

Finchley Catholic High School

Woodside Lane, Finchley, N12 8TA

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 13 & 14 March 2019



Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education is good

- The requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory are met in an engaging and creative way, addressing the needs of pupils.
- There is strong attainment and progress by pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5. Most pupils make good progress in their knowledge of the Catholic faith and their religious literacy is well developed for their age and ability.
- Teachers have high expectations and teach lessons that deepen pupils' religious literacy. Teachers create a positive climate for learning in their lessons; pupils have a positive attitude towards their learning, are interested, engaged and eager to do well.
- There is a dynamic and creative vision for religious education in which staff and pupils strive consistently for excellence. The newly appointed subject leader and chaplain have a strong understanding and appreciation of the centrality of religious education in the mission of the church and its impact in the daily life of the school.

Classroom religious education is not yet outstanding because

- Differentiation is not yet evident in all religious education lessons and there is not yet enough stretch and challenge tasks for the higher ability pupils.
- Assessment is not yet fully consistent across the religious education department in order for pupils to be provided with meaningful feedback, which would enable all of them to make excellent progress.

B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- Religious education is at the heart of Finchley Catholic High School and permeates all aspects of school life.
- The school meets the Bishops' Conference requirement for a curriculum time in all key stages.
- A variety of different styles of worship is made available to the pupils to allow the widest possible experience of the breadth of Catholic prayer and worship.
- The school has an extensive programme of opportunities for pupils to respond to the needs of others and the pupils have a strong commitment to the Common Good through their fundraising for a range of charities and by raising awareness of those most in need.
- The pupils are not only actively involved in service, but this is reinforced by an excellent understanding of the theology underpinning their actions.
- The school cultivates excellent relationships with parents, other Catholic schools, parishes and the diocese.
- Parents express strong support of the school and feel welcome at the many school events which celebrate the Catholic life of the school.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and demonstrates that the leadership team have a clear understanding of their strengths alongside areas they need to develop.
- The headteacher has made an impressive impact on the school. The leadership team is fully committed to the Catholic life of the school and the importance of religious education influencing all aspects of school life. Governors share the strategic leadership with energy and enthusiasm, offering highly effective support and hold the school to account.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

All staff in the religious education department (RE) have attended relevant professional development on assessment and have undertaken assessment moderation internally to ensure greater accuracy. They have also had appropriate training on assessment at GCSE and A level. The department has taken part in the diocesan pilot on assessment. The RE schemes of work now reflect the new assessment changes at Key Stage 3. At all key stages, the department uses the whole school marking and assessment policy. Assessment practice in RE has improved in consistency and most pupils know and understand what to do to improve their work and make faster progress.

The content of classroom religious education is outstanding

The contribution of religious education to the Catholic life of the school is strong and its influence permeates all aspects of the learning environment of the school. Religious education programmes are used creatively to enhance the delivery of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD) resulting in a progressive, cohesive and developmental programme for each key stage. There is a wide range of evidence to show how topics are revisited throughout the delivery of the curriculum over all key stages, demonstrating progression and greater depth of provision. Resources are used creatively to facilitate excellent links to the key aspects of the RECD and ensure the provision of a dynamic curriculum at all stages. As pupils progress through the key stages, the delivery of religious education is structured to ensure progression and development of content at deeper levels.

Pupil achievement in religious education is good

Pupil achievement is good when evidence of progress is measured against appropriate benchmarks such as levels of attainment, the diocesan pilot 'standards document' and the school's own internal systems. Attainment is as good as other core subjects. There is strong attainment and progress for pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 and 5. Most pupils make good progress in their knowledge of the Catholic faith and their religious literacy is well developed for their age and ability. Most pupils know and understand what they have to do to improve their work and show a good understanding of the levels of attainment. Pupils' attitudes to learning are consistently positive and have an impact on the progress they make. Good progress is made by most learners, according to ability, and there is a good level of challenge with supporting evidence, which stretches pupils' knowledge and understanding. Pupils' are very confident in their use of religious literacy. They enjoy RE and are keen to succeed. They have a good understanding of their target grades and apply a wide variety of skills to great effect in their work.

