

St Mark's Catholic School

106 Bath Road, Hounslow, TW3 3EJ

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 5-6 December 2018

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils



A. Classroom religious education is outstanding

- The curriculum is extensively mapped to the Religious Education Curriculum Directory for all key stages, highlighting where and how the four strands are covered.
- The department produces excellent, extensive resources to engage pupils and aid learning.
- The linear specifications being delivered at Key Stages 4 & 5 are now embedded and the synoptic elements of each curriculum are well emphasised.
- Pupil attainment in examined courses is exceptional and well above national averages.
- All groups of pupils make consistently rapid progress far exceeding that of national counterparts.
- In lessons there is a real sense of mutual respect and collaboration which makes for an industrious, positive working atmosphere.
- Links with local primaries to share good practice and ensure consistency and challenge in Year 7 has had a significant impact on Key Stage 3 teaching and learning.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and plan detailed and imaginative lessons.
- Pupils are clear about what steps to take to improve.
- The senior leadership team and head of department promote and bear witness to a genuine culture of trust and partnership, which permeates all areas of the school's life.
- The head of department's clear vision for excellence is underpinned by a sense of departmental unity and strong ambition for the pupils.

B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- Every religious education teacher in the department is a subject specialist which has a hugely positive impact on the learning and progress of pupils.
- Pupils are afforded their entitlement of 10% at Key Stages 3 and 4 and 5% at Key Stage 5 in full compliance with the Bishop's requirements.
- Pupils welcome the time available for prayer and reflection and respond in a very respectful manner.
- The appropriately placed and beautiful iconography reinforces the Catholic identity of the school and serves as a useful aid for prayer and reflection.
- The notion of service to 'neighbour and community' is built into the mission statement and is an ideal that is clearly understood and lived out by the whole school community.
- The sixth form 'Faith in Action' programme is a special feature of the school.
- There is a strong awareness of the school's history and a strong legacy of service and commitment.
- There is a strong ecclesial awareness which is reflected in the relationships with clergy and other schools in the Hounslow deanery, and with the diocese.
- The leadership team has high ambitions for the school and works hard to ensure the Church's mission in education is demonstrated in an active and innovative way.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

Since the last inspection, work has been undertaken to improve feedback and marking. Exercise books across the school show evidence of pupils consistently reflecting on and responding to marking and feedback. Pupils are aware of the key indicators of progress and what they need to do to improve. The whole school marking and feedback policy is carefully adhered to by all staff. The school was also asked to prioritise outcomes in Religious Studies A level which they duly did. The summer examination results were excellent and in-year data suggests that these outcomes will be sustained, if not improved upon.

The content of classroom religious education is outstanding

The Religious Education Curriculum Directory is extensively mapped across all key stages, highlighting where and how the four strands are covered. A great deal of thought and effort has gone into the themes and content of the Key Stage 3 curriculum to ensure it is challenging, yet foundational. The linear specifications being delivered at Key Stages 4 & 5 are now embedded and the synoptic elements of each curriculum are well emphasised. The links with local primaries to share good practice and ensure consistency and challenge in Year 7 have had a significant impact on the level of expectation on the part of staff and the quality of work produced at Key Stage 3. World religions, including Islam and Hinduism, are taught at Key Stage 3 as a foundation for the study of Judaism as part of the GCSE. Pupils were very positive about this element of their course and valued learning about other faiths. The resources produced by the department are extensive and of high quality, taking into account the needs of pupils and prior learning.

Pupil achievement in religious education is outstanding

Students make excellent progress in religious education at every key stage. Pupil attainment at both GCSE and A level is exceptional. At least half attain the highest grades, far exceeding national averages. Progress scores in religious education are extremely high in GCSE and are rising rapidly at A level. Similarly, at Key Stage 3 pupil attainment is outstanding. The attainment and progress in Religious Education of all pupils, at all key stages is in line with, and often exceeds, that of other subjects in the school. All groups of pupils make consistently rapid progress far exceeding that of national counterparts. Any gaps in achievement or attainment are smaller than those nationally and are closing. Students in the sixth form studying the core religious education benefit from a well-planned, rigorous course pitched at Level 3, which fits well with their attainment levels. At each key stage, the department uses prior attainment and/or tailor made assessment data to formulate targets. This practice is very successful but is not yet fully developed at Key Stage 5 to ensure more personal targets.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

