

Saint Christina's Catholic Primary School

25 St Edmund's Terrace, St John's Wood, London NW8 7PY

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 6 October 2017



Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education is good

- Pupils have a very wide range of opportunities to experience Catholic practice and traditions and to learn about the faith.
- The religious education programmes of study take good account of the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory.
- All pupils, including those from other faiths, achieve well in religious education, given their starting points when they join the school.
- Overall, the impact of teaching on pupils' learning about religious education is good. In their daily lives, pupils put their faith into action in their interactions with others.
- A major strength of the teaching provision is the cross-curricular approach, involving areas such as art, drama, music and the use of new technologies.
- Staff are very willing and able to support each other in constantly improving the work of the religious education department. Self-evaluation is accurate.

Classroom religious education is not yet outstanding because

- Work set in religious education does not always allow the most able pupils to achieve at the highest available levels.
- In-term checks on pupils' progress in religious education require development as does the scheme of work so that teaching staff have clear guidance on how to deepen and broaden the pupils' understanding and knowledge.

B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- School leaders and staff, at all levels, treasure the Catholic life of the school. Members of the community, including those from other than Catholic traditions, support the school's ethos very well.
- Religious education has more than the 10% of timetable allocation at each key stage required by the Bishops' Conference.
- Worship and prayer, based securely on the liturgical calendar, are central to the life of the school community. Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to reflect and pray as well as taking part in liturgical celebrations.
- Pupils are very happy and secure at St Christina's. They flourish, both academically and in their personal development. They understand why it is important to help others, especially those worse off than themselves. They contribute very well to the Common Good, locally, nationally and internationally.
- Partnerships with the diocese, with the worldwide community of schools to which St Christina's belongs, with the adjacent religious community, and above all with parents are especially strong. Governors evaluate the impact of the school's Catholic life through regular visits.
- School leaders at all levels give high priority to ensuring that St Christina's can continue and expand its work for the young people it serves, within the education mission of the Church.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

There were no published areas for improvement at the last inspection. Since then, the school has taken steps to develop the expertise of staff in using the diocesan levels of attainment. Staff now have access to a portfolio of moderated work to guide their assessment practice. Pupils' range of study of other major religions has widened. Families can benefit from the regular availability of the Wednesday Word with similar material available for children in their new homework diaries. Generally, the school has made good progress since the last inspection.

The content of classroom religious education is good

The four areas of study of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory form a solid foundation for the religious education scheme of work across the school. Inspection evidenced flags to highlight the Curriculum Directory are in the process of being added to teachers' medium-term plans. Good resources and supplementary materials support links with other curriculum areas, particularly art. The structure of the liturgical year underpins well progression within the curriculum. Year programmes are supported by a published scheme, and broadened by a study of major world faiths in each year group. Pupils visit places of worship other than Christian to encourage the development of their understanding as they move up through the school. Older pupils, for example, undertake independent research on Islam, visiting a mosque and listening to the views of a Muslim convert. This leads some to work on comparisons between Christianity and Islam. The school recognises, however, that it has more to do to help staff grow in the knowledge and understanding of the programme, particularly in relation to the highest available attainment levels throughout the key stages.

Pupil achievement in religious education is good

Pupils generally achieve well in religious education at St Christina's. Pupils of all faiths show very positive attitudes to learning. Among the most able pupils, independent research projects reflect many examples of the potentially high quality of their religious literacy. This is well illustrated in the pupils' work on exploring why Jesus was an inspirational leader, and in a pupil's independent imaginative work on Fatima. Although pupils show a good facility in the retelling of the Bible stories, in exploring their understanding of their faith in daily life and in the liturgical cycle, their written tasks do not always illustrate work that reaches the highest available levels of the diocesan attainment targets appropriate to the age groups. This is particularly so for the most able pupils. As a result, not enough pupils are recorded as reaching the highest available levels by the end of Year 6. Generally, teachers' evaluation of pupils' achievement is accurate. Overall, pupils make good progress in developing their religious literacy, including those who have additional learning needs. Work in religious education is moderated internally and the school is involved in diocesan and deanery moderation activities.

The quality of teaching is good

Good teaching in religious education is the norm at St Christina's. Pupils engage well in their classroom activities and collaborate happily with staff. A major strength of the teaching provision is the cross-curricular approach, involving areas such as art, drama, music and the use of new technologies. However, this sometimes results in limited written evidence of the true quality of the children's learning. Some of the youngest pupils were very at ease in acting out the story of Noah's Ark, for example. Others were happy in their tasks associated with the story of creation. Not all

work for the younger pupils, however, is secure in the recounting of the biblical narrative. At the same time, there are examples of excellent practice in the school as experienced in a Year 4 lesson on the 'plagues' and a Year 6 lesson on the 'Kingdom of God'. In both sessions, pupils were enthralled by their work. Year 6 used the class 'think, talk, feedback' technique to reflect deeply and extend their ideas in a challenging homework task. Pupils' work is marked regularly in line with the school policy. There are regular assessment and moderation activities. However, the information on pupils' progress retrieved from these checks was not readily available.

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

The religious education department is supported very well by school leaders, staff, by religious among the staff and by the sisters from the adjacent community. The coordinator of religious education has been in post for several years. The coordinator is enthusiastic and motivated to improve the teaching and learning of religious education. The day-to-day work of religious education is smooth and the coordinator is actively involved in diocesan moderation and other useful professional development. Classroom practice is monitored regularly and staff have good opportunities for development of their knowledge, understanding and skills. The coordinator recognises the issues still to be addressed to ensure that provision in religious education is outstanding. Self-evaluation is accurate. The trustees and governors support the development of religious education very well.