The quality of teaching is good

Teaching is consistently good and results in most pupils making good progress and achieving well over time. Pupils have a positive attitude to RE and enjoy their lessons showing high levels of engagement. They are provided with opportunities to discuss topics and learn from their peers. Teachers create a positive climate for learning in their lessons and pupils are interested, engaged and eager to do well. Teachers communicate high expectations in lessons. Pupils are set targets and generally know how well they are doing, what they need to do to improve and are keen to do well. In one lesson, there was strength in visual literacy as the Year 8 pupils were discussing the painting of 'The Last Supper', they were encouraged to both reflect and think critically. Teachers plan lessons that deepen the pupils' religious literacy, for example, in a Year 9 lesson, pupils were able to express the key ideas related to Judaism in great detail and were clearly enjoying learning about another faith. In a Year 8 lesson one group of pupils were discussing which Gospel was the most reliable in

an enthusiastic and engaging way, which demonstrated the level of subject curiosity. Pupils' attitudes towards RE are extremely positive and permeate beyond the classroom. Teachers generally have strong subject knowledge and are able to use this effectively to support learning within the classroom. Teachers assess learning within the classroom effectively and provide good individual support to the pupils. When assessment is used effectively pupils are able to make good progress and are provided with detailed feedback by the teachers.

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

The quality of the leadership and management of religious education is good. There is a dynamic and creative vision for religious education, established by the leadership team, in which staff and pupils strive consistently for excellence. This vision and the commitment to the school's key role in the educational mission of the Church are evident and religious education influences all aspects of the school. The newly appointed subject leader has a strong understanding and appreciation of the centrality of religious education in the mission of the Church and its impact in the daily life of the school. There are highly effective systems and structures in place to frequently monitor, track and ensure pupil progress in religious education. The leadership actively supports staff professional development to further their knowledge and professional expertise in religious education. Subject staff work hard to creatively engage pupils in lessons and there is active pupil engagement and impressive progress being made across all key stages.

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

- Differentiation needs to be tailored more effectively to meet the needs of all pupils and to be consistent across the department, particularly with higher ability pupils.
- Pupils are provided with diagnostic feedback; however, this is not always consistent in terms of frequency and pupil responses.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

The curriculum now meets the time allocation requirements of the Bishops' Conference. Monitoring of acts of worship is now established and a form is completed by the chaplain and leadership team; there is an 'Acts of Worship' booklet given to all staff so that expectations are made explicitly clear. There is now greater theological underpinning of pupils' activities to support the Common Good; pupils make connections between good deeds, discipleship and human flourishing.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

is outstanding

The school meets the Bishops' Conference requirement for a weekly entitlement of 10% curriculum time in Key Stages 3 and 4 and 5% in Key Stage 5. A good range of resources are used to enhance the delivery of RE. The RE department has five dedicated classrooms in the school that all have high quality displays reflecting both the work of pupils and the Catholicity of the school. The budget for the RE department is on a par with other key subjects. Pupils learn about other faiths such as Judaism and Islam and relayed that it helped them understand their own faith better. There are many opportunities for RE teachers to undertake professional development within the school and at the diocese and working with neighbouring schools. The headteacher, leadership team and RE link governor work very closely with the department to review the place of RE in the school.

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

is outstanding

Prayer and worship are a key part of the daily life at Finchley Catholic High School. There are many opportunities for engaging and collaborative worship as part of pupils' experience at school. There is a welcome Mass for Year 7 pupils and their families and all year groups celebrate Mass during the academic year. Pupils are involved in leading the Liturgy of the Word, altar serving and the offertory. Parents are invited to celebrate Mass with the school community on Founder's Day and the feast of St Alban, the school's patron saint. Liturgies are delivered by the chaplain and student liturgy leaders. Sixth form ambassadors gave an excellent assembly on Cafod to pupils in Key Stage 3. There is a chaplaincy newsletter which gives further information about the previous Sunday Gospel and an explanation of its teachings. A Friday morning prayer group allows pupils an opportunity to reflect on a theme and experience different types of prayer. Retreat days are central to the prayer life of the school. An extensive array of worship is made available to the pupils allowing the widest possible experience of the breadth of Catholic prayer and worship and this is valued by pupils. The provision for meditation is particularly popular and the pupils appreciate the time to strengthen their relationship with God. A staff chaplaincy team has been developed to look at how the school community can develop and grow.

