

St Philip's School

6 Wetherby Place, Kensington, London, SW7 4NE

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 8 March 2019



Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education is good

- St Philip's school offers a well-considered, relevant and dynamic curriculum for religious education across both key stages, based on the Religious Education Curriculum Directory.
- Pupils are religiously literate and, in most cases, can articulate their knowledge and understanding of religion in a meaningful and purposeful way.
- Pupils' attitudes to religious education are good and they demonstrate a sound knowledge of the topics covered.
- Systems are becoming increasingly rigorous to ensure that the teaching of religious education meets the needs of the children as well as the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory.
- Monitoring and moderation is beginning to inform planning in religious education.
- Good teaching in religious education throughout the school results in the children's developing progress over time.
- Leaders have a clear vision for further improvement in religious education.
- The governing body is very committed and ambitious for the school.
- Pupil behaviour in lessons is exemplary.

Classroom religious education is not yet outstanding because

- Pupils are not yet given enough opportunities for challenge and creativity in religious education lessons and to extend their learning independently.
- Moderation of work in religious education is not yet rigorous enough and needs to be discussed in more depth and shared at deanery and diocesan level.
- There is insufficient coverage of a range of other world religions.

B. The Catholic life of the school is good

- The school's mission, 'To aim for the higher gifts through gentleness and kindness' is lived out authentically at St Philip's.
- Leaders, including governors, are committed with great faith to the Catholic life of the school, and challenge one another to improve this further.
- Prayer and worship is a strong feature of the school and pupils are thoroughly engaged in the experiences the school offers.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are exemplary.
- The school recognises the achievements of pupils in every aspect of school life.
- The school's self-evaluation demonstrates the large number of initiatives that have been introduced to further develop the Catholic life of the school.
- There is a clear commitment to developing the Common Good in response to the Church's call to serve
- Parents are very supportive of the school, one saying, 'There is a great sense of joy in religion at St Philip's.'

The Catholic life of the school is not yet outstanding because

- Pupils do not currently receive their weekly entitlement of 10% curriculum time for religious education.
- Pupils are not yet given enough opportunities to take ownership in preparing and leading collective worship on a more regular basis.
- Pupils are not yet fully involved in leading charitable works in order to understand more fully the call to serve and the theology underpinning their actions.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

Since the previous inspection, leaders have revised the school's marking policy to ensure consistency in marking and feedback to pupils. Pupils were able to discuss how this feedback helps them to improve their work in religious education (RE) as well as being able to let their teachers know how they are coping with the work. There has been a whole school review of resources to provide a greater focus for religious education and this was clearly evident during a learning walk around the school as well as in lessons observed. These resources reflect the liturgical year as well as additional initiatives, for example, from 'Adoremus' – the national Eucharistic pilgrimage and congress.

The content of classroom religious education is outstanding

The head of religious education has been instrumental in devising a creative, interesting and bespoke curriculum for pupils in the upper part of the school, which matches the expectations of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD). The design of this curriculum has encouraged pupils to take increasing ownership of their learning and revision in preparation for the 13+ Common Entrance Examination religious studies examination (Syllabus B, Roman Catholic Tradition). In discussion with pupils, they expressed their gratitude to the head of religious education for the personally created curriculum booklets for each topic of study which support them in their lessons and with revision. The content of the curriculum is challenging and focused, giving opportunities for all pupils to achieve well. A whole school religious education lesson on Thursday mornings follows the liturgical year and all teachers participate in supporting the children to write up an account of what they have heard. The school is mindful that the curriculum for pupils in Years 3 and 4, although in line with the requirements of the RECD, is still developing and they are working closely with the diocesan advisor to ensure the curriculum is increasingly rigorous and challenging. Coverage of other faiths, as part of the religious education curriculum, is developing but recent developments are not yet embedded.

Pupil achievement in religious education is good

Pupils generally make good progress across the school from their starting points in religious education. There are inconsistencies, however, in achievement between the younger pupils and those higher up the school who are preparing for Common Entrance and whose attainment is noticeably stronger. Pupils, particularly in Year 3 and Year 4, are not being given ample opportunities for challenge in RE and classwork is not rigorous enough. There is an over reliance on worksheet based activities which limits the pupils' opportunities for writing at length. Pupils are not given enough opportunities to apply their knowledge and understanding of beliefs and practices to everyday life and lessons often lack creativity and opportunities for independent research. The progress of pupils in Years 3 and 4 are not yet measured against appropriate benchmarks in RE; the school is aware of this and are making a conscious effort to remedy this by working closely with other deanery schools and the diocese. Pupils in the older years achieve excellent results as a result of challenging work and high expectations. Their results in Common Entrance 13+ religious studies examination is on a par with other core subjects. Assessment in these years is rigorous and tracked consistently. The school's revised marking policy is having an impact for pupils across the school who know and understand what they have to do to improve their work. Younger pupils were able to say that they found it helpful to let their teacher know if work was too easy or too challenging by way of a feedback system in their books. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive and they have a sound understanding of key religious vocabulary. They are religiously literate, highly articulate and are happy to share what they have learnt.

