

St Benedict's School

54 Eaton Rise, Ealing, London, W5 2ES

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 9 and 10 May 2019

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils



A. Classroom religious education is outstanding

- The school offers a carefully designed and meticulously planned religious education curriculum which fully meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory in a dynamic and creative way.
- Pupils are religiously literate; they can articulate their knowledge and understanding in a relevant and purposeful manner.
- Pupils make excellent progress as they journey through the school and attain very highly in religious education. Their attainment in religious education is as good as, and in many cases better than, that in other core subjects.
- The partnership between all those who teach religious education is a real strength and can be clearly seen in the planning and delivery of lessons and in the way colleagues are supportive of each other to enable pupils to flourish.
- Pupils' exemplary behaviour and attitudes to learning are a key factor in the excellent progress they make. They are keen to do well and take on board the advice of their teachers to continually improve their work.
- Teaching is very strong throughout the school. Excellent pupil-teacher relationships and high teacher expectations foster an environment of mutual trust and respect where all pupils can be successful.
- Leaders of religious education share a passion and clear vision for religious education to be the best it can be. They model excellent practice and continually seek ways in which to improve outcomes for pupils.
- Governors are very knowledgeable about the school and are highly supportive.

B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- The school fully meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference for pupils to receive 10% curriculum time for religious education and 5% at Key Stage 5.
- The Catholic life of the school permeates every aspect of daily life and is clearly seen in the way staff and pupils share and live their Benedictine values and principles.
- Worship and prayer are woven into the daily life of the school. Pupils are afforded many opportunities to plan, prepare and deliver acts of worship throughout the school using the vast array of talents demonstrated by fellow pupils. Pupils speak with enthusiasm of their involvement in the liturgical life of the school.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are exemplary and there is a tangible sense of mutual respect and trust.
- Pupils fully understand that all at the school are involved in working towards the aim to keep the principles of service, love and forgiveness at the heart of their community. Pupils demonstrate a real readiness to be of service to others through their many and varied acts of charity and compassion. They have a deep understanding of their responsibility to the Common Good.
- The partnership with parents, the parish, the Abbey and the diocese is very strong and highly effective in developing an environment where all pupils flourish.
- School leaders and governors share a passion and determination to ensure that St Benedict's is fully committed to the Church's mission in education. They ensure that the Catholic identity of the school is widely celebrated.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

All the recommendations from the previous inspection have been implemented.

In the junior school, pupils have been taught how to respond to teacher feedback and marking. The use of purple pens follows the school marking policy. Staff meetings have supported staff on the use of the 'Can I' statements and a more effective use of differentiation to inform assessment.

In the senior school, a robust and challenging assessment structure in Key Stage 3 enables pupils to progress to the highest order skills rapidly. The sixth form religious education programme has been updated and pupils undertake rigorous termly assessments. General religious education lessons in the upper sixth form are now taught by subject specialists.

The content of classroom religious education is outstanding

Throughout the school, the teaching of religious education fully meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD). All areas are carefully mapped across the key stages. Well planned programmes of study build pupils' skills year on year; a lovely example of this was clearly seen in Early Years and lower Key Stage 1 books where the children were studying the wedding at Cana. It was evident from the work in books how much more they understood and knew as they progressed through the school.

In the junior school, pupils greatly benefit from a religious education programme which is creative, enriching and systematic. They have excellent opportunities to study other world faiths and enjoy visiting other places of worship. During the inspection lower prep pupils had the opportunity to visit the Neasden Temple. The school is also creative in encouraging pupils from other faiths to speak with their peers and explain how they celebrate events in their faith; a lovely example of this was when a pupil from the senior school visited the junior pupils to show them his Puja tray.

In the senior school, the department meets the requirements of the RECD in a rich dynamic and relevant way. Detailed, well-planned schemes of work provide a comprehensive study of the Catholic faith. Programmes of study show progression and are meticulously planned; they are designed to stretch and challenge pupils enabling them to come to an understanding of faith and the connections with life. The religious education department's goal to ensure that pupils leave St Benedict's having fully heard the Good News and being deeply aware that faith and reason are 'the two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth' is deeply embedded.

Pupil achievement in religious education is outstanding

Overall, the achievement and progress of pupils at St Benedict's is outstanding.

