

# Westminster Diocese Inspection Report

## St Paul's Catholic College

The Ridings, Middlesex, TW16 6NX  
Date of inspection: 18-19 November 2015



### A. Classroom Religious Education

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

**Overall Grade I**

The college's motto 'Achieving Excellence, Learning to Serve' is implemented outstandingly well in its practice. St Paul's provides its students with a very comprehensive, rich and vibrant curriculum. It is based solidly on the Curriculum Directory, and engages students fully in their learning so that they make excellent progress over time in religious literacy. Resources are imaginative and students are very well involved in enhancing the Catholic ethos of the environment within and around the college site. Students' achievement at Key Stages 3 and 4 is excellent. At post-16, over three years, the A Level outcomes in religious education were at least good. In 2015, there was a dip in results, partially because of turbulence in staffing. The college has rightly recognised that this is an area for improvement and is taking steps to support staff in delivering examination specifications. The overwhelming impact of teaching is typically outstanding and is evident in the students' engagement, enthusiasm and success in learning. Religious education plays a central role in developing and sustaining the college's Catholic life. Working closely with the chaplain, the head of department is determined to ensure excellence of provision. The staff team works very effectively together and recognises where improvements are needed. Self-evaluation is accurate. Staff, receive well-considered support to improve teaching and learning. The department moderates its work regularly in conjunction with other local Catholic schools and through the deanery. The Governors understand very well the work of the religious education department and work determinedly with the college to help develop the religious literacy of the students.

### 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**

This Catholic college lives its mission statement outstandingly well. It is a vibrant Catholic community. This ethos permeates policies and procedures throughout the school. The headteacher and senior leaders are fully committed to the Church's mission at home and abroad. They, together with the religious education team, the local clergy and the exceptionally cooperative students, drive the development of a Catholic culture. Religious education is at the heart of the curriculum and prayer and liturgy are part of the daily life of the students and staff. As a result, students and staff have rich opportunities for prayer, reflection and personal growth. Students who are not Catholic feel at home and participate willingly because of the excellent nurture in helping them to feel comfortable with Catholic practice. Students and staff at all levels flourish. The unswerving commitment of the school to the Common Good is demonstrated particularly clearly in the post-16 core religious education curriculum. New staff are very well inducted into the school and its Catholic life, as are new students. Governors devote their time and energy very effectively to the strategic development of its Catholic life. Partnership with the diocese is excellent. There are regular opportunities to explore the views of all stakeholders. The overwhelming majority of parents and students have a genuine sense of belonging to St Paul's Catholic community.

## 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 11 lessons, two learning walks, four assemblies and a tutor period, and carried out 10 interviews with school staff, pupils and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, discussion with local clergy, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of St Paul's Catholic College, Sunbury-on-Thames, 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

Mrs Sheila Nolan	Lead Inspector
Rev Antony Homer	Associate Inspector
Mrs Bernadette O'Hanlon	Associate Inspector
Mr Stuart Alexander	Associate Inspector
Mrs Nancy Conoboy	Associate Inspector

## Description of School

This voluntary-aided school is a six-form entry in the LA of Surrey and the locality of Spelthorne. The school serves the parishes of St Lawrence, Feltham, St Ignatius, Sunbury, St Michael's, Ashford, Our Lady of the Rosary, Staines and St David's, Stanwell. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 74%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 13%, from other Faiths, 6% and 7% of no declared faith. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 52%.

There are 1033 pupils on roll, with 13 pupils with statements of special educational need and/or disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health & Care Plans (EHCP). The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an additional language is above average. There is a below average rate of families claiming free school meals. There are 147 pupils in receipt of the Pupil Premium.

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Headteacher: Miss Ceri Bacon  
Chair of Governors: Mrs Cathy Hobday

Date of previous inspection: 13 September 2010  
Previous Inspection grades: Good

<b>Key for inspection grades:</b>	<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 leadership of the religious education department has changed since the last inspection. The team has had a central role in the overall marked progress made across the school. Students have made rapid and sustained progress in religious education external examinations, particularly in obtaining the highest available grades. The quality of learning has also improved in other year groups with issues from the last inspection addressed very thoroughly. Checks on learning in lessons have been well developed. Schemes of work have been rewritten and staff training put in place to support teachers in challenging underachievement and matching work in lessons to the needs of students. Above all, the school has taken measures to meet fully the requirements of the Bishops' Conference in relation to the time available for classroom religious education in all year groups.

