



Diocese of Westminster

FINCHLEY CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

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Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of inspection: 4th-5th November 2013

Date of previous inspection: 19th November 2008

Reporting Inspector: J. Coyle

Associate Inspectors: Fr. A. Homer and R. Sorohan

Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, students and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent two days in school, visited nineteen lessons, a tutor group, an Oratory group, an assembly, carried out learning walks around the school and conducted seven interviews with school staff, students and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, discussion with local clergy, scrutiny of samples of students' work, observation of students in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of Finchley Catholic High School in the London Borough of Barnet was carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework and Schedule 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.

Description of School

The school is a five form entry boys' school in the London Borough of Barnet. The school serves 30 parishes drawing students from fifteen Catholic feeder primary schools across the Diocese of Westminster. The proportion of students who are baptised Catholic is 98.62%. The proportion of students who are from other Christian denominations is 1.3%, from other Faiths 0.08%.

The Sixth Form works in partnership with St Michael's Catholic Grammar School.

The number of students currently on roll is 1156 of which 322 are in the mixed sixth form.

The attainment of students on entering the school is well above average. The proportion of students from ethnic minority groups is well above average. The proportion of students eligible for free schools meals is below average. The proportion of students supported by school action or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The proportion of students from homes where English is an additional language is below average.

Key for inspection grades:

Grade 1: Outstanding;*

Grade 1: Very Good;

Grade 2: Good;

Grade 3: Requires improvement;

Grade 4: Causing Concern.

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

Overall Grade: 1

The overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing students' religious literacy is very good.

The excellent curriculum offered by the Religious Education department is evidenced in schemes of work based on the Curriculum Directory. Lesson plans and resources are created to meet the needs of all learners at different key stages. Well qualified Catholic teachers display enthusiasm and confidence when interacting with their students and colleagues. They are well led, and collaborate and plan effectively which results in very good teaching. As a result, most students make good progress including those requiring support and gain high grades at GCSE and Advanced level Religious Studies.

Systems are in place to track and monitor student progress, providing support strategies where needed. The department is well resourced and Mass, liturgies and assemblies are key elements of the work that they contribute to, in collaboration with the Chaplain.

What has improved in classroom religious education since the last inspection and what should the school do to further improve in classroom religious education?

At the last inspection, the department was asked to strengthen the good practice in assessment through greater consistency of monitoring of marking, to ensure that all groups of learners receive precise advice on how to improve their work to ensure that they achieve their very best.

The school has taken a number of steps to address these points so that diagnostic comments are now closely linked to levels of attainment and assessment objectives, students' strengths are highlighted and areas for improvement are listed and regular book monitoring takes place. However, in lessons Inspectors spoke with students, observed their work and carried out a book scrutiny drawn from across year groups and, whilst marking and feedback is used to promote students' learning, there remains inconsistency in the way this is applied across classes and year groups.

The department should now take the following steps to further improve classroom religious education:

- Develop assessment practice further and ensure consistency of the marking and written guidance given to students, so that they all know and understand what to do to improve their work and make faster progress.

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

Grade 1*

The content of curriculum religious education meets all the requirements of the Curriculum Directory. The excellent curriculum offered by the religious education department provides a systematic study of God, the life and teaching of Jesus, the Church, the central beliefs that Catholics hold, and the relationship between faith and life.

All schemes of work are based on the Curriculum Directory and the four strands of study are mapped clearly against the course content. Departmental lesson plans and resources are created to meet the needs of all learners at different key stages. At Key Stage 4 students study the faith traditions of other religious communities in order to understand and respect them and deepen their own faith. The annual visit to a local synagogue aids their understanding of the history of another religion and the roots of their Christian heritage.

Students are given the opportunity to relate their religious studies to other subject areas and Cafod Activity Days make the links between Geography and Science whilst exploring the causes of world poverty, environmental damage and Christian stewardship.

In the sixth form, the general religious education course provides a programme that links the students' learning about the roles and responsibilities of being a sixth former in a Catholic environment, to putting into practice their commitment to speak up for those who are in need and witness the transformation that can be made. The 'TenTen' theatre programme built into a retreat, gives time for reflection on their place as young Catholics and through the Youth Philanthropy Initiative, helps the students work as part of a team and identify vulnerable groups in their local community as well as mentoring younger students closer to home. Whilst the school no longer enters students for the NOCN examination, the specification is used to assess students' progress and attainment during the programme.