In the junior school the tracking and monitoring of pupils from pre-prep to upper prep clearly demonstrates the excellent progress all groups make. It is evident from data that high numbers of pupils in upper prep achieve the highest levels. Evidence from work scrutinies and discussions with pupils show an increasing level of subject knowledge and understanding as they move through the school. The use of 'I can' targets is beginning to be used by pupils for self-assessment and to identify strengths and areas for development. The religious education coordinator ensures teacher assessments are accurate through participation in school, deanery and diocesan moderation events. Pupils' excellent behaviour plays an integral part in their outstanding achievement.

In the senior school attainment and progress at both GCSE and A Level is outstanding, often exceeding that of other core subjects. A significant number of pupils achieve the very highest grades in these public examinations and many choose to go on to study Philosophy or Theology at

university. Highly effective, regular and robust tracking systems ensure that pupils throughout the school are on track to meet their targets. In Key Stage 3 half termly assessments and end of year assessments check not only pupils' knowledge and understanding but also the ability to reflect on and evaluate materials in a mature manner. These assessments demonstrate that pupils are able to respond to questions in a highly academic way. Pupils are fully involved in the target setting process. Teachers ensure that pupils are given the tools they need to understand why they achieved the grade they did as well as the steps they need to undertake to move to the next level.

Across the school, pupils demonstrate highly positive attitudes to their learning. They are confident and highly articulate young people and their use of religious vocabulary in both discussions and written work is commendable. They demonstrate excellent subject knowledge and understanding and are happy to share this with their peers. This was seen in a Form 3 lesson on the parable of the prodigal son where, during a discussion on the actions and attitudes of the father and the elder son, pupils were able to explain their ideas succinctly and purposefully. All pupils demonstrate great pride in their work and this is clearly evidenced in the well-presented work in books and folders and in the beautiful displays in the classrooms and around the school.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

Throughout the school, teachers plan and deliver lessons which are well structured, well resourced, engaging and which capture pupil's interest and attention. They have very high expectations and pupils respond in a positive way and consequently achieve well. Across the whole school teaching builds on prior learning allowing pupils to grow in confidence and build up their knowledge and understanding. Detailed marking and feedback show pupils how to move their work forward and the use of purple pens in the junior school clearly indicates that pupils are keen to take on board this teacher advice in order to get higher grades. Relationships between adults and pupils are very strong which enables pupils to seek help and advice where necessary. Rigorous high quality questioning teases out pupils' knowledge and deepens their understanding. A real strength of the school is the way in which pupils are taught how to use the Bible independently and to refer to scripture passages in discussion and written work. Those responsible for religious education have worked very hard to create an ambitious and enthusiastic culture of learning.

In the junior school, teachers use a variety of strategies to engage pupils including the application of ICT, role play and art and music. Visualisers are used effectively to share exemplar pieces of work enabling pupils to learn from each other. Additional adults are well deployed to enhance learning for some groups of pupils. Resources are used effectively and creatively to promote and enhance learning experiences. In the Early Years' Foundation Stage, the use of puppets and artefacts brought scripture to life and an exciting way when learning about Good News, the topic was creatively linked with the arrival of the new royal baby.

In the senior school, teachers' excellent subject knowledge ensures that challenging questioning strengthens pupils' confidence and ability to argue points during discussions and be able to answer difficult questions thoroughly and consequently make rapid and sustained progress. Pupils report that 'teachers are good at guiding you not just as an academic but in life. They teach passionately'. In a lower sixth ethics lesson discussion a pupil posed the question 'What does it mean to die with dignity?' The teaching of core religious education in the sixth form is on a par with that of the teaching of religious education throughout the school. Teachers have the same high expectations and engaging approach which exposes pupils to a range of Catholic thought and allows them to form considered responses.

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

Both the religious education coordinator and the head of department share a common vision and passion for religious education and constantly strive for excellence in all they do. They are very well supported by the senior leaders of the school who share in their vision. Both leaders have an excellent understanding of the strengths and the areas they need to develop and these are articulated in the self-evaluation documentation. Opportunities for continuing professional development are very well managed and respond to individual and subject needs identified through lesson observations, discussions and appraisals. Highly effective systems are in place throughout the school to track and monitor pupil progress. Schemes of work are reviewed regularly and ensures that innovations are constantly being made to improve religious education even further.

In the junior school, the coordinator actively supports her colleagues through modelling good practice, supporting colleagues with planning lessons and offering guidance on training opportunities to enhance their teaching. She further ensures that colleagues have a clear understanding of the aims for the academic year and that they have the necessary skills and resources to fulfil these aims.