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

#### **Grade 1**

The religious education programme of study at St Paul's Catholic College is fully compliant with the requirements of the Curriculum Directory and is well structured to meet the needs of the students and aid their development in religious literacy. All four strands of the Curriculum Directory are carefully linked to schemes of work and lesson plans in all key stages. Lessons build on the strengths of teachers who are creative and imaginative in their delivery. There is a systematic study of the teachings of the Church, of the scriptures, and of other key elements of the Christian message. The study of other faiths is evident at Key Stage 3 and the department is looking to develop further the programmes of study for Year 9 to include a more thorough examination of Judaism. At Key Stages 4 and 5, students are about to take part in an extensive programme with speakers from across the faith range. The College has a 'spiral' approach built into their programmes of study, allowing each topic to build upon the foundations of the previous learning and topic. Key ideas are teased out each year through increasingly complex input and responses from students. Students' progress is measured through regular assessments built into the schemes of work for each half term, offering an accurate vehicle for staff to access and respond to students. At Key Stage 4, the vision of the departmental leader and her team has made the delivery of examination topics creative and challenging, further encouraging students' engagement. Students see topics as relevant and accessible to and in their daily lives. Post-16 core religious education encourages students to develop their responses as they explore the role of faith in the modern day. The study programme covers topics such as global poverty, slavery and human trafficking, ethics and sexual morality, all of which build into a coherent response to the demands of the Common Good. Students produce a theological reflection each half term considering an aspect of these topics. Advanced level students follow the core religious education programme as well as studying for the examination in Philosophy and Ethics.

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

### **Grade I**

The College has taken seriously the charge to close the gap in students' learning and to move them on in their religious literacy. Students sit a baseline test in Year 7 which allows the religious education department to pinpoint current levels of understanding and religious literacy. Systems are in place to meet the individual student's learning needs in order to move them on in their learning. There are good examples of in-house departmental moderation and a sharing of moderation with other local Catholic secondary schools. Students' progress is regularly assessed and monitored and staff feedback is both constructive and informative. This results in rapid progress across Key Stages 3 and 4 with above average results in GCSE examinations, often from below average starting points. Students know what they need to address in order to move on and to further develop in their understanding. In conversation with students across the key stages, it was clear that students were well aware of their current working level and of their potential to exceed their initial targets as a direct result of the regular feedback from their teachers. In advanced level examinations, students at Key Stage 5 make steady, and often good or better, progress. There was a dip in results in 2015 but the college has taken robust steps to address this issue. Currently, students are achieving well and making good progress, both in examination courses and in the core religious education programme.

## **The quality of teaching**

### **Grade I**

Teaching promotes learning exceptionally well. This was demonstrated clearly in the above average outcomes in examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 and in the rapid development of students' religious literacy throughout Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. The students' success is underpinned by the deep subject knowledge of teaching staff and by the warm working relationships in the majority of classrooms. Expectations are consistently high and, as a result, students give of their best at all times. Very effective efforts are in place to link classroom religious education to current world events and daily life. For example, students in a lesson on the Sacrament of Marriage, made excellent progress because of the very personalised approach to marriage vows adopted by the class teacher. In the most successful lessons, students supported each other very well so that all groups were able to make rapid progress. Staff employed a variety of different teaching styles and activities to push students to give fuller and more rounded responses to tasks. Students reported how secure they felt in offering their own opinions within lessons and how they appreciated the teachers' willingness to share ideas. These elements were especially valued by non-Catholic students who understood the need for a Catholic response to issues but were grateful that other points of view could be articulated and evaluated. Students' books and folders show high levels of religious literacy and an increasingly thorough understanding of the ideas involved in a range of topics. Staff are very secure in sharing feedback and assessment information. Books are regularly marked and each half term, students undertake a significant piece of assessed work on which they receive substantive and helpful feedback for their next steps to further improve upon their grades. Students' responses are often shared with parents through good news postcards. This process promotes very well a dialogue between teachers and students and fosters personal reflection.

