



# **Convent of Jesus and Mary Language College**

Crownhill Road, Willesden, London NW10 4EP

Date of inspection: 02 – 03 October 2014

## **A. Classroom Religious Education**

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

**Overall Grade 1\***

The Convent of Jesus and Mary Language College provides its students with outstanding opportunities to develop their religious literacy. The curriculum, both inside and outside of the classroom, thoroughly based on the Curriculum Directory, engages students exceptionally well in their learning so that they make rapid and sustained progress throughout their school careers. Students' performance in religious education examinations exceeds that in other core curricular subjects. Typically, teaching over time is outstanding in its impact on learning. The leadership of the department models excellent practice and staff work exceptionally well together. Staff new to the department are carefully nurtured and developed so that they rapidly match the best practice around them. The department's evaluation of its work is accurate and provides clear evidence of moving on with its improvement plans for honestly identified areas for development. The departmental team engage well with diocesan events, including moderation. The contribution of the religious education department to the Catholic life of the school is exemplary and permeates all aspects of the students' experience.

## **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 provision and experience of Catholic life at the Convent of Jesus and Mary Language College is outstanding. Religious education is at the core of the curriculum and provided with excellent resources, staff and accommodation. Prayer and worship are central to the daily life of the school community, promoting its distinctive Catholic ethos and punctuating and shaping the school year. There are strong links with the local clergy, parishes, the wider diocesan family and parents. Students very actively engage with the Common Good, clearly seeing the links between the Church's social teaching, care of those in need throughout the world, and the call to human flourishing. The leadership of the school, the liturgy committee and Chaplain are firmly rooted in the ethos of St Claudine and the school's motto "With God's grace we excel and lead". The governors wholeheartedly work in collaboration with the school to safeguard this shared Catholic identity and vision for the future.

## 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 two days in school, visited eight lessons, three assemblies, joined the school in the celebration of Mass, and carried out a significant number of formal and informal interviews with school staff, the chaplain, students and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of Year 11 books for this and the previous year, samples of students' work from other years, observation of students in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The inspection of the Convent of Jesus and Mary Language College, Willesden, 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

Sheila Nolan  
Andrew O'Neill  
Antony Homer

Lead Inspector  
Associate Inspector  
Associate Inspector

## Description of School

The school is a six- form entry secondary in the local authority of Brent and the locality of Harlesden. The school serves the parishes of Our Lady of Willesden, St Mary Magdalen, Willesden Green and Five Precious Wounds, Stonebridge. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 68%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 22% and from other Faiths is almost 10%. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is just over 67.2%, seven of whom each religious education.

There are 1033 pupils on roll, with 16 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 a well above average rate of families claiming free school meals. Three hundred and fifty three pupils are eligible for the Pupil Premium.

The Convent of Jesus and Mary Language College was established in 1888 by the Religious of Jesus and Mary, founded by St Claudine during the French Revolution. The school has been in the Trusteeship of the Diocese since 1996 and converted to become a Diocesan Academy in 2012. Last year the school has celebrated 125 years of Catholic education.

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DFE Number: 3045404  
URN Number: 137994

Headteacher: Mrs G Freear  
Chair of Governors: Mr D Finnegan

Date of previous inspection:

2 July 2009

**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 has improved in classroom religious education since the last inspection?**

Results in GCSE examinations in religious education have continued to rise since the last inspection. In 2014, students gained the highest ever percentage of A\* and A grades. The academic profile of religious education has been raised with stricter requirements for those beginning examination courses in the 6<sup>th</sup> form. Despite this raising of the bar for entry, numbers for advanced level courses are again growing after a dip last year. Timetabled allocations have also increased to support Year 11 with the new linear examinations. The pattern of increased challenge and the positive response of the students are replicated at Key Stage 3 with a growing number of students achieving the highest Level 8 at the end of Year 9. Additionally, induction procedures for staff new to the school and department have improved in their effectiveness so that teachers make a smooth start with their classes.

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

**Grade 1\***

The religious education curriculum, firmly based on the school's mission statement 'With God's grace we excel and lead', meets exceptionally well all the requirements of the Curriculum Directory. Programmes of study meet the students' needs outstandingly well and encompass fully the four strands of the Directory. The school as a whole and the department model constantly how the central beliefs held by Catholics are worked out in day-to-day living.

The departmental team work collaboratively to develop creative resources for students and staff so that a deep knowledge of the Church's teaching, of the scriptures and of Catholic practice and tradition are very thoroughly embedded in the school's work. Regular assessments are in-built into the annual timetable with religious education as part of the core tracking of students' performance. Students' progress through the school is meticulously managed as the department systematically maps content, resources and assessments to the stages of students' development, so that not only staff but students are aware of how well they are doing. Students talk comfortably about aspects of their faith and develop high levels of religious literacy alongside their examination success. Students from other Faiths participate fully within and outside of the classroom with some undertaking post-16 further study. The study of other major faiths is carefully orchestrated so that students are at ease with others of different traditions both in and out of school.

