

St Paul's Catholic College

Manor Lane, Sunbury-on-Thames, Middlesex, TW16 6JE

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 27- 28 January 2022



Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education is outstanding

- The content of classroom religious education is outstanding. In all key stages, the content of classroom religious education (RE) meets the requirements of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*.
- The planned RE programmes provide a systematic study of God, the life and teaching of Jesus, the central beliefs that Catholics hold, alongside a comprehensive study of world religions.
- Resources are used creatively to ensure the provision of a dynamic curriculum.
- The RE department uses a variety of creative pedagogical approaches in their teaching to ensure that pupils consolidate their knowledge. Pupils are confident users of religious language and demonstrate an excellent understanding of the topics studied in their learning journey across the school.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. The RE department has relentlessly high expectations of all pupils. Consequently, teaching is engaging and challenging at all key stages.
- The quality of leadership and management is outstanding. There is a dynamic and creative vision for RE that is shared between the subject leader and the SLT. The creativity of the religious education curriculum to meet pupils' needs is exceptional and results in pupils' active engagement in their learning and excellent progress across all key stages.

B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- The worship and prayer life of the school is firmly rooted in the liturgical year and reflects the richness of the Catholic tradition with a focus on Pauline theology.
- Opportunities for the celebration of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation demonstrate the school's understanding of itself as a worshipping Catholic community.
- St Paul's is a dynamic community where staff and pupils have a clear understanding of the call to human flourishing and excellent opportunities are provided for pupils to both develop and use their gifts and talents to help others.
- Pupils are involved in the choice of charities supported as well as having input into the distribution of funds and goods collected. Not only do pupils actively engage in these acts of service but they can confidently articulate the theology that underpins their actions.
- St Paul's works closely with parents and carers to develop a shared understanding with them of the mission of the school. The school welcomes participation in school events, regularly asks for parental views and actively seeks ways of fostering partnerships.
- The effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding, and within that category exceptional. Governors, SLT and staff all have a deep understanding of, and a lived commitment to, the school's vision and mission: *achieving excellence, learning to serve*.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

The previous diocesan inspection report noted several improvement points focused around supporting pupils to make faster progress at Key Stage 5 and enhancing communication with parents. The RE department has worked hard to address these action points and the report that follows demonstrates their success in making the necessary improvements.

The content of classroom religious education is outstanding

The content of classroom religious education is outstanding. In all key stages, the content of classroom religious education (RE) meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory. The planned programmes of study provide a systematic study of God, the life and teaching of Jesus, the central beliefs that Catholics hold, alongside a comprehensive study of world religions. Resources are used creatively to ensure the provision of a dynamic curriculum. For example, the Year 9 Philosophy of Religion scheme introduces pupils to arguments about the existence of God and seeks to deepen pupils' understanding through a study of the classical characteristics of God. In a series of Year 7 lessons, pupils discussed with confidence Biblical teaching on forgiveness using a variety of examples. Both the core RE and the A-Level at Key Stage 5 are rigorously planned and highly ambitious for all students, encompassing a range of topics with the explicit intention of developing their religious literacy in relation to modern ethical challenges. Students in Year 13 Core RE debated the relationship between science and religion, whilst in a Year 12 A-Level lesson students explored the problem of evil. The provision at all key stages for pupils for whom English is an additional language is a strength of the school. The curriculum is further enhanced by a study of world religions, with pupils studying Hinduism in Year 7, Judaism in Year 8 and Islam in Year 9.

Pupil achievement in religious education is outstanding

Pupil achievement is outstanding and is a strength of the school. Pupils make brisk progress throughout the school, and consequently achievement at GCSE over the 2 last years has been outstanding. Outcomes in RE are amongst the highest across the school in comparison to other core subjects. In 2021 nearly a third of all pupils achieved a Grade 7 or above. These outstanding outcomes have led to an increase in the number of pupils choosing to study Religious Studies A level. The RE department uses a variety of creative pedagogical approaches in their teaching to ensure that pupils consolidate their knowledge. Pupils are confident users of religious language and illustrate an excellent understanding of the topics studied in their learning journey across the school. They can articulate with accuracy the specific skills required to access the very highest levels of achievement. Consequently, they are exceptionally well prepared for public exams at both GCSE and A-Level.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