Teaching is always good and very often outstanding. This stems from excellent subject knowledge on the part of teaching staff and detailed and imaginative lesson planning. For example, in an excellent Year 9 lesson on Martin Luther King the pace and creativity of activities ensured full engagement and rapid progress on the part of the pupils. The expectation of teachers and pupils alike are high. In lessons there is a real sense of mutual respect and collaboration which makes for an industrious, positive working atmosphere. Challenging class work is set for most pupils but there is scope to extend this further for the most able learners. Books are regularly marked to admirable effect in line with school policy. As a consequence, pupils know what to do to improve and actively

take steps to advance their work. Classrooms are stimulating environments with displays and iconography that enhance pupils' learning experience. Pupils display impressive levels of religious literacy. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, a pupil referred to the term 'in persona Christi' and in a Year 13 lesson, students were able to articulate the Irenaean Theodicy with ease and real flair.

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

The leadership and management of religious education are outstanding. The leadership team and head of department promote and bear witness to a genuine culture of trust and partnership, which permeates all areas of the school's life. The head of department's clear vision for excellence is underpinned by a sense of departmental unity and strong ambition for the pupils. He works closely with senior managers and the chaplain to maintain a successful and high profile provision for the students. With effective support from the senior team, the department strives to ensure a learning experience for its pupils that is second to none. Continuing professional development is excellent and well matched to teachers' stages of development, both for the department and the whole staff. Quality improvement planning demonstrates the subject leader's excellent grasp of the strengths and areas for development within religious education.

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

- Ensure consistency of practice in developing lesson activities, which stretch and challenge the most able learners even further.
- Review the practice of target setting at A level to ensure a greater level of personalisation.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

At the last inspection, it was recommended that 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. To that end, the chapel has become the focal point of the prayer life of the school and is used daily by the school community. In addition, parents are invited to and attend events in the school calendar, such as the Year 7 Welcome Mass and the Christmas Carol concert.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

is outstanding

Religious education is the lynchpin of the curriculum. Pupils are afforded their entitlement of 10% at Key Stages 3 and 4 and 5% at Key Stage 5 in full compliance with the Bishop's requirements. The significance of religious education is reflected by the time, money and resources allocated to it. The learning environment is vibrant and staff clearly invest time and energy into displaying pupils' work and making the classroom display boards relevant to the lessons. Designated classrooms are situated next the departmental office and the religious education line manager which helps to promote teamwork and the sharing of best practice. All religious education teachers are subject specialists which has a hugely positive impact on the learning and progress of pupils. The department is well supported in improving practice through both internal and external professional development.

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

is outstanding

The school excels at being a community based on Catholic tradition and practice. The chaplain ensures that prayer and worship are central to the school and are a key part of every school celebration. There are regular acts of worship, including morning prayer, and year group and key stage assemblies. During the inspection, an engaging, pupil-led assembly on the Imago Dei Doctrine was observed where Genesis 1:27 was linked to the 1955 Bus Boycott in Montgomery, Alabama. Pupils were able to learn, pray and reflect on the parallels that can be drawn today. The adjustment of the school timetable to allow for weekly Mass and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the school chapel demonstrates a real commitment to providing a full and rich experience of Catholic worship. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered to pupils across the school at key points in the year. Pupils welcome the time available for reflection and respond in a very respectful manner. The key stage prayer books are a valuable resource and help to promote a diverse, age appropriate prayer experience. Liturgical events and daily prayers throughout the school reflect the cycle of the Church's calendar. Pupils are involved in liturgical ministries including through the excellent liturgy music group but there is scope to develop opportunities for more pupil involvement. The appropriately placed and beautiful iconography reinforces the Catholic identity of the school and serves as a useful aid for prayer and reflection.

