

Westminster Diocese Inspection Report

St Richard Reynolds Catholic High School

Clifden Road, Twickenham, London, TW1 4LT

Date of inspection: 9 -10 March 2016



A. Classroom Religious Education

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

Overall Grade I

Pupils at St Richard Reynolds Catholic High School are provided for excellently through the very rich religious education curriculum. They are encouraged to 'see the good things of the Lord' in their academic work as much as in the Catholic life of the school. They respond enthusiastically to the work in lessons which is very well informed by the Curriculum Directory and enhanced by imaginative resources of all kinds as well as vibrant and typically outstanding teaching. Attainment in religious education is excellent and rates of progress are fast. Checks on pupils' learning and moderation of their work have been built into the cycle of the school year. Marking is very regular although the consistency of the quality is not yet fully in place. Feedback to pupils is always generous in its praise but not all staff are yet fully skilled in providing the best possible guidance to help pupils advance their learning. The head teacher and governors give high priority to religious education and support the department very well in its outstanding contribution to the Catholic life of the school. Governors, and many members of the clergy, are actively involved in supporting the school in developing the pupils' religious literacy. In discussion, governors demonstrated a very thorough understanding of the next steps for the school in classroom religious education.

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 effectiveness of the senior leadership team and governing body is outstanding in actively promoting the distinctive Catholic ethos of the school. All share a clear vision for its future contribution to Catholic education within the local authority and diocese. Religious education is clearly at the centre of the curriculum and has a tangible impact upon the community, helping staff and pupils to frame their lives through faith and the Catholic tradition. The experience of Catholic worship in the life of the school is outstanding with numerous opportunities for communal and individual prayer. Pupils clearly put their faith into action and live the call to human flourishing for all especially those most in need. This call to action is supported by the religious education curriculum and through exploring concepts of servant leadership and the core values at the centre of the kingdom of God. Pupils actively live the schools motto to 'see the good things of the Lord' and to love their neighbour as themselves. Pupils spoke passionately about the joy they feel in supporting younger pupils in the primary school; the link between the high school and primary school is a powerful tool in fostering the Common Good and call to service in the hearts and minds of this distinctive Catholic community. Governors work determinedly to ensure that the pupils experience a vibrant Catholic ethos and spiritual life. Partnerships with parents, parishes and with the Dioceses of Westminster and Southwark are very strong. Self-evaluation is accurate and senior leaders and staff are always ready to respond where there are areas for improvement.

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 not been previously inspected.

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

Grade I

The curriculum is well referenced to the Curriculum Directory and to the diocesan attainment targets. Progression is built carefully into the schemes of work to match the stage and learning of the pupils from the primary school to the current Year 9. Work is very well matched to the pupils' needs. All four areas of the Curriculum Directory are covered in each year's programme of study. Programmes of study are underpinned solidly by excellent attention to the liturgical year. Creative resources and visits supplement the pupils' experiences. Pupils are immersed in the scriptures, key topic vocabulary is developed and a range of practical activities reinforces pupils' developing understanding of the Catholic faith and doctrine. Well-conceived extended projects support older pupils in learning independence in their religious studies as well to learn about and from religion on their own faith journeys. Pupils report that they find the prayer tables a very effective way of expressing their sense of solidarity with each other. The school is working very effectively in promoting the pupils' religious literacy, particularly in developing their oral communication skills to express their beliefs and understanding of the Christian narrative and implications for daily living. Pupils' use of religious language is better developed in their oral work than in their written work generally although there are examples of extended projects providing very well for the most able pupils

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

Grade I

Pupils of all ages learn exceptionally well at St Richard Reynolds Catholic High School. The academic work of the school's patron saint provides a role model for the classroom work of the pupils and is well understood by all. The school's mission statement, 'to see the good things of the Lord' permeates learning as well as the attitudes and conduct of the staff and pupils. As a result, pupils take great pride and care in their work in religious education. In lessons, pupils make rapid progress in their learning and develop resilience and independence rapidly, not least through the 'little help-big help' strategies. Characteristic of the achievement of all pupils is the outstandingly articulate way in which they express their understanding of the work in hand. Orally, their religious literacy is second-to-none in all key stages. Moderation of work at all levels, both internal and external, is built into the school's assessment cycle.

Pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve highly in religious education. Their performance is measured carefully against the new GCSE grades and referenced meticulously to diocesan attainment targets. Through extended projects, such as that on Islam in Year 9, able pupils make rapid progress. However, there remain opportunities to improve further the religious literacy of these very able pupils by ensuring that minor errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation are highlighted. Pupils' overall attainment is high and in line with English. Pupils in lessons are very able to link concepts and ideas from previous learning. For example, Year 8 independently linked the work on the parable of the prodigal son to previous work on the parable of the good shepherd, the deadly sin of jealousy, and the Year of

Mercy. Pupils use religious language confidently and demonstrate a thirst for learning, participating very actively in all activities in lessons.

The quality of teaching

Grade 1

At St. Richard Reynolds Catholic High School, a major strength of teaching is the warm working relationship between staff and pupils and between pupils. Religious education staff provides excellent role models for the pupils, demonstrating perseverance, resilience, diligence, creativity and a deep loyalty to the school and to the Church. This is the case at all key stages. Typically, teaching across the school is outstanding. Teachers challenge pupils to be the best that they can be through stimulating and creative approaches to concepts and ideas. High expectations by all staff ensure that pupils develop very well their religious literacy. Resources are excellent and range from scripture through digital aids to traditional religious artefacts. Similarly, the range of assessment strategies deployed by staff is impressive. Despite these excellent approaches, there is some variation in the feedback guidance to pupils from marked work at both phases. The best practice provides excellent guidance to pupils on how to improve but there is scope to improve the attention to spelling, and grammar in their written work.

The excellent progress that pupils make in lessons was well demonstrated in a Year 8 class working on the persecution of the early Christians were so enthused by the teacher's input that they did not want to leave the classroom at the end of the session. These pupils were still bubbling over with questions they wanted to follow up.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 1

The quality of the leadership and management of the department is outstanding. Not only does the subject leader model excellent practice, but she has very well inducted staff relatively new to teaching into the department. Nothing less than the best will do and staff respond very well to these expectations. The religious education leader has a deep understanding that the task of the department is at the heart of the mission of the Church. Schemes of work have been very carefully developed and are growing in line with the growth of the school and the needs of the pupils. There are regular opportunities for the many very able pupils to extend their learning through the interesting visits and drop down days.

Very effective systems and structures are in place to regularly monitor, track and ensure the pupils make rapid progress in religious literacy. The subject leaders' impact on developing the quality of teaching is highly effective in the secondary school. There is a clear recognition of where improvements are needed and helpful training opportunities are provided regularly. Self-evaluation is accurate and the drive to improve further is relentless, not least in preparing for the future GCSE examinations.

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

- Ensure consistency in the quality of marking and feedback to pupils across all phases so that it always matches the best practice.
- Make sure that pupils' written work always matches the high levels of their oral communication.

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?

The school has not been previously inspected.

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

Grade I

Religious education is clearly at the centre of the curriculum for St Richard Reynolds Catholic High School and has a very significant impact upon the whole school community, helping staff and pupils to frame their lives through their faith. The department is staffed with three full-time subject specialists and is ably supported by the two vice principals who are also qualified religious education specialists. The subject leader is a member of the learning development team, placing religious education at the heart of the school's drive to establish excellent teaching. The department itself offers outstanding and creative lessons for pupils, employing a variety of strategies to engage and inspire. The "big help and little help" initiative is a key tool in raising pupils' confidence to respond to key tasks, and in the relentless drive to improve religious literacy. The school has a well-planned professional development programme and a collaborative approach to sharing best practice. With the benefit of a new school with generous timetabling, there is built-in time for teachers to reflect upon their professional development and practice. The school has a strong induction programme in place for new staff and for those new to teaching. A buddy system ensures that all staff feel welcomed and incorporated into the distinctive Catholic ethos of the school. The religious education department is well resourced and all lessons delivered in dedicated classrooms. The budget for RE has increased annually and will be in line with the other core subjects for Key Stage 4 provision next academic year. There is a designated link governor to the religious education department who is a regular visitor to the school. The subject leader attends all diocesan training and has developed strong working relationships with a number of local Catholic schools and St Mary's University.

The school complies with the Bishops' Conference requirement of 10% taught curriculum time at Key Stage 3. Besides this, pupils enjoy extended learning opportunities in religious education through drop-down days to compliment and support the curriculum. These drop-down days are formally assessed and tracked through graded assessments. Currently, these days include a visit to the London Central Mosque, a visit from Margaret Mizen to the school and a site visit to the parish church followed by extended tasks.