The quality of teaching is good

Teachers create a positive climate for learning and pupils are interested and eager to learn in the RE lessons. The teaching of religious education across the school is predominantly teacher directed with limited opportunities for independent study and collaboration. Pupils are rarely given opportunities to be exposed to a range of learning styles or to experience creativity by way of ICT, art and drama. The teachers of RE have identified ways in which they can link with other schools in the deanery and diocese in order to observe a wider range of teaching and assessment. This will further enhance the quality of teaching. In the best lessons observed, pupils were able to participate in discussion, for example, in a lesson on King David in Year 6, pupils were keen to share their knowledge about how many commandments King David had possibly broken and in a Year 8 lesson, pupils were exceptionally articulate in discussing the possible misconceptions people might have about Catholic priests. Challenging questioning is used most significantly in the upper school to stretch pupils' knowledge and understanding and extend their ability to reflect on the deeper significance of religious belief and practice. The relationships between teachers and pupils at St Philip's are exemplary and behaviour in all lessons observed was excellent. The subject leader for religious education has outstanding subject knowledge and, in discussion with pupils, they said how much they valued this. Pupils feel they can ask their teacher anything on a given subject and the teacher will be able to guide and help them.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education is good

The school's Diocesan Self Evaluation Form (SEF) is a clear indication that the headmaster, assisted ably by the deputy headmaster (academic) who is also the head of religious education, have high expectations and are committed to achieving high standards in religious education. Although a number of new initiatives have been introduced, notably in terms of assessment and moderation, these are not yet embedded and therefore their impact cannot be determined. Once these are embedded, the school's SEF will become less of a descriptive document and will show impact of initiatives more clearly. Leaders in the school actively support staff professional development to further their knowledge and professional expertise in the subject. The school has been encouraged by its collaboration with local schools in the deanery as well as their contribution at a diocesan level. This engagement at leadership level will continue to ensure best practice is observed and shared.

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

- Ensure pupils are given enough opportunities for challenge and creativity in RE lessons and to extend their learning independently.
- Ensure moderation of work in RE across the school is rigorous and is discussed and shared at deanery and diocesan level.
- Ensure there is sufficient coverage of a range of other world religions.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

The requirement to review and revise the timetabling of this subject throughout the year to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Bishops' Conference has not yet been fully addressed. A review of work on developing the Common Good so that pupils are able to develop more long term and sustainable projects to serve the wider community was undertaken and the school has started to develop this but initiatives are not yet established and pupils are not yet actively engaged in developing these in depth. The school's mission statement was reviewed and is prominently displayed and known by the pupils and the wider community; it is lived out on a daily basis.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

is good

Pupils do not currently receive 10% of religious education time when considering it as a proportion of the total teaching time and are therefore not provided with the curriculum time required by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. The RE leader is working closely with the diocesan RE advisor to improve this. The commitment of the RE lead in planning and preparing outstanding content in RE lessons is indicative of the value placed on RE as the core of the curriculum. A generous budget is further evidence of the centrality of religious education in the school. A link governor for RE has recently been appointed and the deputy head (who is also RE lead) reports to the newly created Pastoral Governors' Committee twice yearly. It is clearly evident that resources and displays reflect the Catholic identity of the school. Senior leaders are committed to ensuring religious education is central in the school, and this vision is shared by the governing body.