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

**Grade 1\***

Students achieve exceptionally well in GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4. Increasingly, the school is providing challenging opportunities for the most able students to achieve outstandingly well. The proportion of students gaining the highest A\*/A grades was very high in 2014. The percentage of the students achieving grades A\* to C in GCSE examinations was also well above average. Students on the general religious education programme have a wealth of experiences to supplement their Level 1 and 2 courses. The department is working towards students having the

opportunity to study Level 3 courses. Students' results in religious education exceed those in other core subjects. Typically, post-16 students do at least very well in their final advanced level courses. At the same time, the school ensures that those who find learning difficult achieve as well as they can.

The school's aspiration for the students when they join the school sets targets that encourage the very best progress possible. The longer the students are in the school, the greater their progress in religious education. This is borne out by the students' work in lessons and by the work in their books. Diocesan attainment targets are used very effectively to support the school's checks on students' performance. Students actively seek to improve their learning, responding to guidance and making the best use of the excellent guidance available to them.

Students develop their religious literacy exceptionally effectively and are able to apply their growing skills very well in their work. For example, the values of St Claudine as exemplified through the students' craft skills, were very successfully applied to the 125-year anniversary tapestry. The school is working diligently on developing further its systems for checking on how well staff assesses the development of religious literacy.

## **The quality of teaching**

**Grade 1\***

The impact of teaching on learning over time is outstanding as both examination results and class work demonstrate. Relationships between staff and students are extremely positive and this engenders a positive climate for learning within classes. The department has specialist staff with strong subject knowledge and high expectations. They provide excellent opportunities for students to discuss complex theological issues as seen in a Year 12 general religious education lesson. Students were deeply involved in a lively discussion on the meaning of spirituality. The head of department and the senior leadership team are working assiduously with new staff to develop them to be the very best teachers possible. The most successful learning seen occurred where students had the opportunity to collaborate and learn from one another. This was clearly seen in a Year 9 lesson on marriage. Students grew in understanding of the meaning of marriage as a result of the carefully orchestrated group work.

Typically, teaching is very well adjusted during the course of lessons to meet the needs of students and excellent use is made of learning support assistants to aid the progress of students as seen in a Year 8 lesson on covenants. Students' work is well marked and they receive detailed diagnostic feedback on how they can improve their work. In addition, students frequently respond to either this feedback or that from their peers. The departmental leader makes excellent use of weekly meetings to assess the quality of marking as well as evaluate assessments and share ideas in order to ensure that teaching remains of the highest quality. High order questioning is frequently utilised to stretch students' understanding of some very difficult concepts and this in turn encourages high levels of interest from the students. Students are also provided with opportunities for independent learning which include project work, creative assignments, in-class presentations and the judicious use of new technologies.

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

**Grade 1\***

The leadership and management of religious education are outstanding. The subject leader has a very clear and articulate vision for the work of the team and is exceptionally well supported by the headteacher and leadership team. The creative and thought-provoking curriculum meets students' needs excellently and results in high levels of engagement and outstanding outcomes for students, particularly at the end of Key Stage 4. The department is a cohesive and strong team that supports each other to enhance the learning of students through both the sharing of best practice as well as resources. The departmental team is further developing systems to regularly monitor, track and

ensure students' progress in religious literacy so that systems match the rigorous recording and tracking of examination work. There is a relentless drive to ensure that the quality of teaching in the department is of the highest quality and this is seen through an excellent range of professional development activities as well as training carefully matched to those staff at the early stages of honing their skills.

Formative and summative assessment of learning in religious education is systematic and rigorous and is used very well to ensure that students make outstanding progress. This is well exemplified in the detailed written feedback teachers provide for students. The head of department has an excellent understanding of both the strengths and areas for development in religious education. Issues are clearly identified and action on areas for development is well underway such as the move to enter more students for Level 3 in the general religious education course. Senior leaders, together with the departmental team, appreciate the centrality and importance of religious education in the mission of the Church and the formation of the students. This was most evident in the conversations with students who were erudite in their understanding as to why religious education in school is so important to the development of their own faith.

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

- Further develop the departmental plans to systematise the discrete tracking and oral assessment of students' religious literacy.
- Ensure that post-16 students in the general religious education programme have opportunities to tackle the highest available accreditation.

## **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?**

Religious education is at the heart of the school's drive for improvement. The inclusive ethos of the school has improved. Cross curricular events celebrating particular feasts, including that of St Claudine, are part of the annual calendar. Links with a wide network of parishes have extended and parish clergy regularly visit the school to celebrate the sacraments. Links with the worldwide religious community of the Sisters of Jesus and Mary have deepened with regular visits from religious from other countries and annual visits by the headteacher to the gathering of the community of sisters. The school has become a flagship for developing its students in the leadership of the laity. Students from all Key Stages are incredibly proud of their school and speak of the ways in which the school has helped them to develop their faith. One sixth-form student has enjoyed her time at the school so much that she stated that she would like to go all the way back to Year 7 and "start again".