Overall, the judgement is that the content of classroom religious education is outstanding in meeting the requirements of the Curriculum Directory.

Pupil achievement (as well as attainment and progress) in religious education **Grade 2**

Students' achievement in religious education is judged to be good. Students join the school with levels of attainment well above average in the key subjects. During their time at the school most students make good progress including those requiring support. With data based on a benchmark test when they enter the school, students are tracked in order to identify under achievement at KS3. Teachers then provide appropriate interventions, support and challenge.

Attainment in religious education at national level is very good with a third gaining Level 6 at KS3 and GCSE results above average notably at A*-C grades. However school data recognizes that when measured against other school subjects, notably English, students were not making as much progress or attaining at the highest levels.

Assessment for learning has been utilised using level descriptors for target setting to monitor performance and progress. Assessment of learning provides marking and feedback for improvement. Target grades are a notable feature at GCSE with aspirational grades used as a prompt to identify the high level responses required to progress from one grade to the next. Most students were able to use this information to comment on the progress they were making.

In the sixth form, the department attracts and retains good numbers year on year for Advanced Level religious studies. They achieve well at A2 with three quarters gaining A*-C grades, which is above the national figure.

The general religious education programme is well supported by students and attendance figures are

high. Written and oral feedback is used by teachers when evaluating students' progress against the learning outcomes and assessment criteria for each module.

There is a carousel system that allows students to cover different modules, experience different types of prayer and reflection, as well as inputs from visiting speakers. Inspectors saw evidence of young people who were attentive and respectful to a visiting speaker and each other. There was a clear sense of belonging to their community and the support given to the speaker's charity was seen as a way of participating and extending themselves.

The quality of teaching

Grade 1

Overall the quality of teaching is very good and students are engaged in their learning.

Inspectors observed teaching which was mostly good or very good, and some which was outstanding. All teachers have excellent subject knowledge and teach with enthusiasm and confidence. They collaborate and plan schemes of work well together. Lessons are well planned and there is a creative use of resources. As a result, most students make good progress and achieve well. Survey evidence conducted by the school shows that students enjoy religious education lessons and have consistently placed it at the top of the list in terms of enjoyment of the subject and their happiness. This is manifested in their positive approach to their work and active participation in class.

In an outstanding Yr 10 lesson on the Resurrection, students' role played the key parts of the Passion. Participants played out the events based on their prior learning whilst others looked on, respectful of their efforts. The questioning and issues raised by them and prompted by the teacher got inside the story and extended their religious literacy and understanding. Work is marked well and students receive feedback, both written and oral. However, not all are confident about what they need to do to improve in order to reach their target level or grade.

In lessons, inspectors spoke with students, observed their work and later carried out a book scrutiny drawn from across year groups, and whilst marking and feedback is used to promote students' learning there is an inconsistency in the way this is applied across classes and year groups. This is an area that the school recognises as an area for improvement.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 1

Leadership and management of religious education are very good. The Curriculum Leader is dedicated and hardworking and leads a team of subject specialists and Chaplain who are all practising Catholics and are actively involved in their parish and or Catholic organisations. They are, in effect, excellent Catholic role models for students and as well as providing challenge for students to achieve their best academically. They also provide opportunities to deepen their relationship with Christ and understand the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.

There are systems in place for tracking and monitoring student progress, implementing intervention strategies and supporting staff. The team support each other, share resources and they are encouraged to attend or in some cases deliver relevant in-house professional development courses. A recent example being the Curriculum Leader's in-service session on spirituality in the classroom, with an emphasis on daily prayer which was offered to all school staff.

Staff, who are experienced examination board markers, deploy their expertise and insights on behalf of colleagues. There are good links with other Catholic schools and the Diocesan Advisor that provide updates and opportunities to share expertise. The department is well resourced with dedicated classrooms and good use of technology through a Virtual Learning Hub, allowing student access from home to reinforce their learning.

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 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

The school's overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school in developing students' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing is very good.

The school cannot be outstanding as it has yet to fulfil the Bishops' Conference requirements of 10% curriculum time for religious education from Key Stage 3 – Key Stage 4, and 5% curriculum time at Key Stage 5.

