



# Gunnersbury Catholic School

The Ride, Brentford, Middlesex TW8 9LB

Date of inspection: 26<sup>th</sup> February 2014 – 27<sup>th</sup> February 2014

## A. Classroom Religious Education

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

**Overall Grade 1\***

Classroom religious education thrives in this school. The content of the classroom religious education is outstanding. The schemes of work are very thorough and specify in detail the implementation of the Curriculum Directory at all stages. Pupil's achievement in religious education is outstanding; the progress of pupils is excellent and sustained. At GCSE the results demonstrate that pupils make excellent progress given their varied starting points. At A Level, both Year 12 and Year 13 students achieve extremely well, compared with national performance in the subject and also in terms of value added. Overall teaching is very good. Pupils make good progress and achieve well over time. Teachers have consistently high expectations, strong subject knowledge, very good relationships with their pupils and confidence which inspires. Where teaching was less effective, the pace of learning slows and the level of challenge decreases. Religious education books are marked regularly. Some pupils are provided with outstanding written feedback however this is not consistent across the whole department. The leadership and management of the religious education department are outstanding. The head of department has a vibrant vision for religious education and works in a colligate style with well qualified staff to ensure pupils achieve their best.

## 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 1**

This is a very good Catholic school that has many outstanding features. To improve the place of religious education as the core of the curriculum, the school has committed itself to ensuring pupils in Year 9 receive the weekly entitlement of 10% curriculum time of religious education. The experience of Catholic worship is outstanding; Mass and daily prayer lie at the heart of the school experience for pupils and staff. In assemblies pupils experience high quality acts of worship; there are very clear links made between Scripture and the everyday life. The commitment and contribution to the Common Good is outstanding; pupils are encouraged to take responsibility, strive to achieve and give service to others. Pupils excel in supporting charities through high levels of fundraising. The school's key relationships with parents, parishes and the diocese are outstanding. The school enjoys very high levels of support from parents and has an outreach programme to local parishes which is a model of excellent practice. The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The headteacher has a passionate commitment to achieving the best for every pupil in his school "where the Catholic traditions of learning, truth, respect and community are promoted." The governors of the school make a significant contribution to ensuring Gunnersbury is an outstanding Catholic school.

## Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent 2 days in school, visited 11 lessons, 2 learning walks and 3 assemblies, and carried out 7 interviews with school staff, pupils and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, discussion with local clergy, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of Gunnersbury Catholic School, Brentford 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

|                    |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| Mr Matthew Dell    | Lead Inspector      |
| Mrs Mary Coyle     | Associate Inspector |
| Mr Andrew O'Neill  | Associate Inspector |
| Mr Giovanni Zammit | Associate Inspector |

## Description of School

Gunnersbury is a six form entry school in the LA of Hounslow and the locality of Brentford. The school serves mainly parishes in the deaneries of Hounslow, Ealing, Hammersmith and Upper Thames. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 97%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 2% and from Other Faiths 1%. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 55%.

There are 1210 pupils on roll, with 10 pupils with statements of Special Educational Need. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average. There is an above average rate of families claiming free school meals. 282 of pupils receive the Pupil Premium.

Telephone: 0208 568 7281  
e-mail address: office@gunnersbury.hounslow.sch.uk

DFE Number: 313/5401  
URN Number: 102545

Headteacher: Mr Kevin Burke  
Chair of Governors: Mr Derek Bourn

Date of previous inspection: 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2009

|                                   |                 |                             |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Key for inspection grades:</b> | <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?**

At the last inspection, the religious education department was asked to strengthen the interactive use of white boards in order to promote more opportunities for pupils to learn independently. This issue has been addressed successfully. During the current inspection a number of lessons included purposeful use of the interactive white board to support pupil learning.

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

**Grade 1\***

The content of the classroom religious education is outstanding. The department meets all the requirements of the Curriculum Directory. The schemes of work are very thorough and specify in detail the implementation of the Curriculum Directory at all stages. There has been some recent improvement to the schemes of work in Key Stage 3, the result being a sharper focus on links to the Curriculum Directory and clearer learning outcomes for pupils. There is a strong commitment to ensuring pupils experience a systematic programme of study organised around the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, the Church, its beliefs, celebrations and way of life of Catholics who follow that teaching. The teaching of Other Faiths is also very strong in Key Stage 3, and in Year 9 pupils study in detail Mark's Gospel. At Key Stage 4 pupils follow the Edexcel GCSE, studying two units: Catholic Christianity and Religion and Life based on a study of Roman Catholic Christianity. The curriculum for sixth form general religious education is grounded in the Curriculum Directory, providing pupils with opportunities to revisit topics studied previously but at a greater depth.

