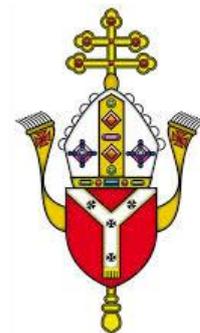


Westminster Diocese Inspection Report

St Martha's School

Camlet Way, Hadley Wood, Hertfordshire, EN4 0NJ

Date of inspection: 28-29 April 2016



A. Classroom Religious education

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

Overall Grade 2

The overall effectiveness of classroom religious education is good. The quality of teaching is typically good with outstanding outcomes in public examinations. Students are actively engaged in their learning and as a result they make good progress in acquiring religious literacy. The quality of learning in lessons and the rate of progress being made by students are regularly assessed and monitored through a careful system of tracking. The religious education curriculum contributes significantly to the Catholic life of the school community. Marking is very regular although the consistency of the quality is not yet fully in place. The headmaster and his team give high priority to developing religious education and religious literacy across the whole school community. In discussion the headmaster's passion for Catholic education and his vision for religious education and the future curriculum offer at St Martha's are clear and creative.

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 1

St Martha's is a unique community, not least in its make-up, including Catholic students along with other Christian students and those of other faiths. It is clearly evident that all religious traditions are respected and all students are given the opportunity to develop spiritually and morally through times for quiet, reflection, discussion and sharing. St Martha's School has strong links to the parish and deanery, sustains a life giving relationship with its founding religious order and takes a collaborative approach to working in the diocese. Such links serve to underpin the school's distinctive Catholic ethos and identity. The headmaster and the senior leadership team actively encourage the whole community through personal reflection to be open to the witness and example of those of other faiths. The liturgical year, the regular celebration of the Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the place of whole school assemblies and collective worship shape and foster this distinctive community of learners. Those students and staff who are not Catholics willingly uphold the school's ethos and allow all to "Serve the Lord joyfully". The school is exceptionally well led by the headmaster whose passion for a distinctive inclusive Catholic school is tangible.

Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headmaster, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent two days in school, visited six parts of lessons and four assemblies, dropped in to the Year 8 Retreat Day and carried out a number of interviews with school staff, pupils, clergy, parents 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 Martha's School, Barnet 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

Rev Antony J Homer	Lead Inspector
Ms Catherine Bryan	Associate Inspector
Mr Chris Cleugh	Associate Inspector

Description of School

This independent girls school is a two form entry serving the community of North London and Hertfordshire. The school was founded in 1903 by the Sisters of St Martha and still has a member of the Order among the teaching body and within the Governance of the School. The school serves the parishes of Potters Bar, Barnet, Enfield and Mill Hill as well as being home to a number of international students. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 41%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 26% and from other Faiths 8%. 25% are of no declared faith. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 35%. There are 186 pupils on roll, with 2 pupils with statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health & Care Plans (EHC). The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is average.

Telephone:	020 8449 6889
e-mail address:	wattsf@saint-marthas.org.uk

DFE Number:	302/6014
URN Number:	101374

Headteacher:	Mr Matthew Burke
Chair of Governors:	Mr L Edgar

Date of previous inspection:	17 January 2011
Previous Inspection grades:	Grade 1

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 identified two areas for the school to reflect upon in relation to classroom religious education.

- Review the sixth form religious education curriculum in the light of current 16-19 developments.
- Maintain and develop the use of scripture both in general religious education and in the selection of exam papers.

The senior leadership of St Martha's School have seriously responded to these reflections and made significant changes to the religious education available in the sixth form. This has led to a restructure of the curriculum on offer which in turn has resulted in increased student enrolment in A Level Religious Studies. The school has also sought ways of engaging with students to raise religious literacy across the age and ability range. This has been supported by greater emphasis on independent learning and a wider use of technology in the classroom.

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

Grade 1

Schemes of work are carefully aligned with the requirements of the Curriculum Directory. The Key Stage 3 schemes of work are compliant with the Curriculum Directory, though in Year 9 the scheme has been amended to facilitate the introduction of the GCSE syllabus. Students study Judaism, Hinduism and Islam at Key Stage 3 and benefit from input from students who share their experiences, for example in a Year 9 lesson one girl spoke with authority about her Hindu faith and her experience of Puja worship. At Key Stage 4 students study St Mark's Gospel and Christian ethics and have a rich experience of scripture. In the Sixth Form there is a well-developed and challenging general religious education programme.