The governors, headteacher and senior leaders and those responsible for religious education provide support for and commitment to the spiritual life of the school and the place of religious education in the school. They ensure it is at the heart of the curriculum and this is evidenced in the staffing, budget and accommodation of the department. However, they have still to meet fully the requirements of time for the delivery of religious education. The school has a tradition of strong collaboration with the local Catholic community. Parents are actively encouraged to share the mission of the school in the education of their children.

Prayer and worship are central to the life of the school and a key part of every school celebration.

Systems are in place to check on how well students and staff develop as members of a Catholic community. This reveals that students contribute exceptionally well to the local and wider community and they understand that their actions are rooted in Gospel values. Development opportunities for staff and students are in place to strengthen their relationships and share opportunities for spiritual development and reflection.

What has improved since the last inspection and what should the school do to further develop the Catholic life of the school?

At the last inspection, the school was asked to address the shortfall in time for the delivery of Religious Education. The implementation of a new curriculum model that will allow for the requirements of the Bishops' Conference is still to take place and is currently under discussion by the Governing Body.

School leaders should now take the following steps to further develop the Catholic life of the school:

- Ensure students receive their weekly entitlement of 10% curriculum time for religious education from Key Stage 3 – Key Stage 4, and 5% curriculum time at Key Stage 5.
- Further develop monitoring of worship and arrange for some evaluation and feedback to students in order to determine its impact.
- Provide greater theological underpinning of students activities in support of the Common Good so that they make the connection between good deeds, discipleship and human flourishing.

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.

However, whilst the leadership of the school frequently reviews its provision it has still to meet fully the requirements of time for the delivery of religious education. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to religious education is 8% in Key Stages 3 and 4 and 4% for Sixth Form General Religious Education and 20% for Sixth Form AS and A2 courses related to the subject.

The department is allocated a budget that is in line with that of other core subject areas. It has very good staff allocation and accommodation with six specialist teachers a dedicated suite of four rooms and an office. There is a Chaplain and a designated chaplaincy office, an Oratory for prayer and celebration of the Eucharist. The Governors and Senior Leadership Team provide good support and are committed to the development of quality religious education in the school and the ongoing review of its spiritual life.

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

Grade 1*

The experience of Catholic worship for the whole school community is outstanding. In line with the school's own evaluation, the inspection team found that prayer and worship are central to the life of the school and a key part of every school celebration.

There are prayer opportunities for staff, students and parents that encourage participation and inclusion. Students were observed in quiet reflection, sharing and discussing in lessons, in prayer with form tutors and assemblies. They are actively encouraged to participate in the planning and delivery of assemblies. Each class has regular prayer and reflection time in the Oratory with the School chaplain.

A system of monitoring and evaluating assemblies is in place which involves tutors, Pastoral Leaders, the Senior Leadership Team and the Lay Chaplain. The Chaplain is aware that currently evaluative practice is informal as regards impact on students. There now needs to be a more formal monitoring of worship and some evaluation and feedback to students so as to determine the impact of these prayerful and reflective activities.

Mass is celebrated on a weekly basis, with class groups taking responsibility to prepare the liturgy with the chaplain and planning for the Remembrance Day service was observed during the inspection. Holy Days and Feast Days, including the school's patron St.Alban, are celebrated with Mass and parents are invited to attend. There is a Mass of welcome for Year 7 students and Leavers' Masses for Years 11 and 13 to which parents are invited. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered to students during Advent, and local priests are present to offer the sacrament of reconciliation through the Lenten period; all integral to and reflecting the liturgical year.

Staff briefings, meetings and INSET days begin with a time of prayer. Class retreats offer the opportunity for staff and students to strengthen their relationships and share opportunities for spiritual development and reflection. During the year there were three spiritual enrichment days including an evening session for parents with a focus on the challenge of Christian parenting

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

Grade 1*

In line with the school's own evaluation Inspectors found that the schools' commitment to action for social justice is outstanding.

Students not only contribute exceptionally well to the community but they also understand that their actions are rooted in Gospel values. Both the Chaplain and Parish Priest attest to the range of local, national and international charitable activities. These are variously listed as Lenten fundraising, Advent projects Christmas and Summer Fetes. There is a Senior Citizens' Christmas Dinner and local parishioners are invited to the Christmas Carol Service and celebratory Masses held at the local church.