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

- Ensure that classroom religious education is securely outstanding by providing pupils with sufficient opportunities to show that they can reach the highest appropriate levels for their stages of development.
- Draw on the expertise within the school so that all staff expand their knowledge and understanding of how to extend the work of the most able pupils.
- Refine the way in which the checks on pupils' work is recorded so that there is a meaningful and readily available record of their progress throughout the year.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

There were no areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Much has been done to develop an already strong provision in the period since the last inspection. Of major note is the strengthening of the place of St Rafaela Maria as the patron and role model for staff and pupils. The school now links with other sister schools internationally. All year groups, including Year 6 and the early years, now engage in a retreat. Children in the early years enjoy weekly liturgies together to prepare them for the future celebration of the Mass. Parents and carers are welcome to attend and many do so. Much work has been done to support a mission in Equatorial Africa. At the same time, the school has sustained the best of its ethos and Catholic life from the time of the last inspection.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum is outstanding

Religious education has more than 10% of timetable allocation at each key stage. The headteacher, senior staff, trustees and governors ensure that religious education is at the heart of the school. The school community does its best to live out the values of St Rafaela within the school community. Resources allocated to religious education are similar to that of other core subjects. All classrooms have their prayer tables. Displays and religious artefacts in classrooms both demonstrate children's experiences and enhance the Catholic ethos of the school. Religious education is supported very well by the headteacher, trustees and governors, and by staff. Governors are active in sustaining the religious life of the school.

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

Prayer and worship are central to the life of St Christina's. The presence of the adjacent religious community of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus sustains the ethos of the school exceptionally well. The convent chapel is viewed as an integral part of school life. One of the sisters helps in the preparation of the liturgy, supporting the deputy headteacher and the director of music in their preparations with the pupils. Parents also play their part, sometimes giving of their time to lead devotions such as the rosary. Pupils are active in the class prayers and in maintaining the class prayer tables. Assemblies are strongly rooted in prayer and in Gospel values. Pupils have many opportunities to lead prayer and other celebrations. The whole school regularly celebrates Mass at the end of each week. Pupils take part in traditional Catholic practices depending on the liturgical season. Parents and carers are encouraged to join in the celebration of Mass and do so. There is good provision for the pupils' sacramental life. School Houses are called after St Joan of Arc, St Francis of Assisi, and St Cecilia.

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

The school builds its extensive work for the Common Good on the mission statement which encourages the school community to 'care and to share'. Pupils understand at their own levels that they are part of a wider Catholic family with a responsibility to help others less fortunate than themselves. They know that they have a role to play in the wider community, based on the message of Christ. They offer practical help as well as prayer for those in need. Pupils support a number of local projects such as St John's Hospice and Providence Row. They also raise funds for CAFOD and the Catholic Children's Society. They support a school of the Handmaids in Equatorial Guinea, already raising over £5000 to help. Pupils are very happy at St Christina's and genuinely flourish.

Their spiritual, moral and social development is promoted excellently so that they thrive in all aspects of their learning and development.

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 sees itself as part of the diocesan family. Staff participate in diocesan moderation and other events and welcome diocesan staff to the school. There are exceptionally close links with the founding religious community and with their schools throughout the world. The headteacher is working to build strong links with other mainstream Catholic primary schools as well as the secondary schools to which the children aspire. Links with parents are excellent and they are welcomed to the school liturgical celebrations. Of the 93 parental responses to the school's Catholic questionnaire, the overwhelming majority were very positive about the school. However, a few noted that they were not always convinced that homework in religious education was challenging enough or that they were sufficiently well aware of the religious education programme. Inspectors' findings indicated that there were very many opportunities to enable parents to appreciate the pupils' work in religious education.

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

is outstanding

The headteacher, together with her staff, governors and trustees, is fully committed to the Church's education mission. Staff and pupils from other than a Catholic tradition are charged with, and willingly do, uphold the ethos of the school and the expectations of the trustees and of the Church's teachings. Rich opportunities enable staff and pupils to experience a Catholic way of life in their day-to-day living. The induction of staff new to the school and to teaching is robust but supportive. Governors challenge and support the school very well and offer excellent support for the school's Catholic life. They visit regularly and are a visible presence in the school and at Mass and assemblies. The school's self-evaluation is honest and accurate. The headteacher, a year in post, is in the process of involving the whole school community in a review and reformulation of the mission statement and in appointing a governor with specific responsibility for religious education. Although the school is not formally part of a parish, school leaders are keen to work towards strong links with local parishes.

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

- Take forward plans to review St Christina's mission statement.

Information about this school

- The school is an independent, non-selective Catholic day school in the locality of St John's Wood, Westminster. The school, founded in 1949, is in the trusteeship of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The school is located in the parish of Our Lady, St John's Wood.
- The school provides for girls aged 3 to 11 and boys aged 3 to 7. There are 182 pupils on roll. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 60%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 15% and from other faiths is 9%. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 59%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 6.
- The school identifies 19% of pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Of these pupils, one has an Education, Health and Care plan.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average.

Department for Education Number	213/6225
Unique Reference Number	2211319
Local Authority	Westminster
Type of school	Primary
School category	Independent
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	182
The appropriate authority	The trustees
Chair	Mrs Joan McConnell
Headteacher	Miss Jenny Finlayson
Telephone number	020 7722 8784
Website	www.saintchristinas.org.uk
Email address	headteacherspa@saintchristinas.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	November 2012
Grades from previous inspection:	
Classroom religious education	Very Good
The Catholic life of the school	Outstanding

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 trustees, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection.
- During the inspection 10 lessons or part lessons were observed and a learning walk with the headteacher undertaken.
- The inspectors attended a celebration of Mass and a number of acts of worship.
- Meetings were held with school staff, pupils, and trustees. A telephone discussion was had with the chair of governors on the day prior to the inspection.
- 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 Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

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Published by the Diocese of Westminster

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