

Gunnersbury Catholic School

The Ride, Brentford Middlesex, TW8 9LB

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 9 & 10 October 2019



Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education is outstanding

- The content of the curriculum religious education meets all the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory and provides a rich, relevant and dynamic curriculum.
- Achievement in religious education is excellent; pupils make outstanding progress in their subject knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith.
- Teaching is characterised by lessons which are very well planned, scaffolded and structured. This enables learners to systematically develop their religious literacy.
- Overall, the quality of teaching is outstanding and never less than good. Relationships between religious education teachers and pupils are very good.
- The subject leader models excellent practice and staff work collegially to ensure high quality religious education. She has a strong understanding and appreciation of the centrality of religious education in the mission of the Church and its impact in the daily life of the school. There are highly effective and rigorous systems evaluate the work of the department and monitor progress in religious education.
- The headteacher and senior leaders are committed to ensuring religious education is central in the school, and the governing body shares this vision.

B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum is outstanding.
- Worship and prayer are central to the life of the school for pupils and staff and provide engaging experiences of the richness of Catholic tradition.
- Prayer permeates all aspects of school life and this is particularly evident in the five-day prayer framework which has been embedded throughout the school.
- The schools' mission is underpinned by Gunnersbury values and the motto '*Ad Altiora*' – to higher things. This aspirational culture encourages all pupils to aim higher and be the best they can be.
- The school provides excellent opportunities for pupils to develop and celebrate their gifts and talents as individuals and as a community.
- The school's relationship with parents, other schools, parishes and the Diocese of Westminster is outstanding.
- The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school and creating a culture of relentless ambition is outstanding. Pupils are proud of their school and recognise the range of opportunities it offers.
- The headteacher, the senior leaders and the governors work together as the driving force in the school's commitment to the education of young people with the clear and committed vision for discipleship for life.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

The recommendation from the last inspection was to further develop written feedback to pupils so that the excellent practice within the department is consistent and all pupils receive feedback that helps them to make rapid progress. Substantial work has been done in aligning systems and practice in consistent approaches to feedback at a departmental, class and individual level. This includes the use of feedback stickers; 'what went well' and 'now you must'. As a result, pupils are appreciative of the opportunities to reflect on their learning in this way and how to improve and achieve further. A further recommendation was to develop stretch and challenge in lessons to match the needs of all pupils. Again, considerable work has been done to address this through the addition of challenge resources to all schemes of work at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. This continues to be a focus for ongoing development for the department.

The content of classroom religious education is outstanding

The content of the classroom religious education meets all the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory and provides a rich, relevant and dynamic curriculum. The department has invested a lot of time and energy in resources and these are now a strength in terms of relevance, presentation, variety and the impact on pupil engagement. Subject staff know and understand the broad areas of the curriculum and there is evidence of progressive planning. The core religious education programme for Years 12 and 13 provides challenge and builds on learning at Key Stage 4. The curriculum has also been reviewed to ensure the skills developed at Key Stage 3 are explicitly linked to Key Stage 4 and provide a foundation for success. This was evident in a Year 9 lesson on Elijah in which pupils applied their learning to a Key Stage 4 exam style question.

Pupil achievement in religious education is outstanding

Achievement in religious education (RE) is excellent and pupils make outstanding progress in their subject knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith at all key stages. This was evident in a range of well-paced lessons seen during the inspection in which pupils' progress was sustained and rapid. Pupils are enthusiastic, display very good attitudes to learning and are keen to succeed, asking questions about their learning of teachers and each other. The religious education department is a leading department within the school and attainment in RE at Key Stage 4 is better than in other core subjects and significantly above the national averages for boys. Value added scores for A level Religious Studies are excellent. At Key Stage 3, pupils' make excellent progress relative to their starting points. Different groups make similarly good or better progress. A range of intervention strategies to raise the attainment of identified individuals, for example, 'The Early Help Group' are used with effect, particularly in Key Stage 4. The school sets challenging targets for pupils at all key stages, which are monitored rigorously.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

