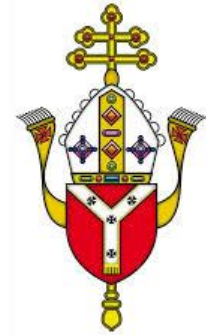


Westminster Diocese Inspection Report

St Augustine's Priory

Hillcrest Road, Ealing, London W5 2JL

Date of inspection: 5–6 May 2016



A. Classroom Religious Education

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

Overall Grade I

Overall, the effectiveness of classroom religious education (RE) in developing pupils' religious literacy is outstanding. This has been achieved by the inspiring leadership of the headteacher, supported by the highly skilled RE team. Pupils make rapid progress over time, and achieve well above average standards, because they are taught extremely well. Relationships between staff and pupils and the pupils themselves, are extremely positive. RE leaders and staff act as excellent role models to the girls, setting high expectations of what can be achieved which enables pupils to cultivate excellent study skills and attitudes to learning. Regular attendance at training events, organised by the deanery and diocese, enables staff to keep up to date with the latest developments in RE, moderate their judgements about pupils' work and to share ideas and good practice. They have ensured that the planning and content of RE lessons is firmly linked to the Curriculum Directory. Governors are highly skilled and have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. This enables them to rigorously hold leaders to account for the school's performance. The headteacher and the RE team make a strong contribution to the Catholic life of the school, ensuring that its mission permeates all aspects of school life.

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 overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of St Augustine's in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing, is outstanding. The sense of community, underpinned by Catholic tradition and practice provides a nurturing environment where pupils flourish academically and spiritually. An excellent example of the familial community of St Augustine's is the on-going 'Stitch in Time' centennial embroidery project to re-upholster the kneelers in the chapel. The diverse religious make-up of the school provides rich opportunities for inter-faith dialogue, which contributes greatly to the Catholic life of the school. Religious education is at the core of the curriculum through both its status on the timetable and the allocation of curriculum time. Worship and prayer are central to the life of the school which offer liturgical experiences that are rich and formational. The strong tradition of performance, particularly in music, greatly enhances worship and the liturgy. Pupils' understanding of, and engagement with, the Common Good is a particularly impressive feature of the school, and pupils develop a personal responsibility to those in need. The school's drive for excellence is reflected in its accurate self-evaluation and the correct identification of the areas that still need to be improved. The leadership team and governing body adopt a highly strategic role and demonstrate a strong commitment to ensuring the girls in their care develop a strong moral compass and embrace a rich prayer life, invigorated by the Gospel values.

Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent two days in school, visited 16 lessons, five acts of worship, and held interviews with school staff, pupils, a governor and a priest. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, the scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of St Augustine's Priory was carried out under the requirements of the Canon 806 and Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Archbishop of Westminster. The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation.

Inspection Team

David Scott	Lead Inspector
Nancy Conoboy	Associate Inspector
Daniel Keane	Associate Inspector
Paula Whyte	Associate Inspector

Description of School

St Augustine's Priory is an all-through Catholic independent school for girls with boys in the Nursery. It is one-form of entry up to Year 5, when thereafter, it becomes two-forms of entry. It is situated in the LA of Ealing in the locality of Hanger Lane. The school serves families from the parishes of St Benedict's, Ealing; Our Lady of St Joseph's, Hanwell; Our Lady and St Joseph's, Wembley; St James's, Twickenham; SS Peter and Paul, Northfields; Church of the Holy Family, Acton; and Our Lady of Lourdes, Acton.

The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 40%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 25% and from other faiths is 32% and 3% of no faith. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is approximately 45%. There are 455 pupils on roll, with one pupil with a statement of special educational needs and disability (SEND) or an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well below average. One member of staff holds the CCRS qualification.

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DFE Number: 307 6005
URN Number: 101946

Headteacher: Mrs Sarah Raffray
Chair of Governors: Mrs Sue Kirby

Date of previous inspection: 2010
Previous Inspection grades: Outstanding

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?

The last Diocesan inspection report identified three improvement points in relation to classroom religious education:

- Develop and maintain the ‘sharing good practice’ process of peer evaluation
- Continue the implementation of Assessment for Learning and in particular the specification of how specific levels are reached in particular contexts.
- Review and implement the building up of expertise and support in religious studies in the Prep and Junior levels. Refine further target-setting in religious education so that it better supports individual pupils’ spiritual development.

Since that time procedures for teachers sharing good practice have been formalised. The number of teachers in the RE department has increased and all members are practising Catholics. Regular lesson observations and half-termly book-scrutinies give staff many opportunities to reflect on their practice and evaluate its impact on pupils’ learning.