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

Grade 1

Students of all ages and abilities learn exceptionally well at St Martha's School and embody the foundress' motto, "Serving the Lord with Joy". There is a highly effective tracking system in use across the whole school supported by online baseline tracking using the Midys, Yelis and Alis programmes. All students take the diocesan baseline test upon entry at Year 7 so that all students complete a study of God, the life and teachings of Jesus and the core beliefs of the Catholic Church; these are consistently revisited throughout their school life. Results at GCSE are outstanding and show highly positive value added in religious education – this success is underpinned by students' experience of the relationship between life and faith and their high levels of religious literacy. These levels are regularly assessed as part of formal end of unit assessments. Increased numbers of students opt to study A Level Religious education (Philosophy and Ethics) and the results achieved are consistently amongst the best in the school. There is on-going monitoring of quality of teaching by the senior leadership team through learning walks, observations, work scrutinies, and

student interviews. Students are aware of the criteria used to assess levels of attainment and have them in the front of their books along with their targets. Dedicated regular inset and departmental time ensures accurate moderation of levels of attainment and the department further benefits from moderation with other local Catholic independent schools.

The quality of teaching

Grade 2

Due to the timing of the inspection and the schools own planned calendar of enrichment activities, there was limited teaching available to be observed. Of the part lessons visited teaching was of a consistently good standard. Typically lessons at St Martha's are well planned and teachers are clearly enthusiastic about their subject and use a variety of resources to engage their students. Teachers also demonstrated great empathy in regard to the particular needs of their students irrespective of ability. Excellent relationships are clearly evident in the classroom with students keen to participate in lessons and confident in answering and posing questions. Staff provide a warm and supportive environment for their students where all can explore the call to human flourishing. The department engages in a creative and inspiring programme of peer observation across the whole school. Students are challenged by their teachers and encouraged to set personal targets that will enhance their learning: for example, at A level, Philosophy and Ethics students are expected to set targets based on previous assignments before commencing a new essay. This example of best practice is not yet fully embedded. Homework is consistently set and relevant to work in class. It is mostly marked with great diligence and provides constructive advice on how work can be further improved. On occasion marking was only perfunctory and did not support learning. There could also be an opportunity for more formal student teacher dialogue in relation to marking and target setting. Students are keen to submit their best work. In conversation with Year 10 students were able to clearly articulate the specific skills required to answer religious education questions as opposed to other subjects studied in their curriculum.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 2

All the members of the department are suitably qualified, plan thoroughly and are enthusiastic about the subject; they clearly want the best for their students. The recent appointment of a lay Chaplain, who is also a qualified religious education teacher has made an immediate and significant impact on both the department and the whole school community. Her experience and vision will allow the school to sustain and, in the future, build upon its already outstanding pastoral provision. The members of the department regularly benefit from ongoing professional development training from the diocese and other providers including the Catholic Independent Schools Conference (CISC). The school has also been greatly supported by the diocese through the regular visits of the linked advisor. The senior leadership team provide regular monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and achievement in religious education and are frequent visitors to classrooms either as formal observers or as part of learning walks. Systems for tracking and intervention are established across the school and this enables the senior leadership team and the religious education team to monitor the individual progress of their students and to plan for appropriate support and intervention. The school's personal tutor system also provides the students with the opportunity to comment on their own current working levels and attainment. Sixth form students spoke passionately about the support they have received throughout their time in the school and the invaluable relationships they enjoy with their tutor and peer group.

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

- Appoint an acting head of religious education at earliest opportunity
- Ensure greater consistency across the department in the quality of marking and feedback
Invite clerics from a wider variety of other faiths and Christian denominations to dialogue with the students to further enrich the curriculum

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?

The last diocesan inspection identified two areas for the school to reflect upon in relation to the Catholic life of the school.

- To develop further occasions and encouragement for personal prayer.
- Develop a bank of prayer resources for use in classrooms.

