



Diocese of Westminster

INSPECTION REPORT

St Martha's Senior School

The Mount, Camlet Way, Barnet EN4 0NJ
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DfES Number: 302 6014

Headteacher: Mr James Sheridan
Chair of Governors: Mr Les Edgar

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster

Date of inspection: 17 January 2011
Date of previous inspection: 13 November 2006
Reporting Inspector: Deacon Anthony Clark

Description of School

St Marthas Senior school is a small independent Catholic school for girls 11-19. It is situated in the Borough of Barnet in the Diocese of Westminster. The school is in the trusteeship of the Sisters of St Martha of Perigeux. Students are drawn from a wide range of primary schools and parishes in North London and Hertfordshire. The motto is 'Serving the Lord with Joy'. There are thirty teachers of whom 60% are Catholic. Three teachers have the CCRS or other Catholic qualification. There are 260 pupils of which 54% are Catholic, 27% from other Christian traditions and 19% from other faith traditions. 18 Pupils are on the SEN register. There were no exclusions in the last year.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1: Outstanding; Grade 2: Good; Grade 3: Satisfactory; Grade 4: Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

The effectiveness of St Martha's Senior School is outstanding. The school is a confident community of pupils, teachers and parents who serve and support the education of the girls with care and commitment. The charism of the school, founded by the Sisters of St Martha of Perigeux, derives from the tradition of trust, hardwork and prayer of St Martha herself. The motto 'Serve the Lord with Joy' is lived out in all aspects of the school's life. The aim of promoting the development of each pupil personally and educationally is underpinned by good leadership and a Christian Catholic vision of the whole person. Each pupil receives a high degree of individual care through the school's high quality tutorial arrangements. The school strives to be a Catholic community in which every pupil, whatever her religion, is encouraged to grow in faith through prayer and liturgy.

Grade 1

Improvement since the last inspection

A number of improvements were suggested at the previous inspection and these have all been achieved. Levels of assessment and attainment have been introduced in the teaching and monitoring of religious education and the pupils know what progress they are making and how to do even better. A second classroom has been made a dedicated Religious Education classroom and both classrooms have good ICT provision. The use of ICT has been fully incorporated into the teaching of Religious Education and the teachers are confident and challenging in using it. The school has reached the diocesan expectation of devoting 10% of curriculum time to Religious Education through increasing the number of periods of Religious Education in each fortnightly cycle and by devoting a number of whole days in the course of the year to Religious Education curriculum topics.

Grade 1

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The school has demonstrated its capacity to improve through its response to the previous report. Through consultation it has brought in and embedded a system of pupil tutors which is very effective. This system provides an immediate route for proposals for improvement and development to be communicated to the leadership of the school and for their implementation, if so decided. The monitoring and review systems in place are effective and the school has the

capacity to continue in keeping abreast. In the School Development Plan each faculty is requested to focus quite specifically on how it can contribute to the Catholic life of the school. The appointment in the Autumn of last year of a full time priest chaplain provides further capacity to the school community to develop its prayer and liturgy.

Grade 1

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop further occasions and encouragement for personal prayer
- Develop a bank of prayer resources for use in classrooms
- 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 Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

The leadership and management of the school is outstanding. The headteacher has established effective systems of communication in the school and provides a focus for unity and development. The school has come to a new confidence in its Catholic life and vision. The leadership team works collaboratively ensuring there is common purpose for the education of the pupils between academic and personal provision. The house system incorporating the system of a personal tutor for every pupil throughout her time at the school means her progress is supported and monitored effectively. The governing body have the structures in place to further the development of the school, ensuring the charism of the Trustees, the Sisters of St Martha, and the daily life of the school are convergent. The deputy head of the school, a sister of the Order, is well placed and effective in communicating its spirit and life. The Governors play a full part in the school's development and are very supportive. Staff work effectively to raise academic standards throughout the school and there is cooperative culture of learning at work in the interaction between teachers and pupils.