In addition, assessment procedures have been strengthened across the school and have focused specifically on how levels are achieved in a variety of contexts. The different assessment levels are prominently displayed in each classroom and in pupils’ exercise books. Discussion with pupils revealed that they have a good understanding of the requirements for the assessment strands.

The expertise and support for the teaching of RE in the Prep and Junior schools has been strengthened. Staff have attended deanery and diocesan moderation training, including target setting to ensure pupils receive effective support for both their academic and spiritual development. RE staff have also recently attended ‘Laudato Si’ training to explore the theology behind Pope Francis’ Papal Encyclical, and to consider the most effective teaching strategies in covering this aspect.

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

Grade I

The school’s schemes of work from Nursery to sixth form have been carefully mapped to the content of the Curriculum Directory. This enables pupils to gain secure levels of knowledge and confidence in the four main areas of study. All six major world faiths are taught and pupils speak freely about the importance of faith in their everyday lives. In addition, parents of other faiths visit the school regularly to mark the festivals of Diwali and Chanukah. Also, through the Three Faiths Forum, the school has worked in partnership with a Muslim girls’ school in Hendon. This ensures that pupils gain a mature appreciation of faiths that are different from their own. RE leaders, including the headteacher, regularly review the RE curriculum to ensure that it meets the requirements of the Bishops’ Conference. They set clear targets as to what they expect to see in classrooms. Regular monitoring of prayer corners and pupils’ exercise books ensures classroom resources are appropriate and of high quality. Religious education is given a high priority throughout the school. Parents attend all major school events such as the Thanksgiving Liturgy, Carol Service, Masses and assemblies. At the beginning of the school year they are given detailed information about expectations in RE, including an overview of the curriculum content. In addition, the school’s well-designed VLE, accessible by parents, pupils and staff, provides an excellent resource for the study of religious education, and includes very helpful power-point presentations, web links and both in-

house and commercially produced learning resources. In addition, there are a number of well-considered resources for pupils and parents who are non-Catholic.

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

Grade I

Overall, religious education is one of the highest performing subjects in the school. Pupils do well at all key stages. Children enter the school with a range of skills and abilities which can vary from year to year, but are broadly average. They make excellent progress throughout the school and develop into very confident learners, displaying high levels of religious literacy.

In 2015, the proportion of Year 6 pupils gaining Level 4 in religious education was well above that of other core subjects. However, the proportion of pupils gaining Level 5 in religious education was half that achieved by pupils in other core subjects. This is because the new curriculum has helped to provide further challenge for pupils, particularly in some of the units in ATi. Also, as a result of more rigorous moderation procedures, teachers do not award the higher levels until pupils have securely reached them. As a result, teachers' assessments are now more accurate than previously, and they have an excellent understanding of the diocesan levels of attainment.

In 2015, almost all Year 11 pupils gained a grade A*–C in GCSE RE, with almost two thirds achieving A*/A, a proportion which is much higher when compared with their peers nationally. Those who proceeded to post-16 Level 3 courses in Religious Studies do very well in both A2 and AS examinations. The general course for post-16 learners is carefully matched to the Curriculum Directory and uses a range of resources that provide very good coverage of themes such as the Church's liturgical year, the Common Good and current topical national and international issues. Work in pupils' books indicates very positive attitudes to religious education. However, the most able pupils do not always achieve their full potential. Since the last inspection five pupils have gone on to study Theology or Philosophy at university with one former pupil returning to the school as a trainee teacher.

The quality of teaching

Grade I

Overall, teaching across the school in religious education is typically outstanding. Pupils' religious experience is enhanced as they move through the school. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge of scripture and are able to explain the often complex theology that lies behind current affairs. As a result, pupils display high levels of religious literacy. Teachers keep a careful track on pupils' progress. Scrutiny of pupils' books indicates that there are numerous opportunities for extended writing which enables them to explore and deepen their knowledge of religious concepts. Feed-back to pupils on the quality of their work is regular. However, not all teachers provide pupils with incisive feedback, which show clear steps on how to improve their work. Excellent relationships exist between staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves. This contributes strongly to pupils' very positive attitudes to learning throughout the school, in both their academic studies and spiritual growth. Inspection evidence shows that pupils were eager to learn and those interviewed by inspectors commented that they thoroughly enjoyed their RE lessons. Pupils are confident in asking questions in class. This was observed during their work on the Ascension and the early church. However, sometimes teachers' questioning did not always probe pupils' knowledge and understanding sufficiently to ensure they made as much progress as possible, particularly the most able. Lessons plans are clearly linked to the Curriculum Directory. This was very evident in a sixth form RE lesson where students could articulate clearly the links between the work of Pax Christi and the recently published 'Laudato Si.' Younger pupils were observed making good use of scripture and circle time to illustrate the Good News and when Jesus appeared to the disciples for the first time. In all classes pupils worked with enthusiasm, both independently and in groups.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade I