## **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education**

### **Grade I**

The headteacher, the senior leadership team and the head of department communicate outstandingly well a vision of Catholic formation at the centre of St Paul's Catholic College. This vision includes leading the way in modelling high quality teaching, producing creative learning

resources and regular structured assessments of students' work and understanding. The head of department has an infectious passion that echoes the college's motto of 'Achieving Excellence, Learning to Serve'. This passion finds expression both in academic studies and in the encouragement of students to support the Common Good. Although new to post, the head of department has a dynamic vision of where she wants the department to be. She is ably supported by the senior leadership of the college. Her approach is firmly rooted in collaboration with her senior colleagues and working with the strengths of her team. The head of department offers invaluable support to the feeder schools of St Paul's and to the student teachers of St Mary's University. The department regularly addresses students at the University as well as hosting PGCE students for their school placements. The college runs a series of Year 5 retreat days developed by and delivered by the department and the Lay Chaplain for pupils from the feeder primary schools. These retreat days encourage pupils to experience religious education outside the formal remit of the classroom, to gain an insight into a day in the life of a secondary school, as well as providing an invaluable support for the transition experience of students from primary to secondary school. The department has thoroughly reviewed the current religious education curriculum and are looking to further develop schemes of work to address the expected changes in GCSE specifications. There is a genuine and accurate self-evaluation of the work of the department along with excellent training for staff both in the department and throughout the school.

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

- Look at additional ways of supporting students to make faster progress in specialist religious education at Key Stage 5, either through study skills sessions or themed study days.
- Enhance even further communication with parents through sharing more fully the success of students.

## **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?**

A new chaplain has been appointed since the last inspection. There is a coherent retreat programme in place for Key Stage 3. Parish clergy are more deeply involved with the college than previously. Alterations to the roles of the chaplain and head of department have supported the development of Catholic life throughout the school. Above all, the school has taken measures to meet fully the requirements of the Bishops' Conference in relation to the time available for classroom religious education in all year groups. The college now demonstrates explicitly that it has the students' academic development in religious education, as well as their spiritual life, at the heart of its work.

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

#### **Grade I**

Religious education is at the core of the curriculum as is evidenced in its status in the timetable, the accommodation and its resources. The school chapel is a calm and welcoming space much loved by staff and students. The college is fortunate to have the services of a lay chaplain as well as of many of the local clergy. Students have 10% of curriculum time at Key Stage 4 and 5% at Key Stage 5. The departmental budget is in line with the core subjects of English and mathematics. The governors' spiritual life committee supports the department and leadership team very well through its rigorous reviews and visits to the school. Parents and students, before joining the school, are made fully aware that religious education is at the core of the curriculum. The importance of Catholic life is emphasised by the headteacher at the school's open day for potential new students. Governors and the leadership team offer outstanding support and guidance in developing religious education within the school. The leadership of religious education is exceptionally well supported and guided in her work to develop all of the staff within the department.

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

#### **Grade I**

Prayer and a richly creative liturgical life are central to the work of St Paul's. Students' experience of prayer reflects the Church's liturgical year as well as responding to key events in both their own lives and that of others. The theme of an assembly, for example, during the inspection, responded very effectively to the recent terrorist attacks in France. Celebration of the Eucharist is a regular experience of the whole school community, both within the school and in the parish. Daily prayer is an integral part of the college day. Students have opportunities for very active sacramental lives, including for the Sacrament of Reconciliation in Lent and Advent. Other rich opportunities in the college are presented through the new prayer garden with its planned contributions from the many parishes served by the school, the Stations of the Cross in the garden and Our Lady's shrine. Many religious artefacts across the site encourage students to reflect throughout the busy school day as do the prayers in tutor time and in lessons. A parish priest, also a governor, commented, 'It is like walking in God's garden in St Paul's'. Students engage well in all aspects of the college's Catholic life. Non-Catholics are welcomed into liturgies and services, and feel comfortable within the college ethos. Governors attend religious celebrations regularly and take an active role alongside the