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

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

The school meets the requirements for curriculum time in Key Stages 3,4 and 5. Students spend 10% of the available curricular time in religious education in the main school. At Key Stage 5, students receive 5% of curricular time from the timetabled allocation and carefully planned and audited drop-down days dedicated to religious education. This provision is enriched by a wide range of related activities that promote the Common Good. The religious education department has an ample budget, one which surpasses that of other core subjects. There are seven teachers within the religious education department which also has dedicated classrooms all very well resourced. St Claudine's house is beautifully appointed and offers an excellent resource to support the ministry of the Chaplain as well as providing space for retreat and group work. The governors and headteacher offer outstanding support and guidance in developing and reviewing the place of religious education in the school. The leadership of religious education and the chaplain are extremely well supported as are staff in their professional development for the teaching of religious education.

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

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

Prayer and worship are central to the life of the school and form an integral part to each school day. Staff and students are regularly invited to pray and to reflect upon their place in the world. The school's liturgical committee meets weekly to plan and evaluate the schools rich liturgical life, making adjustments and looking for new ways to engage with the changing student population. Traditional hymns and modern worship songs sit comfortably side by side and encourage the whole community to feel valued and appreciated. The local parish clergy visit to celebrate Mass throughout the year and are available to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation. The school also visits the Parish Church and Shrine of Our Lady of Willesden and supports various annual events in the life of the parish. Students talked enthusiastically about the May Procession, opportunities to pray the rosary

and the Stations of the Cross. The quality and presentation of worship is of an exceptionally high standard and is taken seriously by the whole school community. Students from other faith traditions are included and no one is withdrawn from worship. In conversation with a Muslim student, she commented upon how safe and valued she felt in this school. Other girls commented on how important it is to learn and appreciate diversity and to respect each other.

The Convent of Jesus and Mary Language College offers outstanding opportunities for prayer and spiritual development for its students and staff firmly rooted in the Church's sacramental life and devotion to Our Lady and St Claudine. The school celebrates, for example, the anniversary of the crowning of Our Lady of Willesden in communion with the local parish and in the coming week will celebrate Founder's day and the school's 126<sup>th</sup> anniversary of providing Catholic education in Willesden. Students, on entry to the school, are presented with a bible in the school's Bible Mass. For school leavers, there is a special celebration of Mass, celebrated by a Bishop of the Diocese. The chaplain and senior team work tirelessly to ensure a rich and vibrant experience of prayer as well as opportunities for reflection throughout the academic year for both students and staff. St Claudine's house is beautifully appointed and offers an excellent resource to support the ministry of the Chaplain as well as providing space for retreat and group work. The students' spiritual moral cultural and social development is outstanding.

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

**Grade 1\***

The school is creative and dynamic in promoting the understanding of both staff and students of how each member of the school community is caught up in the vision of St Claudine and the church's call to human flourishing. Excellent opportunities are provided for students to develop their personal gifts and talents. This was beautifully demonstrated in the school's recent celebration of its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Foundation and in the annual participation of students as "Redcaps" in the diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes. Retreat days, drop-down days and mission week, fundraising for CAFOD and the Cardinal Hume Centre actively encourage the students to be open to the ideas of serving others and enabling all to be revered and respected in their dignity as children of God. The seasons of Lent and Advent are celebrated with liturgical celebrations as well as varied opportunities for the students to put faith into practice in practical service to others and those in need. This is also recognised in the partnership with the world-wide community of Jesus and Mary. The ethics of the business world and the market place are regularly discussed in the light of Catholic social teaching.

### **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 Convent of Jesus and Mary Language College has excellent relationships with its parents and local parishes. The school's website and regular newsletter helps to keep parents, parishes and local primary schools very well informed of the various aspects of the life of the school community. The support of local priests, the annual visits of a Bishop of the diocese and the partnership with the world-wide family of the community of Jesus and Mary clearly demonstrates the special relationship that the school enjoys with the wider Catholic family. Governors make ready use of the Westminster Education Service and the Chaplain regularly attends the diocesan chaplains' conferences. The department is fully involved in the diocesan moderation procedures and training events. The school is truly at the service of the Diocese and is working actively in partnership with the Church in its mission of education and pastoral care.



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

The head teacher, senior team, chaplain and departmental team are all driven to fulfil the school's motto. The head teacher is passionately committed to the Church's mission in education. In partnership with her team she works tirelessly to maintain a creative and dynamic place for staff, students and parents to experience the richness of the Catholic way of life. Every aspect of the school's day-to-day running is shaped by this vision, the place of prayer, and openness to the gifts we receive from God to achieve all we set ourselves to accomplish. New staff are very well inducted into the school's catholic ethos. The leadership team and governors are a driving force for safeguarding and celebrating the particular gifts of the Convent of Jesus and Mary Language College as a distinctive Catholic community in this part of London.

**Grade 1\***

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

- Continue to explore new and innovative ways of engaging students in personal reflection.
- Explore how the liturgy committee can involve students in a more formal way in the reviewing and planning of liturgical celebrations.