The RE leaders have a very clear vision for the promotion of religious education throughout the school. This vision is understood by all staff and governors. The school's five-year plan articulates clearly its future aspirations and mission, and the centrality of curriculum religious education for the provision of a Catholic education. The RE leadership team have devoted much time and energy to improving the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. Leaders are highly-skilled practitioners who by precept and example model excellent classroom practice. They have high aspirations which focus on pupils' achievement, the deepening of their faith, including their spiritual and moral development. All members of the religious education department are practising Catholics who bear witness to their faith through their work. Arrangements for tracking and assessing are reviewed regularly. For example, in September 2015, sub-leveiling of pupils' progress was introduced in order to track pupils' progress more accurately so that if any pupil is found to be underachieving or is not meeting their challenging targets, swift and appropriate action is taken to ensure that they are soon back on track. The headteacher, together with RE leaders, regularly observe RE teaching and provide staff with helpful feedback. However, records of these visits do not always indicate what precisely needs to be improved, or specify what training or support will be provided to help the teacher, and the timeframe for improvements to be made. Governors visit the school often and conduct focused learning walks, in order that they are able to rigorously challenge and hold leaders to account for the school's performance.

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

- Improve the teaching and pupils' progress still further by ensuring that:
 - teachers provide pupils with more incisive feedback on how to improve their work
 - teachers use questioning more effectively to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding, particularly for the most able
 - records of observations of teaching indicate what precisely needs to be improved, the support and training that will be required and the timeframe for improvements to be made.

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?

There were no recommendations made at the last inspection in regard to the Catholic life of the school. Since this time collective worship has improved markedly. The quality of singing has improved and the liturgical repertoire expanded. Pupils have composed their own setting of the Mass and a specially commissioned hymn book will be published shortly which has been approved by the Bishops' Conference. Pupils now regularly contribute to the planning of the various liturgies, including class Masses, which are significantly richer as a result. The addition of a Prayer Garden for spontaneous prayer and liturgy, has contributed well to ensuring that there is a close harmony between pupils' personal faith journey and the rhythms of the liturgical year. The school has purchased additional resources to enhance the Catholic life of the school. The school's website has been developed to inform parents of what is happening at the school, including the content of RE lessons.

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

Grade I

The school meets the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales requirement in allocating 10% of curriculum time to the teaching of RE at Key Stages 1, 3 and 4 and there is 5% in the sixth form. At Key Stage 2, the curriculum time for RE is 12%, which exceeds the Bishops' requirement. The status of religious education is reflected in the specialist staffing and has been further enhanced by the appointment of an additional full-time RE teacher. Since the last inspection, the department has been refurbished and as a result, the accommodation has been greatly enhanced to include spaces for display which support pupils' the spiritual development. Stimulating classroom displays throughout the school are thought-provoking and are of high quality. Also, the planned re-decoration of the chapel will enrich the girls' experience even further. In 2015/16, the resources allocated to RE were below that of other core subjects. This was due to pressing demands on the overall school budget. However, leaders acknowledge that this needs to be rectified as soon as possible, so that the allocation for RE compares favourably with that of other core subjects. New resources have been purchased, to enable the introduction and effective implementation of the new linear GCSE and A level courses. The new faculty structure and line management by the headteacher, ensures that the subject has a high priority, which underpins its broader and deeper role in the school. Excellent support and guidance are provided by the senior leadership team and the RE link governor. Together, they have ensured that the place and role of religious education is central to the life of the school.

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

Grade I

The experience of Catholic worship is outstanding. Prayer and worship play a pivotal role for staff, pupils and parents. The prayer time, observed by inspectors, was led by pupils and encouraged them to reflect on their own and others' intentions. The school demonstrates an acute awareness of, and sensitivity to, the prayer and worship opportunities for pupils from other faith traditions. With the inspection being conducted in the month of May, the devotion to Mary was very evident through the praying of the Rosary and the daily procession of the statue of Mary to different classrooms. The weekly celebration of the Eucharist provides a central focus and enables pupils and staff from each age phase to come together every three weeks. Pupils are offered the opportunity to train as altar servers and regularly officiate in this capacity at Mass. Pupils take ownership of the preparation and

delivery of liturgies, including Mass. An excellent example of such engagement occurred in 2015, when pupils composed their 'St Augustine's Mass', a setting to mark the school's celebration of 'One Hundred Years of Faith.' Annually, there is a whole school Feast Day Mass held at Ealing Abbey, and last year the centennial Mass was celebrated in the school grounds by the Cardinal. The faculty leader for religious life leads the prayer and liturgy of the school with vigour and creativity, and takes great care to respond to pupils' feedback. During Lent, prayer and penitential services take place in the chapel. However, at present pupils are not given the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The school's extensive grounds enable pupils to take time-out from a busy curriculum and provide opportunities for them to reflect on their faith. 'Emmaus walks' in the grounds and rosary prayers recited in the Prayer Garden, demonstrate the school's strong commitment to providing the best possible resources to support prayer and worship.