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

**Grade 1\***

Pupil's achievement in religious education is outstanding; the progress of pupils is excellent and sustained. The majority of pupils join the school with slightly above average levels of attainment. The school sets challenging targets from the start of Key Stage 3, and by the end the key stage, pupils have made excellent progress, particularly at the higher levels. The results in religious education are in line with the excellent progress of maths and English. At GCSE the results demonstrate that pupils make excellent progress given their varied starting points. The progress from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 is outstanding. The value added score for religious education results is very strong. Different groups of pupils make similar excellent progress. In particular the GCSE results are significantly above the national average for boys. The numbers of pupils who achieve A\*-A grade is very high and there has been a notable increase over the last three years. At A Level, both Year 12 and Year 13 students achieve extremely well, compared with national performance in the subject and also in terms of value added. ALPS value added measures for the last three years indicate that AS religious studies is rated as good to outstanding. At both AS and A2, pupils' religious studies performance was higher than their other subjects; at AS it was half a grade higher than in other subjects. The number of pupils studying at A level is very high and is in itself another indicator of a very successful and thriving department.

## **The quality of teaching**

### **Grade 1**

Overall teaching is very good; it is consistently good, with some outstanding lessons. Pupils make good progress and achieve well over time. Teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils. Pupils have very positive attitudes about their experience in religious education lessons. They feel that their teachers care for them and want the best for them. Behaviour for learning is very good in lessons; pupils have good learning habits that ensure that lessons run smoothly. Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils; there was excellent evidence of judicious use of praise to encourage and affirm. Teacher's planning is very good and they teach lessons that enable pupils to make very good progress. Religious education lessons are characterised by having very clear learning objectives. In a number of lessons pupils were instructed to copy out all the learning objectives, sometimes this task unnecessarily slowed the pace of the lesson. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and confidence which inspires pupils and contributes to their progress. In an A Level lesson on the moral argument for the existence of God, the teacher skilfully questioned pupils so that they were challenged to think deeply about their work. In a lesson on Pentecost with Year 8, the pace of the lesson was very good, as a result there were very high levels of pupil engagement; pupils enjoyed the pair work that involved reflection on images of Pentecost. Where teaching was less effective, the pace of learning slows and the level of challenge is not as great as it might be as there are missed opportunities for pupils to make rapid progress. There is a very strong school culture of regular marking of pupil work; religious education books are marked regularly. Some pupils are provided with outstanding written feedback that enables them to make rapid progress; this was seen particularly in A Level and in some Key Stage 4 marking. However this is not consistent across the whole department, some marking is limited, in that it does not provide clear enough guidance to assist pupils in making the next step in their learning.

## **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education**

### **Grade 1\***

The leadership and management of the religious education department are outstanding. There is a vibrant vision for religious education in which achieving the best for pupils is at the centre. The newly appointed head of department has inherited a strong department that has excellent systems and structures in place that support teachers in preparing lessons. In a short space of time the head of department has successfully introduced new initiatives that have further strengthened the colligate nature of the department. There is an excellent whole school culture of monitoring the quality of teaching and pupil progress which is well used by the head of department. The head of department has a clear focus on improving the standard of teaching. Staff have been observed regularly and given detailed feedback to support their continuing professional development. The head of department has an excellent understanding of the strengths and areas for development for the department. Excellent progress has been achieved in implementing a restructured and renewed Key Stage 3 curriculum. This in turn has led to an improvement of pupil assessments and the development of new resources. Staff share their teaching resources with each other regularly. Some excellent work was seen in developing resources that aid pupils understanding of their grades and help them to review their learning. The department has excellent tracking systems for all year groups and classes. There is good evidence of intervention strategies that teachers use to tackle under performance. There are plans in place to work with other Catholic secondary schools in moderating pupil work; this will strengthen existing internal school moderation of Key Stage 3 pupil work. The head of department is very well supported by the leadership team with the result that the department thrives.

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

- Further develop written feedback to pupils so that the excellent practice within the department is consistent and thus all pupils receive feedback that helps them to make rapid progress.
- Further develop opportunities for stretch and challenge in lessons to match the needs of all pupils.

## **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?**

At the last inspection, the school was directed to encourage more staff to gain the CCRS qualification. This issue has been addressed well with a good number of staff gaining the CCRS qualification. The school has also improved its induction to new staff on the Catholic nature of the school.

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

#### **Grade 1**

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum is very good. The school meets the requirements for pupils to receive the weekly entitlement of 10% curriculum time in Years 7, 8, 10 and 11. In Year 9 pupils do not receive their weekly entitlement, however over the course of the year with a number of special religious education days; pupils do get the full allocation of time. To address this issue, from September 2014, Year 9 will receive their weekly entitlement of 10% and the school has committed itself to appointing a new member of staff to facilitate this. At Key Stage 5 pupils receive their 5% entitlement. The budget for the department is excellent in relation to other core departments. The accommodation of the department is excellent; they are located in the centre of the school. The leadership team and governors provide excellent support and guidance to the department and ensure that religious education has a high status in the school.

