

# Bishop Challoner Girls' School

352, Commercial Road, London E1 0LB

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 11-12 January 2017



## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### A. Classroom religious education is outstanding

- Since the last inspection the department has made very good progress and has improved significantly on a number of issues such as marking, which is now a key strength.
- The content of the classroom religious education is outstanding. There has been a major overhaul of the Key Stage 3 curriculum; with the result that there is now in place much more rigorous schemes of work that fully met the Curriculum Directory.
- Pupils' achievement in religious education is outstanding; in particular the high levels of disadvantaged pupils make excellent progress. Different groups of pupils make rapid and sustained progress in religious education. The girls' GCSE results are excellent.
- The results for A-level have significantly improved; high teacher expectation and engagement have led to these excellent results.
- Pupils' attitudes to religious education are very positive.
- The achievement of pupils both at GCSE and A-level is excellent particularly in comparison to other subjects in the school.
- The quality of teaching is judged to be consistently good with some examples of outstanding teaching.
- Teachers know their pupils well and the relationships that staff have developed are excellent; there is strong behaviour for learning.
- The quality of the leadership and management of religious education is outstanding. The subject leader has created a culture of self-reflection and improvement in which all staff have a shared vision to raise standards.

### B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum is outstanding. The school now fully meets the requirements for pupils to receive the weekly entitlement of 10% curriculum time as directed by the Bishops of England and Wales.
- The experience of Catholic worship for the whole school community is outstanding and clearly central to the life of the school.
- Tutor time prayer is characterised by respectful attitudes of pupils and assemblies are well ordered and provide pupils with a rich time of reflection and prayer.
- The school's commitment to the Common Good is outstanding. The pupils can articulate and demonstrate with pride how they contribute to the local, national and global community through both action and prayer.
- The partnership between parents, school and parish is outstanding. Relationships with local parish are very good and the school is strongly committed to working with the diocese.
- The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The recently appointed executive headteacher has made a significant impact on improving the status of religious education in the school as well as continuing to promote the Catholic life of the school.
- From the recent diocesan parent questionnaire, a parent succinctly commented 'In the past when I visited the school my impression was that of a good secondary school whereas now I see a very good Catholic school.'

## A. Classroom Religious Education

### What has improved since the last inspection?

In the previous inspection, the religious education department was challenged to “improve the quality of teaching and progress students make, so that they are consistently good or better and to continue to raise standards”. The department has made very good progress in addressing these two main issues and the seven subsequent sub-targets. For example, at Key Stage 3 pupils now receive their full entitlement to 10% curriculum time in religious education. In another area, the quality of marking has significantly improved and as such is now a key strength of the department. The pupils consistently receive accurate and helpful advice that helps them to develop their learning. Since the last inspection the department has a much more stable staffing profile and has demonstrated that it has the capacity to sustain at an outstanding level.

### The content of classroom religious education is outstanding

The content of the classroom religious education is outstanding. There has been a major overhaul of the Key Stage 3 curriculum with the result that there are now in place much more rigorous schemes of work that fully meet the Curriculum Directory. The curriculum is designed to ensure 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 an integral feature of the curriculum that supports the aim of fostering interfaith dialogue. The department has been proactive in engaging parents with the content of the curriculum through the ‘Welcome to RE’ evening held for Year 7 parents. The AQA examination course is used for GCSE; studying Catholic Christianity, Judaism and perspectives on faith. There has been a clear commitment to develop staff confidence in the new GCSE curriculum through a combination of in-house sessions as well as attending appropriate professional development opportunities. At A-level the examination course followed is OCR and there is a stimulating programme for Core RE provision within the sixth form.

### Pupil achievement in religious education is outstanding

Pupils’ achievement in religious education is outstanding; in particular the high levels of disadvantaged pupils make excellent progress. Different groups of pupils make rapid and sustained progress in religious education. The girls’ GCSE results are excellent. At Key Stage 3 pupils make excellent progress which is based upon a thorough assessment system. Pupils’ work is regularly moderated and as a result staff have high levels of confidence in supporting pupils in further improving their work. The department is data rich and this is used well in setting appropriate targets. The results for A-level have significantly improved; high teacher expectation and engagement have led to these excellent results. Pupils’ attitudes to religious education are very positive. The achievement of pupils both at GCSE and A-level is excellent particularly in comparison to other subjects in the school. These high results are a very good improvement from the last diocesan inspection.