students. There is a strong culture of evaluation and improvement within the college. The leadership team, for example, monitors the quality of the students' prayer experience through questionnaires and takes steps to address any issues arising. Parents are welcomed into the college's liturgical celebrations and a number attend regularly. Assemblies are engaging and relevant. For example, a Year 7 assembly, led by a tutor group, challenged all to consider what it means to say 'God is eternal'. The Chaplain has worked very effectively, in the short time she has been in post, to increase students' participation in preparing and leading liturgical celebrations. All year groups are well represented in the college liturgy team. The students speak highly of the chaplain and the opportunity the liturgy group gives them to use their talents. Class retreats are embedded at Key Stage 3 and afford students creative ways to pray, for instance through art and pottery. Each year concludes the retreats by coming together to celebrate the Eucharist. In past years, older students have had opportunities for retreats. The chaplain has, as a high priority, the development of the programme for all Key Stage 4 and 5 groups, along with a planned staff retreat. Opportunities for staff to deepen their understanding of the Catholic faith are rich. The leadership team and chaplain model assemblies and prayer opportunities that reflect Catholic tradition, scripture, reflection, application in life and prayer. At the time of the inspection, subjects are also considering how their department is summed up in a quote from scripture in readiness for the Advent liturgies.

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

### **Grade 1**

The college's outstanding commitment to the Common Good is evidenced through a wide variety of initiatives, demonstrating clearly a deep understanding of the college mission statement. Students are actively involved in local and global commitments to allow all to flourish. In college, there is a thriving liturgy group which is responsible for co-ordinating and leading the various opportunities for liturgies and response to charitable work in the local community, for example, supporting the local food bank at harvest time and the annual poppy appeal. Students cited a range of reasons for belonging to the group. One student explained that they joined as a way of living out their commitment as a newly confirmed Catholic. A Year 7 student explained that he wanted to give something back to the college as an acknowledgement of what the college is doing for him. Students are very clear for the reasons for their involvement in a wide range of causes, through both fundraising and active service. At their own levels, students understand the Church's call for peace and justice. They are able to articulate the importance of using their gifts and talents to help others. The governors actively support the work of the students. For example, the governing body fund-matched the efforts of the students in raising funds to support the annual attendance at the diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes as well as responding to the students' requests for contributions for the sixth-form's annual Christmas lunch. As well as providing a meal, the college rugby team sing carols as part of the entertainment for the senior citizens. The underpinning value of respect for all cultures and faiths secures very harmonious relationships across the college community. The global dimension of the college's commitment to the common good is evidenced in its work with a link school in Tanzania and the support given to one of the local parish's project based in the townships of South Africa. The college has also fostered excellent relationships with the local primary schools through the Year 5 retreat programme and subject-based links. Students spoke enthusiastically of opportunities for involvement in projects and how lessons supported their understanding of how to live a Christian life. For example, a Year 7 student explained that analysing how Moses stood up for what is right allowed the class to think how they might stand up for right causes in their own lives. The whole community of St Paul's Catholic College fosters strong relationships where all are encouraged to flourish.

## **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**

The college has a strong partnership with parents. Parents' views are sought regularly as part of the cycle of self-evaluation. In the diocesan questionnaire sent to all parents and to which over 600 responded, they commented on how they are "warmly welcomed" to the college, and are "really happy" with the college. One parent wrote, "The school has been the making of my children." Parents are invited to take part in the college liturgies and they are kept informed of all aspects of college life through the monthly newsletter 'Epistle'. The relationship with the local parishes is vibrant. Each parish has responded, for example, to the invitation to provide a symbolic object for the garden representing its community. The college has a strong relationship with the Diocese and with other Catholic schools. Staff and governors actively cooperate with the Diocesan Education Service, attending meetings and training. Attendance at deanery meetings, chaplains' meetings, and meetings of heads of religious education all contribute to the fostering of strong links with parishes, other schools, the Diocese and St Mary's University.

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

### **Grade I**

The college mission statement reminds staff and students to support a lived Catholic experience for the whole community. This drives the senior leadership team to ensure that all experience the richness of Catholic life. The headteacher has very successfully promoted the strengths of the college in the local parishes so that St Paul's is now a much sought-after Catholic school. The governors have a thorough knowledge of how the college lives out its mission statement. They are regular visitors to the college and have regular contact with students, sometimes through their presentations at the spiritual life sub-committee. Self-evaluation is accurate and a genuine vehicle to support the development of the college's Catholic life. There are very good systems to support and induct staff into its Catholic life. Governors have a good understanding of the college's evaluation and are aware of what the college needs to do to improve. The deputy head, alongside his colleagues, responsible for Catholic life makes a very strong contribution to the development of both the religious education department and the college's Catholic life.

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

- Embed the retreat programme so that it always includes Key Stages 4 and 5.
- Continue to develop even further the students' experience of morning prayer as identified in their recent tutor-prayer-time evaluations.