The quality of teaching is outstanding. The RE department has relentlessly high expectations of all pupils and consequently, teaching is engaging and challenging at all key stages. The best lessons were characterised by pace and tasks which enabled higher order thinking, underpinned by exceptionally strong relationships between teachers and pupils. There is a collaborative and supportive approach through robust monitoring to ensure the typicality of teaching is consistent across the whole RE department. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong, and the use of questioning is skilful in order to deepen pupils' understanding and develop their critical thinking. Assessment is a key component of the highly effective teaching across the RE department. Diagnostic marking along with self and peer assessment involve pupils in identifying where they are in their learning. Consequently, pupils can clearly articulate how to improve their work. Teaching resources are effective and creative,

supporting the learning of all pupils. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on Judaism, pupils engaged with a virtual tour of a synagogue. In a Year 11 lesson on gender prejudice and discrimination, a variety of Biblical perspectives were presented to enable pupils to learn at greater depth. Pupils speak highly of RE, one Year 11 pupil commented 'it really drives us to succeed knowing that our RE teachers want to ensure we get the best grades possible'.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education

is outstanding

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding. There is a dynamic and creative vision for RE that is shared between the subject leader and the SLT. The creativity of the religious education curriculum to meet pupil needs is exceptional, resulting in active engagement in the learning and excellent progress being made across all key stages. The RE department has excellent systems in place that support teachers new to the profession and this also impacts positively on pupil learning in the classroom. Members of the RE department work closely as a team and demonstrate high expectations for attainment, progress, and the development of pupils' religious literacy. The subject leader leads by example and demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of academic excellence alongside a commitment to developing the team of RE teachers. The use of professional development and the sharing of best practice is effective in ensuring consistency across the RE department and equality of provision for all pupils.

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

- Further review and refine assessment in Key Stage 3 so that it is as consistent as assessment at GCSE.
- Continue to work closely with the RE team to further develop outstanding practice across the whole department.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

The previous diocesan inspection identified two areas for development. Firstly, to 'Embed the retreat programme so that it includes Key Stage 4 and 5'. This action point has been fulfilled with retreat provision expanded into those areas. The second action point was to 'Continue to develop pupils' experiences of Morning Prayer as identified in their recent tutor-prayer-time evaluations'. This too has been fulfilled. Morning prayer contains a richness of experience and pupils report this is an important part of their daily experience in school.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

is outstanding

Religious education is at the heart of St Paul's. It is evident to all staff that RE is the core of curriculum. The RE curriculum meets the Bishops' Conference requirements for 10% curriculum time at Key Stages 3 and 4, as well as 5% curriculum time at Key Stage 5. The RE department has dedicated classrooms. The department is well resourced at every key stage. Senior leaders and governors provide deeply committed support to both the subject leader and RE team.

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

is outstanding

The worship and prayer life of the school is firmly rooted in the liturgical year and reflects the richness of the Catholic tradition with a focus on Pauline theology. Pupils' spiritual development is enriched through the regular opportunities they have for prayer, quiet reflection, sharing and discussion. The frequent celebration of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation demonstrate the school's understanding of itself as a worshipping Catholic community. The comprehensive retreat programme enhances this and has improved over time through a culture of evaluation. It is now an integral part of the school year. The work of the chaplain in inducting new staff into the school's commitment to prayer and liturgy is a strength of the school. There is a shared understanding by staff and pupils of the importance and centrality of prayer and worship in the everyday lived experience at St Paul's.

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

is outstanding

St Paul's is a dynamic community where staff and pupils have a clear understanding of the call to human flourishing. Excellent opportunities are provided for pupils to use their gifts and develop their talents. Outstanding systems have been established such as the pupil voice leaders who are appointed from years 8-13. These leaders represent the pupil community and believe that pupils at St Paul's have a responsibility in contributing to the common good. Students in the sixth form spoke about the role that student leaders have in helping the development of younger pupils, especially those new to the school. Strong systems exist that respect and value everyone as central to the community. A year 12 student stated that at St Paul's, 'You feel it's a safe environment and you have a place here'. Pupils are involved in the choice of charities supported as well as having input into the distribution of funds and goods collected. Pupils recognise that one of the strengths of school life are the activities for those in need in the local community. The school regularly collects for vulnerable children and organises an annual OAP Christmas party. As well as actively engaging in these acts of service pupils can also confidently articulate the theology that underpins their actions. The school

chaplaincy team also plays a key role in the service of the school community through driving a variety of activities that contribute to the school's ongoing fund raising and charity work on both a local and national level.