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

#### **Grade 1\***

The experience of Catholic worship is outstanding. Mass is central to the experience offered to the pupils; there is a programme of year Masses and every Friday a voluntary lunchtime Mass. The local parish church is used as an excellent resource for the regular year Masses. Pupils participate in all Masses by being readers, singing, and helping as altar servers and musicians. Parents are invited to the Year 7 Mass of welcome and the Mass for pupils prior to the public examination season. The school has a well developed chamber choir that makes a significant contribution to the celebration of Mass in school. The chamber choir have also sung at many local parishes as well as for a number of special celebrations at the Cathedral. In particular the school co-ordinates the Christmas Service of Carols for the HCPT at Westminster Cathedral.

Prayer lies at the heart of the school for pupils and staff. The tradition of praying is very well embedded as a daily core experience for pupils. In tutor time prayer there is often an over reliance on traditional said prayers at the expense of other ways of praying, e.g. silent prayer, petitionary prayer. There were some outstanding examples of tutor time prayer; in Year 7, pupils had written their own prayers and collected them in a resource folder; in Year 10, pupils were challenged to reflect in silence on 'how can we live out the commandment to love one another?' In assemblies pupils experience high quality acts of worship; there are very clear links made between Scripture and the everyday life; pupils take an active role in preparing as well as leading. An assembly on Fair Trade was characterised by active engagement of pupils which helped them make the connection between the campaign and the Catholic faith.

Pupils are offered the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation; however a number of pupils were not fully aware of this. To improve further, the profile of the Sacrament of Reconciliation should be increased. The school chapel is well used and provides a venue for regular Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

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

**Grade 1\***

The commitment and contribution to the Common Good is outstanding. The school communicates a very good understanding of the call to human flourishing and provides an excellent range of opportunities for pupils to develop and celebrate their gifts and talents as individuals and as a community. Through assemblies and within the religious education curriculum pupils are successfully provided with the theological rationale behind the call to serve others. There is a very successful reading recovery programme where sixth formers participate in paired group reading and handwriting with the younger pupils. Excellent use is made of the school motto, 'Ad Altiora' (to higher things), to celebrate and reinforces all the gifts of everyone in the community. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility, strive to achieve and give service to others and thus work for the Common Good. The school has a highly effective reward system of issuing 'colours' (special badges) with a category for service. A number of pupils have achieved this by demonstrating the Gospel call to justice or by taking roles of responsibility in further developing prayer and liturgy. Within the school systems there are pastoral care procedures in place to show that the respect for and value of each individual is paramount.

There is a dynamic and creative approach to pupils developing their gifts and talents. Sixth form students take part in community volunteering, which involves many different activities from acting as guides at parents and open evenings, helping in local primary schools and helping within departments. There is a pupil led justice and peace group in the school that highlights issues of concern to the whole school community. Lent and Advent are times when pupils excel in supporting charities through extensive and high levels of fundraising, for example by running a Christmas party for the elderly. A very good example of the commitment pupils and staff have to the Common Good, has been in the almost spontaneous and overwhelming outpouring of support for victims of the typhoon in the Philippines.

### **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 1\***

The school's key relationships with parents, parishes, other Catholic schools and the Diocese are outstanding. The school enjoys very high levels of support from parents; this was clearly evident in the responses to diocesan parent questionnaire. The school has a wide range of effective systems which engage parents in the educative process; there is a vibrant parent association and in particular parents are regularly invited to liturgies and celebrations throughout the year. The school a very good outreach programme to local parishes which is a model of excellent practice. The chamber choir is used to lead the singing in Sunday Mass in local churches, this has a significant positive impact on the local communities. The local clergy are very supportive of the school and a number of priests regular support the school through saying Mass and hearing confessions. There are good links with local Catholic primary schools; the headteacher regularly meets with other headteachers. There is a strong tradition in the school, between staff and governors, that it is a 'diocesan school' at the service to the diocese. There are good links between religious education staff and diocesan

officers. There is very good levels of attendance at diocesan meetings and the school fully implements diocesan guidance and policies.

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

**Grade 1\***

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The headteacher has a passionate commitment to achieving the best for every pupil in his school "where the Catholic traditions of learning, truth, respect and community are promoted." The mission statement and school motto are very visible in a number of ways, for example they are referred to frequently in assemblies. Furthermore the school improvement plan prioritises the Catholic mission of the school and the importance of religious education. There are excellent systems for induction of new staff into the Catholic life of the school. The leadership team and the staff are excellent role models for pupils, living out the mission in their daily lives; the impact can be seen in the excellent behaviour of pupils in the school. The atmosphere of respect for each other is tangible.

The governors of the school make a significant contribution to ensuring Gunnersbury is an outstanding Catholic school. They take very seriously their responsibility to safeguard and promote the Catholic life of the school. The governors have high levels of expertise and use this to support and challenge the school to continue to improve. The governors have a very good understanding of the work of the religious education department and take a keen interest in the achievement of pupils in religious education.

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

- Continue to implement the curriculum review to meet the bishops' requirements, so that Year 9 has 10% weekly classroom religious education by September 2014.
- Further develop the prayer life of the school which is over reliant upon traditional prayers, so that pupils benefit from the widest possible experience of the richness of the Catholic tradition of prayer.
- To raise the awareness of the opportunities for pupils to avail themselves of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.