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

Grade I

The school's commitment to service and social justice is outstanding. The pupil-led 'call to action' is evident on a school, local, national and international basis. For example, pupils are keen to embrace the spirit of service by supporting the St Augustine's Society, an organisation that promotes opportunities for pupils to explore and develop their counselling roles with their peers. In addition, they have raised funds for the 'Bridge for Nepal' £1 project and have donated toiletries for the 'Homeless in Hanwell.' In 2015, pupils raised funds to cover the cost of two pilgrims attending the Lourdes HCPT pilgrimage. The most impressive example of the school's commitment and contribution to the Common Good was the partnership formed with the charity 'Calais Kitchens', who organised the collection of tins of tuna for refugees in Calais. This was a whole school initiative co-ordinated by a sixth former, which included leading an assembly to explore the theology underpinning her actions. However, at St Augustine's, service is not just confined to fundraising. For example, the Stewardship Group and the Justice and Peace Group, recently met with the local Member of Parliament to lobby her about the use of size zero models. In addition, the door to the Chapter Room has been adopted as a Holy Door of Mercy, with each key stage decorating the door for a term during the year. The school works very effectively to ensure that the rich and diverse cultural backgrounds of all pupils are celebrated regularly in assemblies. Pupils are afforded many opportunities to take on leadership responsibilities that encourage them to develop their own individual talents, so that they can be of service to others. Pupils are proud of their community and understand the importance of working together. The programme of liturgies and assemblies provide excellent opportunities for pupils to put into action the Gospel values, such as compassion and mercy.

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 Augustine's enjoys close and very positive relationships with parents, local parishes, other Catholic schools and the diocese. Through its highly supportive and collegiate approach, the school has on numerous occasions been able to reach out and support families in times of distress and crisis. Overall, surveys of parents' views reflect how positive they feel about the school and how caring and approachable they find staff. The school supports a local primary school by planning and leading a retreat programme for Year 6 pupils. Also, along with all the Catholic schools in the deanery, the school is taking part in a shared pilgrimage to mark the close of the Year of Mercy. The school works very closely with parents and carers, by extending invitations to assemblies, services and celebrations. Also, RE leaders regularly invite parents from different faiths to share their religious experience with pupils, and to celebrate special festivals. Regular communication through the 'Priory Post' helps to keep parents, carers and the wider community abreast of the pupils' latest academic, sporting, creative and spiritual successes. The school's website, keeps parents

up-to-date about events taking place at the school together. It also contains a wealth of excellent information relating to the RE curriculum, lessons and homework. Close partnerships with other local Catholic schools as well as with secondary headteachers, enables staff to share ideas and good practice so that the Catholic life of the school is at the centre of strategic planning. Staff and governors regularly attend training events and conferences run by the diocese and enjoy warm relations with the local clergy in planning and delivering the school's liturgical celebrations.

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

Grade I

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school is excellent. The headteacher, ably supported by senior leaders, the RE team, teachers and governors have ensured that the school's vision statement is reflected in all aspects of its work: 'To ensure that girls leave St Augustine's equipped with the full range of skills required for life-long success as a woman.' This is demonstrated by the commitment of the leaders to the Church's mission in the promotion of the Catholic ethos of the school, where opportunities in abundance are given so that pupils and staff can flourish. However, leaders acknowledge that this aspect could be strengthened still further if more teachers were encouraged to gain the CCRS qualification. The six core values of: 'A love of learning'; 'Academic excellence'; 'Integrity and truth'; 'Courage'; 'Freedom'; and 'A Community' permeate every aspect of school life. The assembly, tutorial and liturgy programme, together with the regular celebration of the Mass, including class and whole school acts of worship, shape and foster this friendly and welcoming community. Governors are fulsome in their support for the school and in maintaining its Catholic identity and ethos. They have high levels of expertise and are extremely well-organised and thorough in their approaches, with a clear understanding of their strategic role. Since the last inspection, they have made a significant contribution to the school's work and development and in particular, to strengthening its Catholic dimension. The distinctive Catholic life experienced by the pupils of St Augustine's Priory is greatly valued by parents. As one parent commented about her daughter's experience at the school, 'You are valued as a person, you are nurtured to learn, not pressured to produce a desired statistic in a league table.'

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

- Introducing a programme of Reconciliation.
- Increase the budget for religious education so that it is at least in line with core subjects.
- Increase the proportion of teachers who hold the CCRS qualification.