### The quality of teaching is good

The quality of teaching is judged to be consistently good with some examples of outstanding teaching. During the inspection the lessons seen supported the school’s own judgement about the department. Teachers have high levels of subject knowledge and expertise that lead to pupils making good progress in lessons. In a Key Stage 4 lesson on the evidence for the Trinity in the Bible, there were high teacher expectations that challenged pupil thinking which supported pupils in articulating their own views. Teachers know their pupils well and the relationships that staff have developed are excellent; there is strong behaviour for learning. In a Key Stage 3 lesson on the Ten Commandments the clarity of instruction created a positive environment in which the pupils flourished. Where teaching was less effective, the level of challenge was not at an appropriate level, as a result the pace slows and pupils do not make rapid progress. There was more scope in the

lessons seen for collaborative learning between peers, as sometimes teacher talk dominated with over explanation. Marking is very thorough and consistent; this is a key strength of the department. Pupils take great pride in their work and respond well to the written feedback their teachers give them. Where teaching is strong, the well-judged pace of the lesson enables pupils to make rapid progress. Staff can accurately self-assess their own teaching and have a very good awareness of their strengths and areas for development.

**The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education**

**is outstanding**

The quality of the leadership and management of religious education is outstanding. There has been significant improvement in all areas of religious education since the last inspection. The department has a strong team of professionals that not only focus on teaching good or better lessons but also make a clear contribution to the Catholic life of the school. The subject leader for religious education has a clear vision of the academic value of the subject as well as the challenge of preparing young people for the demands of religious commitment in daily life. RE teachers are exceptionally well supported in developing their subject knowledge through continuing professional development. The subject leader has created a culture of self-reflection and improvement in which all staff have a shared vision to raise standards. There are highly effective systems in place for tracking and monitoring that ensures there are high levels of consistency. The subject leader led training on leadership and management for other middle leaders within the school. The department self-evaluation is robust; the subject leader has an excellent understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement. The subject leader has received excellent support from the leadership team and governors. This is a vibrant department.

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

- To further enhance the religious education curriculum develop a range of enrichment visits.
- Increase the pace, range and scope of activities to enhance pupil progress.

## B. The Catholic life of the school

### What has improved since the last inspection?

In the last inspection the school was targeted to “to strengthen the liturgical programme by: appointing a chaplain, encouraging a higher participation in the prayer opportunities throughout the school and re-establish the retreat programme.” The school has made very good progress in addressing these objectives. The school has appointed a chaplain who has put in place a growing retreat programme for pupils and staff. There are now higher levels of participation of pupils in prayer opportunities however there is scope to go even further.

### The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

**is outstanding**

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum is outstanding. The school now fully meets the requirements for pupils to receive the weekly entitlement of 10% curriculum time as directed by the Bishops of England and Wales. The recent changes to the curriculum plan have ensured that the requirements are fully met. The newly appointed headteacher provides excellent support and guidance to the head of faculty for religious education and has actively promoted the department within the school.

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

**is outstanding**

The experience of Catholic worship for the whole school community is outstanding and clearly central to the life of the school. The liturgical year is the foundation of all experiences and opportunities for worship. There are extensive opportunities for worship that reflect the richness of Catholic tradition. Tutor time prayer is characterised by respectful attitudes of pupils and assemblies are well ordered and provide pupils with a rich time of reflection and prayer. There is further scope for pupils to be more involved in the planning and delivery of worship. The newly commissioned chapel has provided an excellent focus for private prayer, although its size inhibits greater numbers of pupils being involved in voluntary Mass. The role of the chaplain has greatly strengthened the spiritual life of the school and the governors' Catholic life committee recognises the enormous potential to develop this further and is committed to prioritising this. The chaplaincy team, involving staff from all facilities and faiths, has enabled the school to introduce a number of initiatives and reach out to the wider community. The liturgical and sacramental life of the school is strongly supported by deanery clergy, including from overseas chaplaincies. Staff and students of other faiths are invited to be involved in all aspects of the Catholic life of the school and given opportunities and space to pray and celebrate their own faith traditions.

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

**is outstanding**

The school's commitment to the Common Good is outstanding. The mission statement of “Christ at the centre” is clearly evident in the range of opportunities for pupils to contribute to. The pupils can articulate and demonstrate with pride how they contribute to the local, national and global community through both action and prayer. Staff are excellent role models for pupils and have very good relationships with pupils. The sixth form students who are members of the justice and peace group are greatly valued by staff and have had a significant impact on the life of the school. As a group they have had the responsibility for selecting the charities and promoting support for them through assemblies. Pupils are given many opportunities to be of service around the school and in their fundraising for a wide variety of charities, for example, the local St Francis Family Centre, Sylhet Aid and Cafod. There is a strong partnership with ZOCS School in Zambia which has led to regular opportunities to share prayer. This partnership makes a strong positive contribution to the

spiritual and moral development of pupils. The school is a warm and welcoming community which recognises the gifts and talents of each individual pupil that are nurtured and facilitated to grow and flourish.