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

Grade I

The experience of Catholic worship in the life of the St Richard Reynolds Catholic High School is outstanding with numerous opportunities for communal and individual prayer. Pupils contribute well to the planning and delivery of worship through their liturgy representatives. The appointment of an additional music teacher has seen music increase in the liturgical life of the school. Non-Catholic pupils spoke beautifully of their being included and learning from the Catholic tradition. They enjoy the encouragement to play an active part in the spiritual life of the school through the creative use of different types of prayer and silence. One pupil described the school as being 'like a large family, with Mass being a relaxing experience and an opportunity to reflect and be'. Pupils were very articulate in expressing the joy they felt about being members of this school community, speaking

with real pride. The establishment of morning prayer for the seasons of Lent and Advent is greatly appreciated by pupils and offers a reflective start to the school day. The school prayer book, prayer tables and celebration assemblies all support and strengthen this sense of belonging and family. Pupils greatly appreciate the sports opportunities and the staff film shown on St Richard Reynolds feast day as a way of celebrating the community of the school. One pupil commented that “not many teachers would be prepared to make us laugh as our teachers do on this day and we just love it.” The liturgy representatives clearly view their role as one of service to the whole school community and a way of giving back as well as supporting the priest and their fellow pupils to enter the sacred space and time of prayer.

The celebration of the Mass is at the very heart of the school’s life with local priests willingly visiting the school to celebrate the liturgy each week. Each week a form group plans and contributes to the celebration of the Eucharist. House Patronal Festival Masses, Ash Wednesday, and the annual Feast of St Richard Reynolds in May, underpin the school’s liturgical calendar. Pupils play an active part in preparing for each of these celebrations through their participation as members of the school Chamber Choir, as readers and as altar servers. Pupils greatly appreciate the care that goes into each of these celebrations and spoke readily of the way they are encouraged and challenged to live and experience the Catholic tradition. One pupil explained that “although not a Catholic, they felt they learnt more here about faith than if they had gone to another school.” The school also has an established retreat programme working in collaboration with local clergy and using the facilities of the parish church of St James or St Mary’s University.

Assemblies are of a high quality and include an imaginative range of activities to engage and encourage pupils and staff to reflect upon the call to faith. Teachers employ a number of strategies from images and music to explore the themes of these assemblies all of which could be clearly linked back to the liturgical season.

In Advent and Lent the School welcomes groups of local priests to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation for pupils and staff. In Advent, this formed an appropriate introduction to the start of the Year of Mercy called by Pope Francis. Priests spoke of their joy at how well pupils responded to this invitation and the maturity of their attitude in approaching this sacrament. For the Year of Mercy, each House has adopted a corporal Act of Mercy and linked it to fundraising for the work of a number of different charities.

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

Grade I

Pupils at St Richard Reynolds Catholic High School take seriously the gospel call to justice and service for all. Pupils fundraise for a number of different charities, including Mary’s Meals, Epilepsy Action, Cafod and Cancer Research. Pupils clearly put their faith into action and live the call to human flourishing for all, especially for those most in need. This call to action is supported by the religious education curriculum and through exploring images of Servant Leadership and the core values at the centre of the kingdom of God. Pupils actively live the school’s motto to ‘see the good things of the Lord’ and strive to love their neighbour as themselves. Pupils spoke passionately about the joy they feel in supporting younger pupils either as play leaders or in helping children by hearing them read. This link between the secondary and primary phase is a powerful tool in fostering the Common Good in the hearts and minds of the community of learners. Pupils spoke of the range of inter-house competitions that exist within the school, fostering team work and healthy competition. In Lent 2015, pupils raised over £3,000 for ‘Toilet Twinning’ and throughout the school there are photographs of the communities the pupils helped to furnish with these services, allowing children to stay healthy and attend school in developing countries. The Christmas box appeal in partnership with the local branch of the Salvation Army produced an incredible response from pupils who put together boxes for children of their own age. One pupil also wrote a note to the young person who would eventually receive this gift and the charity was so impressed by the thoughtfulness of this gesture, it presented the note on their website. The Pentecost Concert in 2014 offered a showcase

for the gifts and talents of the pupils and parents with performances and prayers offered in Spanish, Russian, French, Gujarati and Gaelic. It is hoped that this celebration will become an annual event and a regular feature in the life of the school where all can see the 'good things of the Lord' in the talents of the pupils and staff of the school. Throughout the school, pupils feel safe and valued. Differences are respected.