The head of department in the senior school is passionate and inspiring and has created a culture of high expectations and challenge which is reflected in the excellent examination results. Along with his colleagues he has developed a clear mission for the department to be the very best it can be. The well-planned sixth form 'Faith and Reason' programme is designed to help pupils deal with potential intellectual objections to faith and prepare them to defend it in their life after school.

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

- In the senior school, ensure regular opportunities for pupils to respond fully to teacher comments to 'close the gap' are firmly embedded and consistent across the whole department.
- In the junior school, ensure that the 'Can I' statements are used more effectively to challenge all pupils.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

All recommendations from the previous inspection have been met.

In the junior school pupils have benefitted from workshops focusing on Catholic Social Teaching.

Pupils are able to fully understand the links between acts of charity and the Benedictine values of the school.

In the senior school pupils have extensive opportunities to prepare and lead liturgies and acts of worship and new student liturgical coordinators have been established.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

is outstanding

Religious education is central to the life of the school and receives its full entitlement of curriculum time throughout the school. It is very well resourced and the very generous funding allocation ensures that all aspects of development and vision are well supported. The religious education department is well supported by a strong team of subject specialists, many of whom have obtained or are working towards Masters level of qualification in Theology, Catholic School Leadership or Education. This ensures that less confident colleagues are supported extremely well. Continued investment in professional development ensures that results at GCSE and A Level remain very high. On taking up their position in the school all staff are introduced to the Benedictine ethos with the chaplaincy team organising retreat days and formation days for all. These have a positive impact on the commitment to the Benedictine principles of Love and Forgiveness, Service, Stability in Relationships, Discipline, Reflection and Mindfulness of the World Around Us. The high regard and importance of religious education can clearly be seen in the beautiful, vibrant classroom displays and iconography around the school. The beautifully decorated chapel featuring a splendid stained glass window designed by a current pupil is at the heart of the school community. The chaplaincy centre is a hub for pupils to join in discussions as well as being a place of relaxation and calm. School leaders are fully committed to ensuring that religious education is central to the school and this vision is shared by governors.

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

is outstanding

Worship and prayer are experienced in a purposeful and meaningful way by the whole school community and are central to the life of the school. Pupils participate in acts of worship engaging fully through their responses and focussed attention. Areas for prayer and classroom prayer tables, dutifully monitored by the religious education ambassadors, the 'Mini Vinnies' and the 'GIFT' team, are reflective of the Benedictine ethos. The school's very special relationship with the Benedictine community greatly contributes to the spiritual development of all in the school community.

Pupils in the junior school actively engage in planning and preparing acts of worship and take full advantage of the array of talents of their peers – artistic, musical and dramatic - to enhance the experience for all. The school has been fully involved in the diocesan Adoremus project, which followed the National Congress on the Eucharist. It hosted the deanery Mass and launched the Adoremus deanery folder. The initiative has allowed for cross curricular links with the art department in the design and making of beautiful tabernacles as well as the writing of prayer cards and poetry on Divine Praises.

In the senior school, the chaplaincy team provides a breadth and richness of Catholic worship including Lectio Divina, morning prayer, praying the rosary, Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction, Mass and Reconciliation, all of which are well attended by pupils. The school St Vincent de Paul

Society (SVP) and altar servers speak enthusiastically about their role and altar servers are proud to wear their special ties. A variety of styles of prayer are offered including meditation and reflection. During a guided reflection in the upper fifth 'mover uppers' assembly, pupils were immediately respectful, focused and contemplative, having experienced a session joyfully celebrating their journey through the school. A wonderfully strong and vibrant sense of community spirit was tangible throughout the celebration. All pupils are offered the opportunity to enjoy a retreat programme which provide the opportunity to reflect on Gospel values and how they can be taken into everyday life.

