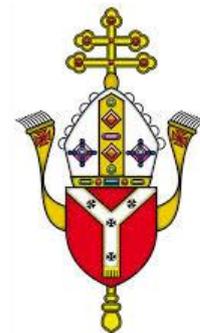


Westminster Diocese Inspection Report

La Sainte Union Catholic Secondary School



Highgate Road, London NW5 1RP

Date of inspection: Wednesday 20 April – Thursday 21 April 2016

A. Classroom Religious Education

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

Overall Grade I

The school has developed a rich religious education curriculum, centred on the delivery of the Curriculum Directory across each key stage. The relevant and creative nature of the lessons ensures student engagement and excellent progress in religious literacy. Students display impressive subject knowledge and are very articulate about the Catholic faith. High expectations on the part of staff and students is part of the culture of the school and results in outstanding achievement at each key stage. Attainment in religious education is in many cases better than in other core subjects. Students are enthusiastic about religious education, and take an active role in lessons to further their learning. The newly appointed head of department understands fully the place and role of religious education and has a vibrant and imaginative vision for the subject. The structures and systems in place to monitor and evaluate teaching and its impact on learning are highly effective. The SEF demonstrates very clearly the school's awareness of both its strengths and areas requiring development and forms the focus for a relentless drive for improvement. Religious education makes an enormous contribution to the Catholic life of the school and its impact can be witnessed in all areas of the school. The governing body is fundamental to the development of religious education and works tirelessly with both the SLT and the department to further students' religious literacy.

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 I

The students are afforded an experience of Catholic life which emphasises the uniqueness of the individual and the pursuit of excellence. The sense of community, based on Catholic tradition and practice, provides the perfect foundation for the development of all students. Religious education is at the centre of the curriculum, as evidenced by the department's relocation to the heart of the school and the allocation of curriculum time. Worship and prayer are an integral part of daily life at LSU and form the foundations of the school community. Students have a genuine willingness to serve and actively look for ways in which to support others in need. The school values greatly its relationships with parents, local parishes, schools in the LaSWAP Sixth Form Consortium and the diocese. The school has developed excellent training and induction systems to ensure staff are equipped to both participate in and contribute to the Catholic ethos of the school. The headteacher, SLT and governing body are the driving force in the school's commitment to the education of its young people and the formation of the whole person.

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 22 lessons and carried out 13 interviews with school staff, pupils and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contact with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of samples of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of La Sainte Union, Camden 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

Mrs Nancy Conoboy	Lead Inspector
Mr Adam Hall	Associate Inspector
Ms Niamh Brady	Associate Inspector
Mrs Lisa Barton	Associate Inspector

Description of School

La Sainte Union is a Voluntary Aided six form entry 11-18 girls' Secondary school in the London Borough of Camden and the locality of Kentish Town. It is in the Trusteeship of an International congregation whose tradition is the provision of a broad Catholic education. The school's mixed Sixth Form is in a consortium with three other local non-denominational schools: Acland Burghley School, Parliament Hill School and William Ellis School. LSU serves the parishes of Our Lady Help of Christians, Kentish Town; St Joseph's, Highgate and St Gabriel's, Archway. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 92%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 2.9% and from other Faiths 1.3%. 3.8% have not declared a faith. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 45%.

There are 1143 pupils on roll, with 9 pupils having statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCP). The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well above average as is the number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language. There is a well below average number of families claiming free school meals with 432 pupils receiving the Pupil Premium.

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DFE Number: 2025401
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Headteacher: Mrs Maureen Williams
Chair of Governors: Mrs Margaret Dixon

Date of previous inspection: 10 March 2011
Previous Inspection grades: 1

Key for inspection grades:

Grade 1	Outstanding
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?

The school has embedded higher order questioning within lessons, resulting in an improvement in student progress and the percentage of high grades at Key Stage 4. The introduction of a relevant core RE programme at Key Stage 5 and extended writing in Year 9 has promoted independent thought and enquiry thereby enabling deeper learning. In addition, the monitoring of teaching and its impact on learning is more rigorous and allows for effective tracking of student progress.

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

Grade 1

The content of classroom religious education is outstanding. The curriculum is very clearly linked to the Curriculum Directory. Lessons are planned to be engaging and dynamic, whilst meeting the learning needs of all groups of students. Departmental schemes of work have been mapped to ensure that each of the 4 parts of the Curriculum Directory is met over the course of Key Stages 3, 4 and 5. Across Key Stages 3 and 4, the broad and balanced curriculum contains scriptural studies on the life and teachings of Jesus, the Sacraments, Church History, World Religions, Christian Living and other relevant social and moral issues. In Year 7, students are additionally given an opportunity to explore the lives of the LSU House Saints and Father Jean Baptiste Debrabant, the founding religious figure of the school. Post 16 specifications both for A-Level and Core RE have been designed with rigour and creativity to build on students' experience at Key Stage 4. The bespoke Core Religious Education programme has an emphasis on preparing students to live as people of faith and explores the values of present day British society.