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 school has excellent links with six local parishes and enjoys strong supportive relationships from local clergy. One parent wrote, 'Our parish priest is a regular celebrant at St Paul's which offers a consistent familiarity'. The school works closely with parents and carers to develop a shared understanding with them of the mission of the school. The school encourages parental participation in school events and regularly seeks their views to further strengthen the home school partnership. Parents feel well informed about the Catholic life of the school as illustrated by a parent's comment, 'The entire school worked tirelessly during lockdown to ensure that RE and the Catholic life of the school was prioritised'. The school liaises regularly with the diocesan education service and has established links with local secondary and primary schools. St Paul's regularly hosts retreats for Year 5 pupils as part of its commitment to education in the wider Catholic community.

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

is outstanding

The effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding. Governors, SLT and staff all have a deep understanding of, and a lived commitment to, the school's vision and mission of '*achieving excellence, learning to serve*'. They are passionate about the school and dedicated to the Church's wider mission in education. They share the strategic leadership of the school with clarity, energy, insight, and enthusiasm. Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths alongside the key areas for development. They hold the headteacher to account through regular monitoring and evaluation and challenge the leadership of the school in strategic matters. Leaders are forward thinking and aware of the need to ensure a strong sustainability model for the school. Aware of emerging national and local challenges, leaders are working closely with the diocese to ensure provision of Catholic education in the local area in the future. The school chaplain is visionary, and this is evident in her strong relationships with pupils and staff and in her wider work with deanery clergy. The leadership of the headteacher and SLT is inspirational. They serve the community of St Paul's with a dynamic vision of discipleship for life. No aspect of daily life at St Paul's is left unobserved in reflecting the mission of the school. Consequently, the school is vibrant, alive and engaging. Feedback from a recent staff survey affirmed that St Paul's 'is an inclusive environment in which the ethos of love and service permeates.'

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

- Support and provide prayer opportunities for pupils from other traditions and faiths.
- Further develop the work of the chaplaincy team in the planning and delivery of liturgy and prayer across the school.

Information about this school

- The school is a 7 form entry Catholic voluntary aided school in the locality of Spelthorne in Surrey.
- The school serves the 12 parishes of The Upper Thames. It also serves the parish of St Lawrence's Catholic Church Feltham.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 86%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 6% and from other faiths is 5%. The remaining 3% of pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 31%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 3.
- There are 12 % of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 19 have Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average.
- There is well below the average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 169 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (13.2%).

Department for Education Number	936/5411
Unique Reference Number	125311
Local Authority	Surrey

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	1278
The appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Alan Fernandes
Headteacher	Mr James Mc Nulty
Telephone number	01932 704113
Website	www.st-pauls.surrey.sch.uk
Email address	info@st-pauls-surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	18-19 November 2015
Grade from previous inspection	Outstanding
Grades from previous inspection:	
Classroom religious education	Outstanding
The Catholic life of the school	Outstanding

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 26 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended 3 assemblies and a number of acts of worship.
- Meetings were held with school staff, pupils and governors.
- Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

Mr Adam Hall

Lead Inspector

Ms Susan Grace

Associate Inspector

Miss Catherine Bryant

Associate Inspector

Mrs Rose-Marie Sorohan

Associate Inspector

Information about inspection

The purpose of Diocesan inspection is to report to and advise the Archbishop on the quality of classroom religious education and the Catholic life of the school. The inspection report is also used to inform parents and carers, and the wider Catholic community. Inspection provides an opportunity to support, challenge, evaluate and promote the work of Catholic schools. It also assists schools in the work of self-evaluation and improvement, and enables the Diocese to celebrate with schools their sense of identity and their strengths as Catholic schools.

Inspection Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

This report is published by the Diocese of Westminster and is available at:

<http://rcdow.org.uk/education/schools>

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