Worship and prayer are central to the life of our school and as part of this the community take seriously the duty of call to human flourishing by continuing celebrating the gifts and talents of our pupils and students. The school's motto "Serve the Lord with Joy" and the new strapline, "This is where I belong" both illustrate the core Catholic values at the heart of the school's foundation. The school chapel is well appointed with furniture donated from the Sisters now available for use by the whole school community. It is located at the centre of the school and offers a calm space for prayer and reflection. More than once throughout the Inspection visit students were seen in the chapel at break time or lunchtime, to be still and to pray. The recent appointment of the lay chaplain greatly enhances the opportunities for corporate and individual prayer. Currently the deputy head celebrates a Eucharistic Liturgy each week as well as being available to pray and talk to the students. The school has devised a prayer book which provides a bank of resources for every occasion and prayer is a natural way to start all lessons throughout the school. Assemblies provide students with a varied experience of Catholic worship and an opportunity to reflect more deeply. During the inspection, St Catherine of Siena House celebrated their patronal festival with a social gathering at break time, followed up by a trip to a local bowling alley. Students were presented with a prayer card and enjoyed the fellowship of their peers and staff. One of the local parish priests has led small groups in Christian meditation and regularly visits the school to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The department and school are more engaged in the life of the diocese and wider ecclesial community attending in-service training and celebrations.

During the inspection the schools timetable was suspended for a day of reflection and enrichment. Year 8 students had a day in celebration of the Year of Mercy and considering friendship with God. The school has developed a retreat programme for each year group with the support of various religious communities including the Columbans, the Franciscan Friars of the renewal and the Augustinians. Religious education is central to this and many projects such as the life choice baby programme are delivered within the context of our Catholic faith and values. Recently the school has worked more closely with the local deaneries of Barnet and Enfield with priests now regularly visiting the school to celebrate Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The local parish of Mary Immaculate & St Gregory Parish, Barnet use the Stations of the Cross in the school grounds around the pond on Good Friday each year. The appointment of a full time lay chaplain has greatly increased the capacity of the school for additional times of reflection, prayer and fundraising for charity.

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

Grade I

The religious education curriculum at St Martha's School is fully compliant with the requirements of the Bishops' Conference offering a generous 12.5% at Key Stage 3, 10% at Key Stage 4 and 5% curriculum time is made available at Key Stage 5. The religious education department is accommodated in two designated classrooms at the heart of the school. Funding for classroom

religious education is low in comparison to the other core subjects of English and Maths. However the Catholic life of the school has its own designated budget separate to that of the department. Currently there are issues with staffing in the department due to the long term illness and absence of the head of department. This has had considerable impact upon the other members of the department and upon the headmaster who has lead the subject as well as the school. The headmaster has worked hard to ensure students have not been compromised in their learning by this ongoing situation and has put into place strategies to support students and staff. All who teach are subject specialists even if they also teach in other disciplines or hold other significant positions of responsibility. The school has an outstanding relationship with the diocese working well with other Catholic schools and advisors. The school is a member of CISC which has provided assistance in both a formal and informal way. The Governors and trustees take an active role in the religious life of the school and safeguard the future of Catholic identity of the school.

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

Grade 2

The Sisters of St Martha's call to service and mission continues to be a significant influence upon the spiritual values and life of St Martha's school. Daily opportunities support students in their exploration of prayer and reflection being framed by the unfolding of the liturgical year. The programme of retreats and days of reflection offer students an opportunity for the whole school community to reflect, share and discuss issues that are important, relevant and appropriate for them and remain sensitive to the opportunities of prayer for those staff and students of other faiths. The annual celebration of the school's foundation enables students to meet with the Sisters of St Martha and to celebrate the unique gift of Catholic education for this distinctive community of learners. The day is framed with a celebration of Mass and a celebratory meal and time of fellowship for the whole community. Every morning begins with an act of collective worship which is built into the school's assembly schedule and follows the liturgical calendar. All staff take an active lead throughout the school year. Mass is celebrated at the start and end of each term by priests from the Deanery. Mass is also celebrated on Holy Days of Obligation and Ash Wednesday and involve the whole school community with students acting as readers and Altar servers. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is made available in Advent and Lent. Students clearly value this opportunity to meet with a priest to talk things through, celebrate the sacrament or to ask for prayers. The whole school gathers for the Stations of the Cross every Lent and during the Marian months of May and October students are encouraged to recite the rosary often accompanied by the sisters. After each liturgical event the school has an established process to review the celebration to ensure the experience is positive one for all those who had participated. Changes are then made and ideas explored as to how to improve future celebration. Students play a significant role in this process of reflection and review.

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

Grade 2

The students are encouraged to be active, faithful citizens. During the inspection the school hosted a visit from an Olympic hopeful who shared his story and encouraged students to believe in themselves and their talents. There is a diverse range of opportunities for the students to celebrate their gifts and talents both as individuals and as a community, reflecting a creative understanding of the call to human flourishing. Students appreciate that their personal achievements outside school are also recognised and celebrated in school whether they be sporting or equestrian or musical.