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

Grade 1

Attainment in religious education is outstanding. Students enjoy learning, and demonstrate at least age appropriate levels of religious literacy. When joining the school, pupils' levels of attainment are typically well above average in core subjects and they continue to make outstanding progress as they move up the school. Their progress is carefully monitored through regular and effective analysis by the department. As a result, their attainment in religious education is outstanding with GCSE outcomes and progress above that of other core subjects and significantly above national averages. Those who require additional support or are disadvantaged make very good progress, at least in line with their peers as a result of multi-agency intervention. The department challenges and supports vulnerable students to excel. Students are well supported in their learning through high teacher expectations and regular feedback set against attainment targets, to ensure a drive for continuous improvement. Work is well moderated and leads to sustained and accurate progress over time. Students' religious literacy is a significant strength. Through a more consistent application of the school's marking policy, students would be able to reflect further on their learning and assess their own progress against targets set by their teachers. In the Sixth Form, the department attracts and retains good numbers year on year for Advanced Level Religious Studies. Attainment at AS and A2 is in line with national averages and almost a third of students complete the course with A*-B grades. The proportion of students who met or exceeded their challenging target grades at AS and A2 is impressive and outcomes have remained strong over time. The consortium arrangements at Key

Stage 5 lead to a different cohort profile from that at Key Stage 4, and the department recognises that there is scope to improve the proportion of students achieving the highest grades in AS and A2.

The quality of teaching

Grade 2

Overall, the quality of teaching is good. The range of teaching and learning strategies employed by the newly appointed head of department is resulting in rapid improvement. Teaching is consistently good with some examples of outstanding practice. The cumulative effect of such daily experiences is outstanding outcomes. Observations indicate that staff have a deep knowledge of the Catholic faith evidenced in their direct teaching and their relationships with students. Their informed understanding of how to challenge students to fulfil their potential in religious education underpins the students' high levels of attainment and progress. Staff have high expectations of students in terms of their academic work, personal development and behaviour which were observed in a Year 11 lesson based on the sanctity of life. Lessons are carefully planned to allow students a degree of independence through thought provoking activities and discussions that engage and interest them. During the lessons observed, it was clearly evident that staff share a common vision to advance the students' understanding of their faith and of the foundations on which it is built. This was clearly seen, for example, in two lessons during the inspection: a Year 11 lesson on war and peace and in a Year 12 lesson on the problem of evil. Students learn to apply the idea of stewardship to their own learning, increasingly taking responsibility for their progress and development of their talents. Students receive regular written and oral feedback on their work, although this is not always consistent across the key stages. This is reflected in the school's own development plan to embed a more consistent approach to marking and the opportunities students have to respond.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 1

The religious education department, together with the SLT, share a commitment to and a vision for high quality religious education for all students. The head of department promotes exceptionally well a common sense of purpose and a strong understanding of the nature of Catholic religious education. There is a focus, already identified by the school, on moving teaching to outstanding by working collaboratively to share best practice, and thereby enhance outcomes for both staff and students. Specialist staff are very well qualified academically but there is scope for more staff to undertake the CCRS qualification. The department is well informed about the requirements of the new examination specifications and other curriculum changes. All members of the team share resources and ideas to further students' enjoyment and understanding of the Catholic faith. Professional development, both in-house and through diocesan activities, are valued and effectively managed. Very good use is made of departmental meetings to discuss innovation, moderation of work and student progress. The subject leader is fully aware of the strengths and areas for development of the department. The self-evaluation was very honest and highlighted the steps being taken to improve the provision of religious education even further.

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

- Further develop the monitoring of marking to ensure both consistency across the key stages and the opportunities available for pupil response.
- Provide further opportunities for stretch and challenge both in and outside the classroom to extend knowledge and learning.
- Support the newly appointed head of department through line management and the sharing of best practice to ensure teaching and its impact on learning is typically outstanding and never less than good.

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?

Since the last inspection great efforts have been made to extend the links with the local parishes. Mass is celebrated weekly, usually by a priest from the deanery. The school has renewed links with St. Joseph's, Highgate, using the Church for key Masses and other events throughout the year. In addition, the sixth formers have been supporting the homeless shelter of Our Lady Help of Christians and the Year 11 organ scholar plays at the Kilburn parish.