Teaching is characterised by lessons which are very well planned, scaffolded and structured. This enables learners to systematically develop their religious literacy. Overall, the quality of teaching is outstanding and never less than good. Relationships between religious education teachers and pupils are very good and thrive as a result of the high expectations of teachers. Teachers impart their subject knowledge with confidence and enthusiasm; they regularly share resources and best practice and consequently lessons are varied, creative and engaging. In the best lessons, pupils were given opportunities to develop challenging thinking skills, debate, consider issues and articulate how they saw themselves as Christians. For example, in a Year 9 lesson observed focusing on the parable of the rich man, pupils were skilfully led to reflect on their own Christianity in the light of Jesus's

teaching. Teachers employ a wide range of strategies to inspire pupils and differentiate effectively to ensure lessons are matched to learners' needs. They systematically build on pupils' prior learning, secure key knowledge and use extension tasks to further challenge pupils. In a Year 8 lesson on Fairtrade, role play and drama were used to challenge pupils' thinking about exploitative child labour and genetically modified crops, as well as encourage empathy through consideration of alternative perspectives. Questioning is a strength of the department and is used in a highly effective way to probe pupils' responses on a whole class and individual level. Support staff are effectively deployed in lessons with identified groups of pupils. Homework is very well planned and organised and contributes well to pupils' learning. Marking and feedback is consistent across all key stages, however the quality of diagnostic feedback needs to be further developed to challenge more able pupils, particularly at Key Stage 3.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education

is outstanding

The subject leader models excellent practice and staff work collegially to ensure high quality religious education. She has a strong understanding and appreciation of the centrality of religious education in the mission of the Church and its impact in the daily life of the school. She is confident and passionate in articulating the essence of her role as a religious educator in the broadest sense and the importance of this throughout the department and beyond. The school has in place highly effective and rigorous systems and structures to evaluate the work of the department and monitor progress in religious education. Formal observations and frequent drop-ins are used to drive improvement and build consistency. Self-evaluation is largely accurate but would benefit from being less descriptive and more succinct. As a new leader, the head of department is proactive in seeking ways to improve and support teaching, driving and challenging staff to good effect. She has been very well supported by the deputy headteacher and has already identified areas for development and ways of sustaining and building on the department's excellent track record of success.

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

- Continue to develop the quality of feedback to ensure sufficient challenge for the most able learners, particularly at Key Stage 3.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

Since the last inspection, the school has increased the time allocated for RE at Key Stage 3 to ensure full compliance with 10% requirement in Year 9. The school has also recently employed a part time chaplain who has a clear vision for building chaplaincy within the school and who combines this with teaching within the RE department. The prayer life of the school has been developed considerably to include a wider range of worship and prayer. Access to the Sacrament of Reconciliation is now available on a weekly basis for all pupils.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

is outstanding

The place of RE as the core of the curriculum is outstanding. Religious education is at the heart of the school and permeates all aspects of school life. Pupil experience of RE is enriched by the extensive number of activities which promote the Catholic life of the school. A pupil commented 'one of the best things about religious education at Gunnersbury is pupils learnt how to behave towards others in relation to the Church's teaching.' The school meets the Bishops' Conference requirements for pupils to receive the weekly entitlement of 10% curriculum time in Key Stages 3 and 4. The budget for Religious Education is on a par with other core subjects. Ongoing professional development is used to drive improvement in the department as a whole and to address individual developmental needs, including those of the non-specialist teacher within the department. The subject's contribution to the Catholic life of the school is exemplary and its influence permeates all aspects of the learning environment of the school. The headteacher and senior leaders are committed to ensuring RE is central in the school, and this vision is shared by the governing body.

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

is outstanding

Worship and prayer are central to the life of the school for pupils and staff and provide engaging experiences of the richness of Catholic tradition. Prayer permeates all aspects of school life and this is particularly evident in the five-day prayer framework which has been embedded throughout the school. Pupils respond reverently to a wide range of prayer including both traditional, personal and spontaneous prayer. Prayer is led by the chaplain in the school chapel every morning. Staff regularly pray together at briefings and the staff bulletin begins with scripture and prayer linked to the theme of the week and the liturgical calendar. The chaplaincy newsletter provides a focus for prayer and faith in action for the whole school community. There are excellent opportunities for Mass and Sacrament of Reconciliation on a weekly basis. Local and international priests are invited into the school regularly to celebrate Mass as well as pupils being given the opportunity to attend Mass at St John's, the local parish church. The school has a well-established retreat programme in Years 7 to 13, often including invited speakers. It is clear prayer and reflection are an integral part of the retreat programme, but the themes are also regularly reviewed to ensure they are current and relevant, for example the Year 10 retreat focusing on mental health and relationships. There is a culture of evaluation of the opportunities offered through pastoral learning walks and feedback on assemblies and retreats carried out by middle and senior leaders. Liturgical leaders and pupils in all year groups are engaged in the preparation for and participation in prayer and worship. However, pupils' enthusiasm and interest in prayer and liturgy could be further galvanised to develop their ownership and leadership of the process.

The contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice –**is outstanding**

The school's mission is underpinned by Gunnersbury values and the motto 'Ad Altiora' – to higher things. This aspirational culture encourages all pupils to aim higher and be the best they can be. There are excellent opportunities for pupils to develop and celebrate their gifts and talents as individuals and as a community. For example, pupils are awarded school colours for a variety of individual achievements and 'commitment to service' has been introduced, something the sixth form particularly valued. The Church's call to action for justice and peace is understood and appreciated. Pupils are actively involved in the Common Good at a local, national and global level and support nineteen charities including, a local foodbank and Mary's Meals. 'Liturgical Leaders' in Years 7 to 13 organise collections for charities. Pupils can explain why they fundraise and how it relates to the Church's social teaching. One pupil said, 'We participate in charity because it helps other people to flourish and Jesus told us to do it.' The school maximises opportunities for pupil leadership and pupils feel their confidence has improved due to experiences which support their wider formation.

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**

The school's relationship with parents, other schools, parishes and the Diocese of Westminster is outstanding. Parents are encouraged to participate in school events at key times of the school year. While the response rate to the inspection parental questionnaire was quite low, parents expressed confidence in the school's ability to deliver a Catholic education. One parent commented, 'We are delighted our son is getting such a good grounding in religion which complements what we teach at home and what he learns at Mass.' The school newsletter provides an opportunity for parents to be informed of and share in celebrating aspects of school life. The school recognises the parish as the main experience of Church for Catholics and actively explores ways to engage with parishes. The school is rightly proud of its high profile 'Adoremus' choir and the impressive number of Eucharistic celebrations and events across the diocese to which the choir is invited to sing. There are very good links with the diocese; the headteacher, chaplain and members of the RE department attend diocesan training and moderation days. The deputy headteacher has recently undertaken training to become a diocesan inspector.

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 and creating a culture of relentless ambition for all pupils is outstanding. Pupils are proud of the traditions of their school and recognise the range of opportunities it offers. There are effective systems in place to support staff including an induction programme, and booklets to guide both prayer and assemblies, enhancing the contribution all staff make to the Catholic life of the school. Governors are deeply committed to the service and support of the school. They know the school very well and offer effective support and challenge to the leadership of the school. The headteacher, the senior leaders and the governors work together as the driving force in the school's commitment to the education of young people with the clear and committed vision for discipleship for life.

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

- Further develop pupil leadership in the planning and delivery of prayer and worship.

Information about this school

- The school is a six-form entry Catholic school in the locality of Hounslow.
- The school serves the parishes of deanery of Hounslow, Ealing, Hammersmith, Mortlake, Kensington and Chelsea and Upper Thames.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 97%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 0.5 % and from other faiths is 0.9 %. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 70 %.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 4
- There are 8.5% pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 16 have 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 above average
- There is an average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 198 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (15.9 %).

Department for Education Number	313/5401
Unique Reference Number	102545
Local Authority	Hounslow

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Male 11-16; mixed 16 - 18
Number of pupils on roll	1244
The appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andrew Flatt
Headteacher	Mr Kevin Burke
Telephone number	020 8568 7281
Website	www.gunnersbury.com
Email address	welcome@gunnersbury.hounslow.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 & 27 February 2014
Grades from previous inspection:	
Classroom religious education	Outstanding
The Catholic life of the school	Very Good

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 14 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended 2 assemblies and 3 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 Sharon O'Donovan

Lead Inspector

Ms Winnie Greer

Associate Inspector

Mrs Rose-Marie Sorohan

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>

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