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

is outstanding

Pupils are thoughtful young people with strong values of compassion and service to others which is reflected in their exceptional charity and volunteer work. Their spiritual development is excellent and they are highly knowledgeable about the importance of faith to themselves and others. Pupils fully understand that all at the school are involved in working towards the aim to keep the principles of service and love and forgiveness at the heart of their community. Throughout the community there is a focus on opportunities to help others. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their experience of community service such as working as members of the SVP, helping in the soup kitchen or going to Lourdes with the HCPT. There is a dynamic and creative approach in articulating their understanding of the call to human flourishing and the theology underpinning it. Pupils are fully appreciative of the privileges they themselves have but are conscious that others are not so fortunate. This was seen in interviews with pupils during the inspection; one pupil said 'We have a duty to serve those who are less fortunate' whilst another said 'Serving others makes a difference, it's nice to see something small having an impact on the lives of others', this beautifully links with the school motto of '*a minimis incipe*' (from the smallest beginnings). The new St Anselm's Award bursary programme for pupils to be educated at the school shows a deep commitment to supporting others who otherwise would not be able to take advantage of a Benedictine education.

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

Partnership with parents is very strong and parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school reporting that 'St Benedict's is a shining example of Catholic education.' Parents are welcomed into the school throughout the year to join the community for celebratory events, liturgies, Mass, talks and coffee mornings. In the junior school parents regularly receive copies of the newsletter describing school events and the 'Wednesday Word' is sent home weekly so that parents can share the Gospel with their children. Religious education books are sent home monthly along with homework tasks and parents report that 'Communication is excellent.' Many parents retain their connection with St Benedict's even after their children leave the school. The Old Priorians and the separate society of parents and friends are hugely supportive of the school. Collaboration with deanery schools is a regular feature throughout the year with the school hosting music, science and gifted and talented days. Staff from the school support colleagues in the deanery to improve aspects of their own practice including revising and editing schemes of work and assessment procedures. St Benedict's enjoys strong links with the diocese and takes full advantage of opportunities for professional development and training. Moderation of pupils' work, to ensure accuracy of teacher judgements, takes place regularly at both deanery and diocesan level in both the junior and senior school. The school sees itself as part of the diocesan family whilst at the same time retaining its independent nature. St Benedict's enjoys excellent links with the Abbey with pupils from Lower Prep to Form 2 attending Mass every Wednesday while their peers in Pre-Prep 2 join them in the Trinity

term. The Chaplain and chaplaincy team have worked with the Diocese of Westminster Youth Team in organising the schools' retreat programme.

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

is outstanding

The Catholic identity of the school permeates all aspects of school life. Their mission as a Benedictine school being to strive for excellence in everything they do focusing on learning and loving and inspiring young people to come to know and love God and be generous in their service of others. Pupils are trained in service and mentoring and this contributes to the holistic development of the whole person. All staff are excellent witnesses to the values and ethos of the school and this is reflected in the outstanding attitudes and behaviour of the pupils. The school is a warm welcoming community which recognises the gifts and talents of each individual pupil. It is a vibrant and engaging community underpinned by Benedictine core values. Leaders are visionary in developing initiatives to ensure the Benedictine values continue well into the future with a new distinctively Benedictine model of chaplaincy.

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

- To develop an opportunity for voluntary service and links overseas.

Information about this school

- The school is a Catholic independent school in the locality of Ealing. There are two forms of entry from Reception to Year 4, three forms of entry in Years 5 and 6 and five forms of entry in the senior school.
- The school serves the parish of St Benedict's, Ealing.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 51% (senior) and 57% (junior).
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 31% (senior), 28% (junior) and from other faiths is 7% (senior) and 4% (junior). The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 58%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 3.
- There are 14% (senior) and 9.55% (junior) of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 4 (senior) and 1 (junior) have statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is below average.

Department for Education Number	307/6006
Unique Reference Number	101947
Local Authority	Ealing

Type of school	All through
School category	Independent
Age range of pupils	3 - 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	783 (senior) and 309 (junior)
The appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Joe Berger
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Johnson
Telephone number	020 8862 2010
Website	www.stbenedicts.org.uk
Email address	headmaster@stbenedicts.or.uk
Date of previous inspection	16-17 September 2013
Grades from previous inspection:	
Classroom religious education	Outstanding (Senior) Very good (Junior)
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.

- 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, 29 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended 3 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 Angela Podmore	Lead Inspector
Mrs Elaine Arundell	Associate Inspector
Mrs Louise Gammage	Associate Inspector
Mrs Bernadette O'Hanlon	Associate Inspector
Mr Daniel Keene	Associate Inspector
Ms Catherine Bryan	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>

Vaughan House
46 Francis Street,
London
SW1P 1QN
SW1P 1QN

T: 020 7798 9005
E: education@rcdow.org.uk
W: <http://rcdow.org.uk/education>