The Sisters of St Martha established the Sister Cecile Scholarship two years ago, to give a place at the school each year to a Catholic girl from one of the local parishes. The spirit of the Sisters remains very much part of the ethos of the school and there is a very real sense that the whole school “Serves the Lord with joy”. Students have a growing awareness of the call to justice and service as part of being a member of the Catholic community. The school has strong links with the Passage and actively encourages both students and staff to give freely of their time and energy for the good of others. In the school reception a display had been installed regarding the upcoming referendum on Europe. Other displays throughout the school buildings promote the core British values of respect and tolerance. The senior leadership of the school clearly understands and promotes the gospel call to action through fundraising and charity drives as being the outcome of supporting the common good. Students also understood this to be a way of living like Jesus but as yet could not articulate why they engaged in these activities other than to help others. With the appointment of the lay chaplain the theology that underpins these actions can be further explored. Each year a number of different charities are the focus for fundraising in the school ranging from the Poppy collection, sponsorship for the Passage, Aid to the Church in Need Charity, all the way through to a student choosing to support the work of their own charity or organisation. Sixth formers visit the elderly at the local Thomas Watson home. Students also support the work of the Catholic Children’s Society through their Lenten fundraising and the Advent Carol Service. Fundraising and practical care for those around us is also evident in the core religious education programme in the sixth form.

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 school has an outstanding relationship with its parents, the local parishes and with the diocese. Parents spoke passionately about this relationship and the excellent pastoral support offered by all the staff of the school. Relationships are strong at all levels and students feel secure and cared for by one another and by staff. Students in the sixth form act as ‘Guardian Angels’ to younger students which helps them to settle quickly and flourish. A former student commented before she left, “This is where I belong”. The well-established house system allows the students to know one another across the school which they appreciate and which strengthens the strong sense of school community; inter house activities are an integral part of school life and reinforce this. The school’s pastoral system of small tutor groups is also highly effective in responding to both academic and pastoral issues as they arise. Students are well supported in every aspect of their development and have weekly meetings with personal tutors; at twice yearly review meetings with students, parents, and tutors targets are reviewed and agreed.

The school works with the local authority to identify and place a growing number of international students with suitable local families and a staff member is responsible for overseeing their care and welfare while at St Martha’s. Partnership is a key, vibrant and central part of the school’s understanding of itself with the immediate and wider community. Links have been established with three local parishes and the parish priests are now regular visitors which has strengthened the sacramental life of the school. Parents are supportive and highly satisfied with the care, challenge and support given to students through their education at St Martha’s. There are good links with the diocese through the diocesan adviser who has worked closely with the school during this academic year. Staff have also worked collaboratively with teachers in Loreto and St Columba’s College in St Alban’s, sharing best practice, moderation of student work and in selecting appropriate examination boards. This relationship has also included university preparation events and shared social functions with St Columba’s College.

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

Grade I

Due to the long term absence of the head of religious education, the headmaster has for a sustained period of time taken on much of the responsibility for the leadership of the department in addition to his primary role as head of the school. He is an exceptional role model, a man of deep rooted faith and a genuine concern for all in his care. His vision and commitment both to the promotion of Catholic life and to the delivery of high quality religious education are truly outstanding. He has shown excellent resolve and courage in challenging times. He is extremely well supported by an able, dedicated and hard- working senior leadership team. The headmaster and senior leadership team are fully committed to the mission of Catholic education. St Martha's School continues to enjoy a close relationship with its founding religious order which underpins the school's distinctive ethos and charism. The headmaster has shown outstanding leadership of the school community during a very difficult period. He has ensured that the stability of the Catholic life of the school has been maintained as a priority. The presence and witness of the deputy head teacher, a Sister of St Martha, provides stability and inspiration for the students, ably supported by three excellent heads of house. St Martha's educates the whole individual and provides challenging opportunities for all. New staff and students are inducted well into the life of the school. Governors and trustees are passionate in their drive to improve the school in all ways including its Catholic identity.

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

- Further develop student leadership through the preparing and delivering of prayer and worship.
- Maximise the role of the newly appointed lay chaplain and develop further the school's links with the local clergy and parishes and with leaders from the other faith communities represented in the school.