mobility'.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

2

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....

2



Students make good progress in religious education at La Sainte Union. Exam results, including students with SEND, show that they achieve well in all age phases and most years. The RE department is taking steps to further reduce the gap for disadvantaged students which includes targeted intervention and support. Students are developing secure knowledge, understanding and skills through coherently planned and well sequenced lessons. Students can articulate the work they are studying and the links between topics and the links between their learning. For example, in a Year 11 lesson on eschatology, the learning was infused with exam practice and real-world examples to develop and deepen students' understanding. Students produce good work that is well presented. There are emerging signs that students are being given more opportunities to write with increasing independence. The use of pupil self-assessment allows students to see how they can improve their work. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on the call of the twelve apostles, inspectors saw students correcting their work to good effect in order to widen their understanding of the topic. Student behaviour in lessons is good and most are actively engaged. They can see the links that exist between what they are learning in RE and their lives, including links to ethical and political issues. Students are also able to articulate how RE helps them to deepen their faith and reflect on their own lives, providing a 'safe space' to discuss sensitive and personal topics. One Year 10 student commented 'studying RE helps me to make sense of modern society'.

Teachers at La Sainte Union are committed to the value of religious education and consequently relationships between staff and students are strong. Teachers have high expectations, and they model this frequently in lessons by supporting students to develop their knowledge and understanding. In the best lessons subject knowledge is good and consequently learning moves at significant depth and pace, demonstrating the skilful expertise of the teacher. However, this is not consistent across all lessons and is an area for further development. Questioning is used effectively

to identify where students are in their understanding. For example, in an A level lesson on arguments for God’s existence, the teacher drew on past learning and used questioning to clarify and deepen student knowledge. Teachers provide students with various ways of expressing their learning, including the opportunity to debate and discuss key ideas and evaluate the answers of other students. Consequently, this gives students both an increased confidence in discussing religious terminology but also space and time for reflection in lessons.

Leaders have ensured that the RE curriculum faithfully reflects the learning required in the Religious Education Curriculum Directory and that RE has at least full parity with other core curriculum subjects in relation to resourcing, timetabling, staffing and accommodation. Professional development is seen as a key priority and all members of the RE department are given the opportunity to complete the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies. The subject leader and the link governor work closely together to ensure that governors are kept informed and that there is appropriate challenge and target setting. The subject leader has an inspiring vision for religious education which is shared by the whole department. There is an ambitious vision for RE and comprehensive plans are in place to secure improvements in all areas of the department. The quality of subject leadership is recognised across the school and in equal measure by both students and staff.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

.....

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

.....

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

2

The school provides a variety of opportunities for students to engage in prayer and worship. Students speak warmly about their experience of collective worship and prayer in the liturgical calendar of the Church, in particular during Lent and Advent. Prayers said by students are traditional Catholic prayers but on occasion students and staff pray in a more spontaneous manner which is appreciated by students. Students are aware of the importance of collective worship in the daily life of the school with one student commenting that prayer is 'simply the best way to start the day'. Students value the opportunities available for collective worship and can articulate why this is an important and beneficial part of their school experience. One sixth form student said that a retreat at school had 'developed a sense of family and inclusion'. All students can recite the school prayer and can articulate how it links to the wider LSU mission.

The rhythm of the school year is led by the Church's liturgical calendar. Students are exposed to and engage in a variety of ways of praying that are part of the Catholic tradition, including the use of scripture, symbol, meditation, and reflection. The school has good links to the local parishes and Mass is celebrated regularly throughout the year. In Mass, liturgical music is used to enhance the liturgy through communal singing and a sung responsorial psalm. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered to students during Lent and Advent. All holy days of obligation are recognised in the school's calendar and timetable. The lay chaplain is an excellent role model and provides a tangible witness to the whole school community. Chaplaincy reps are supported by the chaplain to prepare resources for assemblies and the celebration of Mass. The retreat programme is a positive feature of the wider chaplaincy offer. The lay chaplain has a deep understanding of collective worship and liturgy which ensures it is well resourced and prepared. However, outside of the chaplaincy reps the opportunities for other students to participate in leading and developing

collective worship is limited. The school would benefit from training a wider range of relevant staff to work with students in order to increase these opportunities across the student body. There is good provision for students and staff of other faiths in the form of a multi-faith prayer room. This is reflective of the wider culture of welcome at LSU. The school chapel is appropriately used, available to all and generously resourced. It is permanently dedicated as a space for prayer and the celebration of the sacraments.

The school's policy on collective worship and liturgy is well formulated and fit for purpose. Leaders have sensitively ensured this policy is fully inclusive of the increasing number of students from other faiths. The recently appointed senior leader in charge of Catholic Life works closely with the lay chaplain to quality assure collective worship and liturgy across the school. This leads to accurate self-evaluation and informs whole school priorities in this area. All staff receive professional development on the meaning and purpose of collective worship and liturgy. Through good induction which includes the history and the mission of the La Sainte Union, new staff feel well supported in understanding their responsibilities as educators in a Catholic school. Governors play an active role in collective worship and regularly attend celebrations and events in school. Leaders and governors have faithfully ensured that collective worship and liturgy remains a priority when setting budgets and allocating resources.

Information about the school

Full name of school	La Sainte Union Catholic School
School unique reference number (URN)	100059
Full postal address of the school	Highgate Road, London NW5 1RP
School phone number	020 7428 4600
Name of head teacher or principal	Sophie Fegan
Chair of governing board	Susan MacQueen
School Website	Lasainteunion.org.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	11-19
Trustees	N/A
Gender of pupils	Female
Date of last denominational inspection	April 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Adam Hall	Lead inspector
Clodagh Benning	Team inspector
Catherine Bryan	Team inspector
David Legrande	Shadow Team inspector

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement