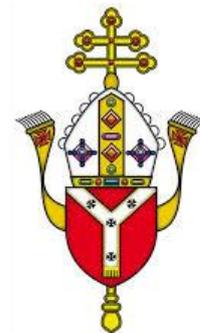


Westminster Diocese Inspection Report



The London Oratory School

Seagrave Road, London SW6 1RX

Date of inspection: 25-26 June 2015

A. Classroom Religious Education

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

Overall Grade 1

The overall effectiveness of classroom religious education is outstanding. A well-resourced religious education curriculum is in place, reflecting links to the Curriculum Directory. The delivery of the content of the Curriculum Directory is approached creatively to provide a very effective developmental programme at each Key Stage. Achievement is excellent at Key Stage 4 and pupils make outstanding progress in their subject knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith from the Junior House to the end of Year 11. During advanced-level courses, students make steady progress to attain well. The subject leader is clear, however, that there is scope for even better progress and higher standards by the end of Year 13. The inspection team agrees.

Throughout the school, students demonstrate outstanding religious literacy. They demonstrate very positive attitudes to learning. Teaching in its widest sense is typically outstanding. Expectations of students are consistently high and staff regularly challenge students to articulate and justify their ideas and beliefs. The quality of students' class work and homework is exemplary. However, the quality of marking remains variable. The subject leader has a very strong sense of the centrality of religious education in the curriculum and relentlessly focuses on improving teaching and learning. There are robust systems in place to track and monitor students' progress. Areas for development have been identified accurately. The short-term impact of the head of department is impressive and the potential for further improvement is excellent. Governors and the chaplain make an outstanding contribution to developing religious education. The latter supports the department exceptionally well in contributing in exemplary fashion to the Catholic life of the school.

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 3

The London Oratory School offers its whole school community exceptionally positive experiences of Catholic life in almost all respects. However, the curriculum time allocated to classroom religious education at all stages of the school does not match the requirements of the Bishops' Conference for 10% of classroom time allocation. As a consequence of this and the leadership's decision not to

implement the 10% requirement, the overall grade for the Catholic Life of the school is subject to a limiting judgement and is therefore judged to require improvement. The school is prepared to reflect for the future on the provision for religious education but has no intention at present to change the arrangements or meet the Bishops' requirements. However, this does not in any way negate the outstanding quality of the numerous rich and varied opportunities offered to students to experience a Catholic way of living. In other respects, the Catholic life of the London Oratory School is outstanding. The whole community's experience of Catholic worship engages them deeply in the richness of Catholic tradition, the celebration of the Eucharist, a very regular sacramental life and a full involvement in the liturgical year. The Common Good is understood very well at all levels of the school. The Church's call to action for justice and peace is also exceptionally well understood by the students and staff. Partnership with parishes, parents and the Diocese is central to the school's understanding of itself. The school motto, 'Respice Finem' informs all that senior leaders, Trustees, staff and students undertake. The Trustees are determined to sustain successfully a distinctly Oratorian, Catholic tradition.

Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headmaster, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent two days in school, visited 10 lessons and an assembly, a celebration of Mass, visits to six morning form times, and several learning walks. The inspectors carried out several formal and informal interviews with school staff, the chaplain and students. Members of the Governing Body were unavailable for interview regarding the leadership of the school during the inspection but the priest chaplain was available for a brief period. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, a scrutiny of a sample of students' work, observation of students in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The inspection of The London Oratory School, Fulham 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 school nominated its own inspector who worked alongside the inspection team but was not part of the team. A separate report will be prepared. 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 Sheila Nolan | Lead Inspector |
| The Reverend Antony Homer | Associate Inspector |
| Mr Andrew O'Neill | Associate Inspector |
| Ms Katy Poitiers | Associate Inspector |
| Ms Amanda Crowley | Associate Inspector |

Description of School

This Voluntary Aided, Academy, is a six-form entry in the LA of Hammersmith and Fulham and the locality of Fulham. The school, founded in 1863, is in the trusteeship of the fathers of the Congregation of the Oratory of St Philip Neri, and serves families from parishes across Westminster, Brentwood and Southwark. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 99.8%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 0.07% and from other Faiths 0.15%. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 61.3%.

There are 1340 pupils on roll, with 23 pupils with statements of special educational need/ Education Health & Care Plans. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well above average. The proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language is well above national figures. There is a below average rate of families claiming free school meals. Over a hundred (104) pupils are eligible for the Pupil Premium.

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| Telephone: | 02073850102 |
| e-mail address: | admin@los.ac |
| DFE Number: | 2055400 |
| URN Number: | 137157 |
| Headteacher: | Mr D McFadden |
| Chair of Governors: | The very Rev I Harrison, Cong.Orat |
| Date of previous inspection: | 09-11 December 2009 |
| Previous Inspection grades: | Outstanding |

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|-----------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| Key for inspection grades: | <i>Grade 1</i> | <i>Outstanding</i> |
| | <i>Grade 2</i> | <i>Good</i> |
| | <i>Grade 3</i> | <i>Requires improvement</i> |
| | <i>Grade 4</i> | <i>Causing Concern</i> |

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?

A new head of department joined the school in the last year. Over this period, the department has also produced additional helpful resources to complement the specifications for external accreditation for GCSE examinations and provided support for teaching staff in developing their work. There is very good involvement with accrediting bodies in the new GCSE examinations. Nevertheless, the consistency of diagnostic marking of students' work, an issue at the last inspection, although improving, remains an area of focus for the department.

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

Grade 2

The new Key Stage 3 curriculum was selected because of its strong links to the catechism of the Catholic Church. It has subsequently been mapped to the content to the Curriculum Directory and has served to supplement other creative departmental resources. The four main areas of study are clearly identified as is the age-appropriate study of other major religions, such as Judaism. It provides a systematic study of God, the life and teaching of Jesus and the Church and the central beliefs Catholics hold. At Key Stage 4, students follow a GCSE religious education course. Post-16 core religious education is underpinned by the NOCN programme, linking it to the Curriculum Directory. Advanced-level students follow a course that is based securely on philosophy and theology. Religious education within form time strongly concentrates on the progression and development of the content. The themes from this programme are picked up in some lessons and in assemblies, providing coherence for the students each week.

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

Grade 1

The majority of students join the school with above average levels of attainment. Students' progress is excellent in developing their religious literacy. This stands them in good stead in achieving outstanding examination results at the end of Key Stage 4. Not only is the progress of the students exemplary but their attainment is much higher than that nationally. The GCSE results in religious education are in line with the students' achievements in other core subjects, and at times exceed them. All groups of students make rapid progress. Although post-16 students follow a core religious education course based on Level 1 in Year 12 and Level 2 in Year 13 of the NOCN programme, students begin the course with high levels of attainment from the end of Key Stage 4 and complete work which is more in line with Level 3 than Level 2 work. The department recognises that there is more to do in raising the level of challenge within this course. Students make steady progress against national benchmarks in advanced-level philosophy and theology examinations.

The department is driving forward plans to support these able students further so that they make more rapid progress than previously.

Throughout the school, students demonstrate outstanding religious literacy and are very confident in their use of specialist vocabulary. They demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and are happy to engage in whatever is being asked of them. The department, however, does not yet use a Year 7 initial baseline assessment as a starting point against which to measure students' progress in religious education. It relies rather on the information from other core subjects at the end of Key Stage 2. Assessments at Key Stage 3 are moderated internally in the department. There is some external moderation of the diocesan attainment levels reached by the students with the Westminster Cathedral Choir School. There is scope for further improvement in the quality of marking to ensure students are clear about the next steps in their learning. Students are not always engaged fully in evaluating their own work or in responding to teachers' helpful guidance.

The quality of teaching

Grade I

Teaching in its widest sense is typically outstanding. The classroom experience is only part of the teaching of religious education in the London Oratory School. Students' catechetical development is impressive and teaching contributes very well to the development of the students' spiritual, moral and ethical progression, and to the quality of the students' reflection. In Junior House, for example, the quality and enthusiasm of teaching brings out the best in the students and contributes exceptionally well to their personal development and their understanding of the cultural heritage of the Catholic Church. This was particularly evident in the individualised music sessions in the choir school. Across the school, expectations of students are consistently high and staff challenge students regularly to articulate and justify their ideas and beliefs. The quality of students' class work and homework is exemplary, and students are erudite in class discussions, displaying high levels of religious literacy.

Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent and this contributes exceptionally well to the rapid progress made by students. In a Year 10 lesson observed, for example, students discussed and debated medical ethics with great conviction and confidence, drawing on historical and biblical teachings. In other sessions, the warm working relationships between students and staff, and between students, contribute significantly to very positive attitudes to learning. Students are eager to do well and behaviour is impeccable as was seen in a third-form lesson where students responded maturely to discussion of daily life situations that could involve them in applying their faith in considering others.

Despite the many strengths of the academic provision for the students, there are occasions when thought-provoking questions posed by students are not explored thoroughly enough in class, especially when they could be used effectively as a springboard for further discussions. Likewise, in some post-16 core religious education classes, the approaches used do not always engage the students totally in the work or discussion. Feedback on written tasks is generally regular and constructive. In the best cases, good use is made of detailed diagnostic comments that provide

students with clear guidance as to how to improve. Nevertheless, the quality of marking remains too variable and does not draw enough on the best departmental practice. Students are not always engaged in evaluating their own work or in responding to helpful guidance. Likewise, not all staff engaged in the 'rite journey' in Year 9 follow through on the biblical foundations of the course and so does not always contribute fully to developing the students' religious literacy.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade I

The subject leader has a very strong sense of the educational mission of the Church and a clear vision for how the department can continue to make progress. The department provides excellent Catholic role models to witness faith through their work. Religious education is fortunate to be staffed by nine teachers who are subject specialists, including experienced members of the leadership team. The head of department has a realistic understanding of the strengths of the team. He has identified areas for development such as ensuring better quality diagnostic marking. He is relentlessly focusing on improving teaching and learning and there is a clear drive to improve the quality of the religious education curriculum and to ensure standards continue to rise. He has identified key aspects of post-16 learning that require attention and has set in place a plan of improvement to make outcomes in advanced level courses reflect the success of those at Key Stage 4. Religious education teachers are encouraged to seek professional development opportunities and are supported ably in developing their subject knowledge. The departmental leader engages with diocesan in-service provision and has forged links with Westminster Cathedral Choir School to support curriculum developments. There are robust systems in place to track and monitor students' progress but this does not extend to include the post-16 core programme. The short-term impact of the head of department on the quality of religious education is impressive and the potential for further improvement is excellent.

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

- Develop assessment practice further so that there is greater consistency of marking, making sure that the written guidance given to students supports them in improving their work. Make sure that students always respond to teachers' useful guidance.
- Ensure that the post-16 core religious education programme always provides stretch and challenge for all students and that their progress is tracked throughout the year.
- Ensure that the implementation of the 'rite journey' consistently ensures that the students can develop greater religious literacy.
- Further the rate of progress in advanced-level courses to ensure students continue to achieve outstandingly well as at Key Stage 4.

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 London Oratory School, in the time since the last inspection, has extensively enhanced its physical learning environment. The careful use of symbolism and iconography reflects its distinctly Oratorian Catholic character. The imaginative use of the thought-provoking written word and images throughout the school draws on the sayings and writings of St Philip Neri and Blessed John Henry Newman as well as on scripture. These spiritually enriching teachings are explored through the cycle of morning prayers and built upon in the mainstream curriculum. A reflection room is located near the chapel to provide a non-classroom space where students can gather for periods of reflection and guided prayer.

Other developments include the work of the school chaplain in furthering the daily morning prayer through a cycle of themes for every week of the school year. The weekly house assemblies in the Chapel now link effectively with the school's daily prayer programme. The school's Catholic Service Book has been revised to provide a new edition that is more relevant to the students in their prayer life. The oversight of the development of the school's distinctly Oratorian Catholic ethos rests now with a senior manager, supported by the school chaplain. The retreat programmes and occasional day opportunities of recollection are under constant review by the chaplain and senior staff.

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

Grade 3

Religious Education at the London Oratory School does not provide 10% of curriculum time at Key Stages 3 and 4 nor the time expected for the post-16 core religious education as required by the Bishops' Conference. The school is prepared to reflect for the future on the provision for religious education but has no intention at present of changing the arrangements.

Religious Education is, nevertheless, highly regarded by the senior leaders, the Trustees of the School, students, and parents and carers. The department has a team of specialist teachers, two of whom serve as housemasters and one as a senior master. There is a clear vision for the future development of religious education, led by the head of department, in conjunction with the senior team, shared among all members of staff, and in line with the distinctive Oratorian ethos of the school, its Catholic traditions and values. Senior managers encourage and support staff in undertaking professional development opportunities.

The religious education department has a good budget in line with the budget allocated to other core subjects. The department is about to benefit from refurbished classrooms close to the chapel and chaplain's room. It already benefits from a new staffroom with expanded storage space. The spaces and resources are exceptionally good and greatly support the ongoing spiritual development of the school community.

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

Grade I

The students' experience of worship through the solemn celebration of the Sacred Liturgy is outstanding. Students are steeped in a wealth of musical and liturgical traditions drawn from the Church's treasury of liturgical music and culture. The liturgical year forms the basis for all school worship and feeds the school's daily cycle of prayer and assemblies. The beautiful purpose-built chapel occupies the very heart of the school, providing a place to pray, celebrate Mass and experience Benediction each week. Other traditional forms of piety are also celebrated in the chapel, including the rosary led by students each Thursday. There are plentiful opportunities for seasonal reflection as, for example, in the Way of the Cross, prayed throughout Lent. Students explained how they participate in the delivery of morning prayer and house assemblies through reading reflections and leading the prayers .

A retreat programme is firmly established in the life of the school. This is regularly reviewed by the chaplain and senior staff so that all students receive the best possible experience. Students go off-site for part or all of these days of reflection, visiting the Oratory Church, the Sisters in Kensington and the monks of Douai Abbey. These days often include an outside speaker as well as school staff who offer instruction, Lectio Divina, and the celebration of Mass or reconciliation. The days provide invaluable opportunities for team building across a year group. The first-form day early in the term ends with a Mass in the Oratory Church. Parents join the school at this Mass, supporting the partnership between home and school. The school plans to offer students a reflective journal in which they will record a "letter to God" written to their future selves as a way of capturing their personal faith development. The *Schola Cantorum*, with its regular collaboration with the Choir of Westminster Cathedral and the Junior Choir of the Oratory Church, allows the musical treasures of Roman Catholic tradition to be experienced by the wider school and parish community. The quality of music throughout the life of the school greatly sustains and further enhances the spiritual development of students.

The many quotes, some from the writings of St Philip Neri and Blessed John Henry Newman, throughout the library and classrooms serve to inspire and nurture the ongoing religious literacy of the students. The chaplain also provides valuable support to students' families and teaching staff. He is readily available to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the School Mass, and help prepare students who have missed the opportunity for the Sacrament of Confirmation in their home parishes. Students can also make their first Holy Communion whilst in the Junior House.