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

is outstanding

The experience of Catholic worship is a strength of the school. Daily assemblies closely follow the liturgical year and there is a high level of pupil engagement. In the assembly observed during the inspection, pupils were involved by playing the piano to accompany hymns, reading an entry from a piece of classwork and reading the Gospel. There was a period for silent prayer which was marked reverently by all pupils. The school are looking at ways in which pupils can take an even more active role in leading collective worship. The pupils describe the school as a 'family' and were very keen to tell the inspection team how they all knew each other by name and there was always someone to talk to. The school have reflected on suitable trips to link with the RE curriculum, for example, a visit to Tyburn Convent to learn about the Tyburn martyrs. The school prepares the pupils in Year 4 for the sacrament of First Holy Communion and in Year 8 for Confirmation. The sacrament of Reconciliation is offered every term. The pupils attend Mass regularly at the local Brompton Oratory and are involved as altar servers and in the 'Schola Cantorum'. An excellent initiative has been introduced during occasional Masses where the RE leader provides a commentary throughout the Mass as it is being said. The parents of the school have responded well to this and have asked for a Mass especially for parents so that they can all understand the Mass in a deeper, more meaningful way. This is testament to the school's commitment to enhancing the experience of worship, prayer and liturgy, for the whole school community.

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

is good

The school supports a variety of charities and provides pupils with the opportunity to choose which charities they would like to support throughout the year. The 'Kensington and Chelsea Foundation'

talk to the pupils about their particular charities and pupils then take a vote for the two charities they would like to support. In interviews with pupils, they spoke about their contribution to the 'Eye Hope' charity which funds research into causes of eye loss. The school also support the Poppy appeal and host an annual conker competition for charity. Funds from the Christmas jumper day, home clothes charity day and the summer fair also raise money for good causes. The majority of fundraising events are planned by parents and staff, and the pupils have said that they would like to have more input into engaging with the Common Good and to be of service to others, especially in the local community. This sentiment was also voiced by a number of parents in the diocesan parental questionnaire. Pupils are acutely aware of the Church's call to serve and are eager to be given the responsibility to lead fundraising projects.

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 good

Links with the local parish of Brompton Oratory are strong and the school engages wholeheartedly through participation at Mass, Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. The school chaplain is supportive of the school's involvement in the parish and was very complimentary of the RE lead's commitment to shaping the Catholic life of the school. Partnerships with parents are also strong and there was an excellent return of diocesan parent questionnaires during the inspection. On the whole, parents were very positive about classroom RE and the Catholic life of the school and some comments included, 'At St Philip's the level of Catholic teaching is far and away the best we know' and 'it is a wonderful feeling to know that the school is looking after my son's Catholic learning. There is a caring Catholic ethos that surrounds the school. I could not be happier with the religious education my sons are receiving here.' The collaboration with the diocese is improving and the school have been working closely with the diocesan RE advisor. Increasing links with deanery schools and the diocese are proving to be very helpful in encouraging the school to witness and share best practice. The RE lead has recently contributed his excellent topic booklets to the diocesan community of schools.

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

is good

The headmaster is supported very ably by the deputy headmaster and both are fully committed to promoting of the Catholic life of the school in their strategic vision. Their developing links with the deanery and diocese are to be commended and are an example of good leadership. Leaders are exceptionally proud of their school and show a clear commitment to creating a vibrant, worshipping community where all are cared for and valued. The governing body is ambitious for the school and provide a supportive yet challenging approach with energy and enthusiasm. They know the school well and share in all aspects of school life.

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

- Ensure pupils receive their full weekly entitlement of 10% curriculum time for religious education.
- To celebrate the Catholic life of the school by developing the school website, thereby enabling the wider community to appreciate the often excellent work undertaken in the Catholic life of the school.
- Encourage pupils throughout the school to take ownership in preparing and leading collective worship on a more regular basis.

Information about this school

- The school is a one-form entry Catholic preparatory school in the locality of Kensington and Chelsea.
- The school serves the parish of Brompton Oratory.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 91%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 8% and from other faiths is 1%.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 59%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 1.
- There are 0 % of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities and none have statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average

Department for Education Number	207/6104
Unique Reference Number	100516
Local Authority	Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Type of school	Preparatory
School category	Independent
Age range of pupils	7-13
Gender of pupils	Male
Number of pupils on roll	91
The appropriate authority	Independent charitable trust
Chair	Mr John Dean
Headteacher	Mr Alexander Wulffen-Thomas
Telephone number	0207 373 3944
Website	www.stpschool.co.uk
Email address	office@stpschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 September 2013
Grades from previous inspection:	
Classroom religious education	Outstanding
The Catholic life of the school	Very Good

Information about this inspection

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

- 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 3 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended an assembly and conducted a learning walk.
- Meetings were held with school staff, pupils, chaplain and a governor.
- 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.

Mrs Monica McCarthy

Lead Inspector

Mrs Geraldine Pears

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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