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

is outstanding

There is a dynamic and creative understanding of the call to human flourishing and the school provides some excellent opportunities for pupils to develop and celebrate their gifts and talents. There are programmes supporting the development of the pupils including 'Excellence in Scholarship' and 'Challenge the Gap' to help pupils to excel and enjoy new experiences. There is a good understanding and appreciation of the Church's call to action for justice and peace. The justice and peace group meets weekly and facilitates the fundraising activities, thus promoting community cohesion. Pupils are actively engaged in supporting those in need and fundraising is a whole school

initiative. Pupils give freely of their time and energy to others and use the liturgical year to enable various activities to take place for the local and international community. Pupils spoke about 'by helping others we are helping ourselves' and 'we do not do it because we have to but we want to.' Pupils are extremely passionate and proud of their school. They spoke articulately and eloquently about their very rich experiences of Catholic life. They understand that Jesus is their role model and are able to link the fundraising work they do to Gospel stories as their call to human flourishing. Each year group has its own charity which is voted for by the pupils. The school supports Young Carers of Barnet, Noah's Ark children's hospice and the Shoebox Appeal, to name but a few. Sixth form pupils organised a porridge breakfast in support of Mary's Meals and all food was donated by pupils and staff. The pupils are not only actively involved in service, but this is reinforced by an excellent understanding of the theology underpinning their actions.

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 cultivates excellent relationships with parents, other Catholic schools, parishes and the Diocese of Westminster. Parents feel welcome at the many school events which celebrate the Catholic life of the school. Parents express strong support of the school and are very happy both with the quality of religious education and the Catholic life of the school. Many parents commented on the strong sense of Catholic identity and community; another parent commented on 'how the staff go above and beyond in their pastoral care to provide a very supportive environment for pupils'. A number of staff have a long history with the school. Some are old boys, others are parents; this strengthens the Catholic ethos and identity of the school. There are strong links with parishes and the school continues to look for ways to further develop this. The chaplain attends meetings at the diocese and deanery. The dean is a member of the school chaplaincy team and leads regular meditation with the pupils. There are very good links with the diocese; the head teacher, chaplain and members of the RE department attend regular diocesan training and moderation days. There are collaborative networks with other schools in the local authority. All pupils who will be joining in Year 7 are visited by staff to aid and support the transition process to secondary school.

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

is outstanding

The mission statement 'I turned my heart to know and to search and to seek wisdom' expresses clearly their understanding of purpose as a school and a community. It influences every aspect of the development of pupils, staff and school policies. The headteacher has made an impressive impact on the school; a highly effective leader, she communicates her vision clearly to the school community and leads by example. The leadership team are committed to promoting the school's Catholic ethos and supporting their pupils to experience and grow in their faith. Self-evaluation is accurate illustrating a deep understanding of strengths alongside the areas needing to be developed. The school chaplain is very effective in her role and has a tremendous impact on the spiritual life of all in the community. Governors share the strategic leadership of the school with energy and enthusiasm. They offer highly effective and excellent support and hold the school to account in strategic matters; they have clear systems in place for reviewing the views of the community. Governors speak of the pride they have in the school and its heritage; they work hard to develop the Catholic identity of the school and participate in ethos learning walks and attend whole school events.

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

- To further develop and embed the role of liturgy leaders in the school to include the sixth form.

Information about this school

- The school is a 6 form entry Catholic voluntary aided school in the locality of Finchley.
- The school serves over 30 parishes, including St Mary Magdalen, Whetstone and St Alban's, North Finchley.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 98.5%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 1.3 % and from other faiths is 0.2 %.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 56.2%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 7.
- There are 111 pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 23 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 above average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is below average.
- There is below average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 169 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (14.2 %).

Department for Education Number	302 5405
Unique Reference Number	101362
Local Authority	Barnet

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Male (Mixed Sixth Form)
Number of pupils on roll	1197
The appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jane Inzani
Headteacher	Mrs Niamh Arnull
Telephone number	020 8445 0105
Website	www.finchleycatholic.org.uk
Email address	narnull@finchleycatholicorg.uk
Date of previous inspection	4 & 5 November 2013
Grades from previous inspection:	
Classroom religious education	Very good
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 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 36 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended 2 assemblies and 2 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.

Mrs Mary Coyle	Lead Inspector
Mrs Bernadette O' Hanlon	Associate Inspector
Mr Nicholas Kehoe	Associate Inspector
Mrs Robina Maher	Associate Inspector
Miss Katherine Sheridan	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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