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

is outstanding

The school's commitment to the Common Good is outstanding. The notion of service to 'neighbour and community' is built into the mission statement and is an ideal that is clearly understood and lived out by the whole school community. Students in the sixth form are rightly very proud of the work they undertake as part of the 'Faith in Action' programme. During the inspection the students were arranging food and gifts for a Christmas party for local senior citizens and earlier

in the term had collected toys for Hounslow Social Services. There is a deep awareness of the school's history and a strong legacy of service and commitment. This was evidenced recently by the lesson time spent at the school's memorial board reflecting on the centenary of the end of the Great War and their former pupils who had given their lives. Additionally, the role played in the life of St Mark's by the long serving premises co-ordinator was celebrated when the sixth form dining area was dedicated to her. Pupils have knowledge of and raise funds for a number of charities throughout the year, including Cafod, Smile Train, Sierra Leone Poverty Relief and Noreen's Kids. Pupils are able to articulate how and why the school's social justice and charity work supports the common good and can confidently cite teachings and examples from Scripture, notably Matthew 25:31-46, to explain the theology behind it.

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

St Mark's is a Catholic school community which has at its heart a love of God, the education of its pupils and a mission to serve neighbours and community. There is a strong ecclesial awareness which is reflected in the relationships with clergy and other schools in the Hounslow deanery, and with the diocese. The school has a strong focus on partnership with parents and this was evident in extremely positive feedback from the parental questionnaires, one of which stated 'the pastoral care in conjunction with the Catholic ethos was clearly evident to us during a recent bereavement'. The high expectations at St Mark's are shared with Year 7 parents and this reinforces a shared understanding of the Church's mission in education which underpins the relationship. The chaplain's post is jointly funded by the school and parish which is representative of their close working relationship and shared mission. Within Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust, of which St Mark's is part, there is a culture of sharing good practice and annually the headteacher visits the 5 main Catholic feeder schools to foster positive partnerships and to speak to all Year 6 pupils. The school also attends deanery and diocesan moderation and training.

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

is outstanding

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school are outstanding. The leadership team has high ambitions for the school and works hard to ensure the Church's mission in education is demonstrated in an active and innovative way. The daily work of the whole school community is directed by the Gospel and the real sense of empowerment for all this engenders is self-evident when speaking with staff and pupils alike. The governing body makes a significant contribution to ensuring St Mark's continues to be an outstanding Catholic school but some systems need to be formalised. The senior leadership team offers highly effective support and challenge to the staff to ensure the whole school community experiences the full richness of a Catholic way of living. The school's self-evaluation is taken very seriously and consequently is a very accurate depiction of the school's strengths and areas for development.

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

- Provide pupils with further opportunities to contribute to the liturgical life of the school.
- Formalise systems to enable the governors to provide further strategic support and challenge for the school.

Information about this school

- The school is a six-form entry Catholic Comprehensive school in the locality of Hounslow.
- The school serves numerous parishes and is based in SS Michael and Martin Parish, Hounslow.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 100% in the Main School.
- The proportion of students in the Sixth Form who are from other Christian denominations is 5% and from other faiths is 15%.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 53%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 9.
- There are 11% of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 20 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 an average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 112 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (9.2%).

Department for Education Number	3134800
Unique Reference Number	10036981
Local Authority	Hounslow Local Authority

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	1218
The appropriate authority	The Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust
Chair	Mrs Margaret McMichael
Headteacher	Ms Andrea Waugh-Lucas
Telephone number	020 8577 3600
Website	www.st-marks.hounslow.sch.uk
Email address	staffroom@st-marks.hounslow.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	April 2014
Grades from previous inspection:	
Classroom religious education	Outstanding
The Catholic life of the school	Outstanding

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.

- 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 16 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended 2 assemblies and 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.

Mrs Nancy Conoboy	Lead Inspector
Ms Catherine Bryan	Associate Inspector
Ms Susan Grace	Associate Inspector
Mr Paul Stubbings	Associate Inspector

Diocesan inspection has four grades:

- outstanding
- good
- requires improvement
- causing concern

Published by the Diocese of Westminster

This publication is available at: <http://rcdow.org.uk/education/schools>

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