Students reflect on ethical and moral issues linked to wealth and poverty through involvement with and evaluation of the CAFOD Activities, a Fair trade initiative promoted by the Justice and Peace group, and an Annual Christmas hampers for the homeless school initiative. The Chaplain, new to post, recognizes that there is more to do in respect of developing the Student Voice so as to evaluate the link between the call to service and students' understanding of the theology underpinning their actions.

A Duke of Edinburgh Awards scheme involves commitment to community service, an example of which is an outreach project to support pupils at a local Special School. Working with them, students' understand their needs and also build up their own self-esteem.

Within school, systems support the value placed on community and relationships, by staff and students and reflect the schools motto to 'Grant that we may always be truly wise'. Students are both commissioned annually as ministers of the Eucharist for the school and their parishes. Students representing the different year groups attend the annual Good Shepherd Mass at Westminster Cathedral in support of the Catholic Children's Society, and across all key stages are encouraged to take on positions of leadership and responsibility. Class/House representatives are elected for all form groups to support the work of staff and students.

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 is outstanding in enabling authentic partnerships between parents, school and parish as an integral part of the Diocese, through its relationship with the Diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf.

The school has a long tradition of strong collaboration with the local Catholic community. There are links with three local parishes and they host retreat days. The school's annual Presentation Evening is held at the local church. The Parish priest speaks of how the school has moved with the times but retains its very Catholic identity. The local clergy display real passion for the school with the result that six priests support the school through regular celebration of school Masses, leading parental liturgies and participation in and support for the ' Old Boys' network.

Evidence from attitudinal surveys, provision of parent consultation evenings, student mentoring days and a well supported PTA, shows engagement with parents in a wide variety of ways. As a result, parents are actively encouraged to share the mission of the school in the education of their children. The very large number of responses to the parental questionnaire, some 360 completed returns, indicates an outstanding endorsement of the work this Catholic school is doing on behalf of their sons and daughters.

A Counsellor puts families in touch with a variety of support groups when appropriate, and the Chaplain provides support to the families of students who have suffered bereavement. The school has a strong relationship with the Diocese and participates in Diocesan events, in-service training and conferences. It enjoys a good relationship with the Advisor and works closely with him on the self evaluation process, planning and delivery of general religious education and the teaching of a new Catechists' course.

Most recently, a senior leader completed the Section 48 Inspectors training, the Curriculum Leader and Chaplain attended training on Introducing the new Missal and the school attended Mass at Westminster Cathedral to mark the end of the Year of Education.

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 very good.

The leadership of the school and those with responsibility for religious education share a strong vision of the Catholic nature of education and are deeply committed to promoting the Catholic Life of the school. The Head Teacher communicates this vision clearly to the school community and leads by example. Leaders have set up systems to monitor, review, reflect on and evaluate all aspects of its education mission which inform its commitment to excellence, identifying strengths and areas for development.

Staff are encouraged to participate fully in the religious life of the school, deliver assemblies and to pray with students. A commitment to the Catholic ethos is part of the application process and forms part of the annual Performance Management review. Staff receive training on the Catholic ethos as part of their induction into the school.

The long serving and experienced Governors are fully involved in the evaluation process. They provide enthusiastic challenge and support through a link governor with specific oversight of the Catholic life of the school, and regularly attend senior team meetings, parents events or celebrations. Governors speak of the pride they have in the school and its heritage and whilst finance and resources are well deployed in promoting the Catholic life of the school as part of their review process, they are aware of the need to meet fully the requirements of time for the delivery of religious education so as to secure and determine the school's Catholic direction.



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Reporting Inspector: Mr J Coyle

Key for inspection grades:

Grade 1: Outstanding;*
Grade 1: Very Good;
Grade 2: Good;
Grade 3: Requires improvement;
Grade 4: Causing Concern.

A. Classroom Religious Education

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

Overall Grade 1

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

Grade 1*

Student achievement (as well as attainment and progress) in religious education

Grade 2

The quality of teaching

Grade 1

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 1

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

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

Grade 1

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

Grade 1*

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

Grade 1*

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

Grade 1