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

Grade 1

Following adjustments made at the start of the academic year, the curriculum time of 10% for Religious Education at Key Stages 3 and 4, and 5% for sixth form general religious education fully complies with the Bishops' Conference requirements. The school views religious education as the core of the curriculum and, as such, time, money and resources are allocated in accordance with this status. Its generous annual budget is in line with or exceeds other core areas. All teachers, including those new to the school, are well supported in improving their practice in the teaching of religious education and regularly attend diocesan in-service training. The newly appointed subject leader is supported effectively by senior leaders and experienced postholders and there are sensitive arrangements in place for the induction of all staff, including those from non-Christian faiths, in the Catholic life of the school. The department is one of the highest performing in the school and is at the forefront of whole school development. It is well supported by the headteacher and, through its support for colleagues in the preparation of Masses, assemblies and reconciliation services, makes a major contribution to the wider Catholic life of the school. The place of religious education is well established at the heart of the school in that the department is now situated largely in one building and in close proximity to the chaplain and chapel. The accommodation is well maintained to a high standard but greater attention could be given to display materials. The governors play an integral role in developing and reviewing the place of religious education in the school. The RE link governor lends tireless support to the department including conducting paired learning walks, attending meetings and undertaking training.

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

Grade 1

The experience of Catholic worship is outstanding. Worship and prayer are fundamental to the school's understanding of itself as a Catholic school. Creative liturgies are held at appropriate points in the Church's calendar and Mass is celebrated weekly in the school's beautiful chapel. The school's sacristan takes great care to tend the Chapel, further highlighting the primacy of worship in the school. The richness of the Catholic tradition is further enhanced by the very visible presence of the LSU sisters around the school. The intergenerational interaction between the students and sisters and the mutual respect and affection so clearly evident embodies the ethos of the school. There is scope for students to have more opportunities to plan Eucharistic celebrations and liturgies. The school day begins and ends with prayer. In tutor time, students are able to offer personal petitions and take the lead with prayer. In addition, staff are invited to take part in a weekly prayer

group. The school's Lenten and Easter prayer booklet was particularly impressive and was well received by the students. Some monitoring of prayer and worship takes place but this could be extended to ensure the best possible experience for all. In the past, all students were offered the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Lent and Advent; however, this option was not available to all students this year. The school is aware of the need to address this and has a plan in place to ensure all pupils can regularly receive the Sacrament. This year's retreat programme focused on 'The Word'. It covered all year groups and was received positively by students. The chaplain plays a significant role and has a very positive impact on the Catholic life of the school. Her concern for the understanding of and involvement in Catholic liturgy by all students is clear and she plans accordingly. Particularly impressive is the chaplain's bereavement support group which provides invaluable support to students who have lost loved ones.

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

Grade I

The school's commitment to the Common Good is outstanding. Its motto of *'Each for all and all for God'* is clearly understood and lived out by the school community. Students speak with pride about the school's fundraising activities for the LSU Tanzania project, Cafod, HCTP and several other local and national causes. Students take a leading role, through the house system, in deciding when and which charities to fundraise for. Students have a strong understanding of what it means to serve and strive for social justice. The North London Citizens project that the chaplain has been promoting resonates very strongly with students. They are able to articulate how and why the school's social justice and charity work supports the Common Good and can confidently cite teachings and examples from the life of Jesus and LSU founder, Father Jean Baptiste Debrabant in direct relation to it.

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 I

The school's partnership with key stakeholders is outstanding. Last year the school has appointed a Key Stage 3 Transition Officer to improve liaison with parents and carers. Parents and carers are invited to attend a number of key events which focus on the formation of young people within the charism of LSU order. Communication with parents and carers has been further improved by the implementation of the Firefly VLE and app. The parent survey carried out for this inspection demonstrates extremely high levels of satisfaction. The school issues the same survey at every parents' evening so it is well aware of parents' views and concerns, if any. The school has close links with local parishes, with priests from the deanery celebrating Mass on a weekly basis. The headteacher plays an active role in supporting Catholic schools in the diocese, specifically by mentoring newly appointed head teachers. Within the borough of Camden, the head teacher takes a leading role at network meetings. Staff and governors regularly attend training events run by the diocese.

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

Grade I

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The leadership team has high ambitions for the school and works hard to ensure the

Church's mission in education is demonstrated in a dynamic and creative way. The daily work of the whole school community is directed by the mission statement and motto '*Each for all and all for God*'. The annual staff induction to the Catholic identity of LSU provides an excellent experience for new staff to be introduced into the aims of Catholic education in general and the charism of the LSU order in particular. These themes are revisited frequently at meetings throughout the year. The governing body makes a significant contribution to ensuring LSU continues to be an outstanding Catholic school. The chair of governors is exceptionally knowledgeable about the school and is passionate about holistic Catholic education. The governing body offers highly effective support and challenge to the leadership to ensure the pupils and staff experience the full richness of a Catholic way of living. The school's self-evaluation is taken very seriously and consequently is a very accurate depiction of the school's strengths and areas for development.

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

- Provide more opportunities for formal monitoring and evaluation of the prayer and liturgical life of the school.
- Provide all students with the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Advent and Lent.