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

St Richard Reynolds Catholic High School is outstanding in the strong relationships it enjoys with parents and local parishes. The school has an excellent relationship with the diocese, deanery and local parishes. The governing body has an above average number of clergy within its membership and local clergy readily support the liturgical life of the school by their willingness to celebrate the weekly Mass and the seasonal times for the Sacrament of Reconciliation at the school. Throughout its short history the school has welcomed a number of auxiliary Bishops and the Episcopal vicar to the schools to celebrate Mass and to bless and open new buildings. The very existence of the school is framed by the sheer determination of these local parishes and parents to create a Catholic school within the area. The joyful fulfilment of this hope was beautifully illustrated in the Opening Mass in 2013 celebrated by Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop Peter Smith of Southwark and Archbishop George Stack of Cardiff, together with a large number of local clergy, parishioners and families. Priests spoke with enthusiasm of the principal's support for pupils celebrating Confirmation in their home parishes by attending the Mass and the recognition of the school's ongoing partnership with its feeder parishes. As well as the principal visiting it was also acknowledged that the chair of governors also visits feeder parishes to strengthen ties with the local faith communities from which the school community is drawn. The religious education newsletter regularly informs parents about the Catholic Life of the school and the topics and activities to be explored. This is also greatly enhanced through the use of the religious education twitter account and the accessibility of staff to parents and pupils.

The school also enjoys a strong working relationship with the local parish of St James. Year 7 retreats have taken place in the Parish Hall and the school was represented at the parish's celebration of their feast day. Each Year 7 form has also visited St James' church as part of their study of a parish church. The parish priest is a regular visitor to the school to celebrate Mass. On Education Sunday pupils visit the local parishes to share information about the school and to offer their thanks to the parishioners for their continued support. The school has also hosted the deanery meeting where two pupils welcomed the clergy and spoke about their faith journey.

All members of the community avail themselves of training opportunities at the diocese.

There is an extremely active Friends of St Richard Reynolds association, which provides a source of fundraising but more importantly also serves to nurture and develop the extended school family. Parents are clearly respected as the primary educators of their children. Teachers seek to support them in this vocation through regular newsletters and information on the website. This relationship begins even before the children enter the school with home visits by the reception team. Parents and children start the academic year with a Mass of welcome. Parents' evenings, social events and curriculum evenings all enable the home school partnership to be celebrated and enhanced.

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

Grade I

The effectiveness of the senior leadership team and governing body is outstanding in actively promoting the distinctive Catholic ethos of the school. They all share a clear vision for its future contribution to Catholic education within the diocese. The members of the senior leadership team witness to their faith through their consistent support of the weekly Mass, their contributions in

collective worship and by providing time for staff to pause and reflect upon the nature of prayer. The understanding of prayer being a natural accompaniment and outpouring of our Catholic faith permeates the life of the school, be it a staff meeting, gathering of governors or the time for saying grace before lunch for pupils.

The senior leadership team has worked tirelessly to ensure the distinctive Catholic ethos of the school, clear from the moment of its inception. This critical self-review encourages all the members of the teaching staff to feel confident in sharing their own faith story and to actively embrace the Catholic ethos of the school. The school's induction programme for both staff and pupils seeks to nurture the spiritual and pastoral values of the community where all can live school's motto *Videte Bona Domini*, "See the good things of the Lord". This is further developed through staff training and staff meetings throughout the academic year with opportunities to reflect upon the Catholic life of the school and each person's faith journey as a natural and ongoing personal review. Middle leaders, as part of the school's ongoing appraisal process, are set a target which develops out of their own reflection upon their individual contribution to the Catholic life of the school.

The governors' involvement in the life of the school is outstanding. Each member is actively involved in the day-to-day life of the school. The chair of governors regularly visits the school and trains pupils to be altar servers as well serving himself as master of ceremonies at major school celebrations. All middle leaders regularly attend governors' meetings to share their vision and their future plans for their curriculum areas. The vice chair of governors conducted a mission walk to assist the school's self-evaluation process and the link governor for religious education is a regular visitor to the department. Such regular contact and support allows governors to be fully conversant with the present strengths and the weaknesses of the school and to support the staff in developing the Catholic life of the school. Several members of staff have been commissioned as extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist for service within the school community.

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

- Continue to share the best practice in terms of worship and assemblies so that there is greater consistency of experience between the school phases.