Grade 1

The Prayer Life of the School

The recommendations for further improvement of the prayer life of the school are made in context of a very good tradition of prayer and liturgy. The school is in a new position to develop yet further its structures for prayer in that the previous priest chaplain who did so much to help the school forward in its prayer and devotion has recently moved on to new duties in the Church. A replacement priest chaplain has been appointed who brings new and different skills and experience to the post. He celebrates daily Mass in the morning in the chapel and the teachers and others who are able to attend have the view through the chapel window of the pupils arriving, and thus keeping them in their prayer for the day. New ways of supporting the liturgical and prayer life of the school are both being reviewed and experimented with. It will be important to ensure that the pupils are encouraged to develop their confidence and familiarity with personal prayer, whether at prayer time in the classroom or other places to complement

the more formal prayer that takes place in assembly. The immediate connection between belief and service is embodied in a number of ways, including the generous commitment of the pupils to raising money for charities, both local and further afield, the Faith in Action group, the pupils who become extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist and the ongoing commitment to helping with the pilgrimages to Lourdes.

Grade 1

How effectively does the school promote community cohesion?

The school's commitment and involvement in promoting community cohesion and local initiatives was spectacularly demonstrated when a head girl of St Marthas from the late 1940's came back to the school in the course of the inspection to speak about one of the pupils' chosen charities for this coming Lent, the charity which she helps run which brings together old people to a centre for a day or two each week. The community of the school is inclusive and supportive of girls from many backgrounds and with a wide range of abilities. The school links with a number of local groups including its local parishes. In the course of the inspection pupils spoke of their personal sense of acceptance in the school community and how they were aware of both the diversity of cultures and communities in their world and the importance of taking part in and contributing to the groups they both are already in and will be part of. The Religious Education curriculum includes appropriate teaching about other faiths and visits are made to various places of worship. The house system and the extra-curricula programme are designed to recognise the strengths of all the pupils, and to encourage them to take this attitude forward in life.

Grade 1

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

Pupils make excellent progress in Religious Education. At each stage pupils are being challenged to learn, to think and to apply to their own lives appropriately a developmental understanding both of Catholic Christianity and other world faiths. The pupils achieve a confidence and maturity in discussing religious and moral issues at 6th form level which indicates the progress they have achieved over their years at St Marthas. The integration of what is believed and what is done in practice to help others in need both in the school and in wider society is evident. Both GCSE and A level grades are among the best in the school in recent years. Regular assessments, examination analysis, work scrutinies and target setting have all contributed to the raising of academic standards in Religious Education.

Grade 1

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

All teaching seen was good or very good with the majority being very good. The use of ICT was much improved and it was employed in a manner which challenges the pupils to think critically. In particular there was excellent use made of online resources. There are positive relationships in the classroom and these are helping to promote religious literacy. Pupils further

up the school are able to articulate religious issues succinctly. Pupils' books were consistently marked, with clear indications of how to improve and progress in attainment. There was good differentiation to help pupils of all abilities make appropriate progress at their ability level. Teachers are well aware of all students on the SEN register. The outcomes of religious education have improved through improved exam results, especially at GCSE where 100% pupils achieved A or B. Parents are kept fully aware of their daughter's work and progress.

Grade 1

Quality of the Curriculum

At Key Stage 3, the school bases its Religious Education programme on the CTS programme 'The Way, the Truth and the Life'. This programme is well suited to evaluating the progress of the pupils. The school has achieved the increase of curriculum time devoted to Religious Education to the bishop's expectation of 10% at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 and 5% at 6th Form. The number of periods per fortnight in Religious Education has been increased along with Religious Education curriculum days in the course of the year. Attainment level charts are displayed in the classrooms together with clear indications of how it links to the topic currently being taught. There is a very clear emphasis on the importance and role of Scripture in Religious Education, with both specific papers at GCSE level (the Gospel of Mark) and at A Level (The Synoptic Gospels Religion, Art and the Media). This emphasis corresponds well to the recent Synodal Exhortation of the Holy Father on the study and use of Scripture in the Catholic community 'Verbum Domini'.

Grade 1

Leadership and management of Religious Education

The Religious Education department is now a faculty in the revised structure of the organisation of the school which gives it great scope in its delivery. The faculty head, who is also a member of the Senior Management Team, provides very good leadership and clarity in the direction and organisation of Religious Education. There has been substantial improvement and development in Religious Education since the last inspection and one sign of this is the consolidated Religious Education Handbook and Schemes of Work schedule which she produces each year. There is good sharing of ICT resources. The textbooks are up to date and the pupils are clearly accustomed to use their Bibles in their Religious Education research. The teachers from other subject areas who also do some Religious Education teaching are well integrated and briefed, ensuring there is a common vision and structure in the school in the delivery of Religious Education. The resources needed for the progress of the subject are available. The Head of Faculty attends diocesan training events and exam board inset days and ensures that information cascades to other relevant members of the department.

Grade 1