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

Grade I

The London Oratory School provides excellent opportunities for students to flourish and celebrate their individual gifts and talents as well as opportunities to look beyond themselves to the needs of the local and wider Christian communities. The 'Volunteer programme', for example, offers opportunities for personal reflection time as well as occasions to help other people. The chaplain has well-developed plans to work more with the local parish of St Thomas of Canterbury in Fulham in establishing a "Youth" arm of a St Vincent de Paul group. The sixth form and its community

service programme offers a number of varied opportunities for students to engage with the local community. These include working with the inhabitants of The Passage, preparing and serving meals for the homeless, working as learning mentors in a local school, befriending the elderly, and working for social justice with a community service charity that champions the 'Living Wage'.

The commitment to the Common Good finds expression in both local and international responses to those in need. In Advent, the students support The Passage through the production of a calendar and in raising funds to buy Christmas presents and shoes for those who live on the streets of our city. In Lent, the school supports the campaigns of the Aid to the Church in Need, raising funds to support persecuted Christians throughout the world. The *Schola* in partnership with other choirs also perform in carol services to highlight the work of these charities and to support local parishes in fundraising for these works of mercy. In summary, not only do the students actively engage in supporting those in need, locally, nationally and internationally, but they have an excellent understanding of the theology underpinning their actions. The Church's global mission and call for justice is exceptionally well appreciated and understood by the school community.

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

Partnership is a vibrant and central part of the school's understanding of itself with its wider community. The school is linked closely with the London Oratory Church where the *Schola Cantorum* sings at the Saturday Vigil Mass during term-time, and performs in concerts and liturgical services throughout the year for the parish and the wider Catholic community. The fundraising concerts of the Schola also serve to form and strengthen links with a number of diocesan parishes including St Patrick's Soho Square, St Mary Moorfields, and Corpus Christi, Maiden Lane. During the state visit of Pope Benedict XVI to the United Kingdom, the school played a significant role in the celebration for the Beatification of John Henry Newman, providing both choir and altar servers. There are increasingly strong links with the Diocese through work with the parishes and much service to support liturgical celebrations, well supported by the Trustees of the school.

The house system supports well parental involvement in the pastoral well-being of the students. The school also provides a number of social gatherings throughout the year to share information relating to educational and parenting issues, drug awareness and forming healthy relationships.

Communication between home and school is secure and highly valued by parents. Parents' feedback via a questionnaire was extremely positive and supportive of the work of the school in nurturing their children, commenting both upon the Catholic ethos of the school buildings and the quality of spiritual care. There were 405 returns. Although the overwhelming majority of parents are positive, the very recent parental survey indicated a few parents expressing concerns but these followed no particular pattern.

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

Grade 1

The school's mission to provide a distinctive Oratorian Catholic ethos for its community is at the heart of all that the senior team does. The head teacher and other senior and middle leaders are all strongly committed to the Church's mission in education. They accomplish this very successfully in a unique way that does not always match fully with diocesan requirements. In spite of the lack of intention to provide 10% of the curriculum time for religious education, which is a limiting judgement and prevents the school from achieving outstanding in the Catholic life of the school, students gain exceptionally valuable opportunities to practise and grow in the Catholic faith. School leadership is creative in enabling students and staff to experience the richness of opportunities of a Catholic way of living. The Trustees are determined that the school will retain a markedly Oratorian Catholic ethos. All staff are actively involved in the liturgical life of the school.

The leadership team and the staff do their best to be role models for the students, living out their Catholic Christian values in their daily lives. The impact is seen in the reverence at prayer and the respect for each other shown by the students at all times. In conversations with students on the playground and in small groups this respect and mutual value is clearly evident. At the start of the year, the whole school staff are reminded of the ethos of the school, and what makes it wholly distinctive in its character not just as a Catholic school, but as a school inspired by the founder of the Oratory. There are very good induction procedures for new staff as well as good support for non-Catholic staff in delivering the morning prayer and form-time religious instruction. There are clear systems in place for receiving and listening to the views of parents.

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

- Ensure that the school offers 10% of curriculum time for religious education in Key Stages 2, 3 and 4.
- Develop the post-16 religious education curriculum to allow for the 30 hours recommended time from the Bishops' Conference.