**The partnership with parents, school and parish, and collaboration as an integral part of the Diocese through its relationship with the Diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf**

**is outstanding**

The partnership between parents, school and parish is outstanding. Relationships with parents begin early in the school life of students. The annual summer school and the summer fun day are testimony to the creative ways in which the school tries to develop its relationships with parents. The school however does recognise that it needs to further develop its relationships with some parents who are hard to reach and has ambitious plans to develop an App which will facilitate this. The school has forged links with local Islamic schools and is part of the Three Faith Schools initiative to further develop its relationship within the local community. There is further scope of the religious education department to develop an enrichment programme of visits that will have the effect of enhancing these links. The relationship with the local parish is very good and the school is strongly committed to working with the diocese. School leaders, including the school chaplain, are regularly involved in diocesan events and meetings which help to promote the school across the community. Staff are regularly working with other local schools as well as other diocesan schools.

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

**is outstanding**

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The recently appointed executive headteacher has made a significant impact on improving the status of religious education in the school as well as continuing to promote the Catholic life of the school. From the recent diocesan parent questionnaire, a parent succinctly commented 'In the past when I visited the school my impression was that of a good secondary school whereas now I see a very good Catholic school.' This is a testament to the work of the school's senior leaders and chaplain to ensure that the school's mission statement, 'Christ at the centre', permeates all aspects of school life from policy to every day practice. The executive headteacher has a dynamic vision for the school that is grounded in the Church's mission. There is a clear drive and motivation for all pupils to succeed and make outstanding progress. The short video embedded on the current website demonstrates this vision and is an example of good practice. The school self-evaluation is highly accurate and as a result the school's improvement plan is a genuine vehicle to further develop the Catholic life of the school. Within the plan the school has committed itself to reviewing the mission statement and engage in a process that engages the whole community. There is scope for developing the profile of the school's patron so that pupils have a greater awareness of the example and achievements of Bishop Challoner. There are very effective systems and support in place for the induction of new staff into the Catholic life of the school. The chair of governors and his team of highly skilled governors work very effectively with the leadership team in safeguarding and promoting the Catholic life of the school. The governors make an excellent contribution to ensuring that this school is an outstanding Catholic school.

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

- To further develop parental engagement so that more parents are empowered to support their children's education.
- To further develop pupil engagement in the planning and delivery of worship.
- To further develop by involving the community in the next review of the mission statement.

## Information about this school

- The school is a seven form entry Catholic school in the locality of Tower Hamlets.
- The school serves the parishes of St Mary and St Michael's, Commercial Road; Ss Mary and Joseph, Poplar; Our Lady Immaculate, Limehouse; The Guardian Angels, Mile End; in the deanery of Tower Hamlets, as well as a large number of other parishes from the wider area.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 47%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 29% and from other faiths is 18%. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 37%.
- There are 10% of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 5 have statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is above average.
- There is a well above average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 390 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (43%).

<b>Department for Education Number</b>	211 4726
<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	100978
<b>Local Authority</b>	Tower Hamlets

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary Aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11-18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	11-16 female, mixed sixth form
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	905
<b>The appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Tony Mackersie
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Niamh Arnull
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7791 9500
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.bishopchallonerfederation.towerhamlets.sch.uk">www.bishopchallonerfederation.towerhamlets.sch.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:dwhelan@bishop.towerhamlets.sch.uk">dwhelan@bishop.towerhamlets.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	25 May 2011
<b>Grade from previous inspection</b>	Good

## Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out (i) under the requirements of the Canon 806 and (ii) in accordance with the Framework for Diocesan Inspections 2015 approved by the Archbishop of Westminster and (iii) under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

- The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection.
- During the inspection 23 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended nine acts of worship.
- Meetings were held with school staff, pupils and governors.
- Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

## Inspection Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

## Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

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Mrs Sharon O'Donovan	Associate Inspector
Miss Catherine Byrant	Associate Inspector
Miss Deirdre McHugh	Associate Inspector
Mrs Angela Podmore	Associate Inspector

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