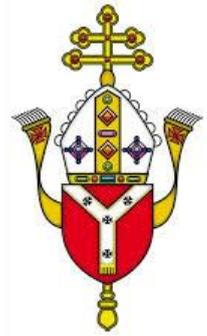


Loreto College

Hatfield Road, St Albans AL1 3RQ

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 29 and 30 January 2020



Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education is outstanding

- Religious education is at the heart of the school and its centrality is clear to all.
- The schemes of work are based on the Religious Education Curriculum Directory but have been adapted to the school context, with units of work looking at the Foundress of the IBVM, Mary Ward.
- Both achievement and progress in religious education are outstanding.
- Teachers have the highest expectations for all their pupils. These are shared with the pupils who know what they need to do to achieve well. The pupils are given confidence that can achieve well because of the positive relationships they develop with all staff.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons and take part in them with enthusiasm. Teachers know their pupils exceptionally well and tailor their lessons to each group. Interventions are used to put support in place quickly and efficiently in order to minimise lost learning.
- Core religious education in the sixth form challenges pupils at an appropriate level and includes the chance for the pupils to deliver catechetics to younger pupils and local primary schools.
- Leaders at all levels provide clear vision and model excellent practice. Governors are highly skilled and provide strong support and challenge. The support of the Loreto Education Trust board helps to ensure that excellence in religious education is maintained.
- The self-evaluation document is an accurate summary of strengths and areas of development.

B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- The school is a vibrant, alive and engaging Catholic community.
- The school excels at providing a community based on Catholic tradition and practice and this is evident to all who enter the school. The school expresses its Catholic identity in a great variety of ways.
- A strong liturgy team, consisting of staff and pupils, ensures the delivery of a dynamic and vibrant programme of worship and prayer.
- Every opportunity is taken to celebrate the gifts and talents of the pupils and for the pupils to develop these. A pupil who had moved from a different school said, 'The support is unrivalled'. Pastoral support is sensitive with an awareness of the current issues facing pupils.
- Every opportunity is taken to develop the pupils understanding of the call to service. It is clear that not only do pupils actively engage in acts of service but they have an excellent understanding of the theology underpinning their actions.
- The school is firmly based in the communities of the Loreto schools, of the diocese and in the local area.
- Leadership at all levels reflects the drive to fulfil the mission of Mary Ward to educate women to the highest standards. The trustees play a vital role in maintaining the ethos of the Loreto sisters and the vision of Mary Ward. There are excellent induction procedures in place for new pupils and new staff which root them firmly in the Loreto family.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

There is a consistency across the learning in the department, showing that all pupils access the same high quality teaching. There is an increased breadth and depth to the curriculum which has added to the challenge available at all levels. In addition, staff challenge pupils through targeted questions which extend and deepen their understanding.

The content of classroom religious education is outstanding

The content of curriculum religious education fulfils all the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD). The curriculum is creative and engaging and meets all groups of pupils' learning needs. The school adapts the scheme of work it uses to ensure that it matches the needs and expectations of the pupils. Progression is clearly seen across the year groups and staff are aware of how their teaching reflects the key aspects of the RECD. In addition, the school ensures that all Year 7 pupils learn the history of Mary Ward and the Loreto schools, linking the vocation of the school with the vocation of the Church. There is a wide range of evidence of how topics are revisited throughout the delivery of the curriculum over all key stages to show progression and greater depth of provision. For example, in Year 11, links were made to the work done in Year 8 about the life of Jesus when learning about vocations. This forms the basis of the pupils' strong knowledge and understanding of the subject. A recent review of core religious education in the sixth form means that students follow a programme which challenges them intellectually.

Pupil achievement in religious education is outstanding

The religious education (RE) department is consistently one of the highest attaining departments in the school. Pupils excel through high teacher expectation and engagement in their own learning. Staff quickly identify the strengths of their Year 7 pupils working hard to integrate a cohort made up from over 60 feeder schools. This means they make excellent progress at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4 GCSE results are significantly above the national average, for example 56% of pupils achieved grades 7, 8, 9 and 94% of the cohort a grade 4 or above in 2019. A level results are excellent with 83% gaining grades A*-C and 100% passing overall in 2019. Pupils enjoy their religious education lessons as evidenced by the high number of students continuing to study in the sixth form. Pupils are highly engaged in their lessons because the staff know their pupils well and are able to tailor their lessons to them. The pupils are confident to ask questions, as the classroom environment is supportive and all contributions valued. One pupil commented, 'student-teacher relationships are great because they encourage you to reach your full potential'.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

It is clear that staff know their students very well. Lessons are made up of a variety of well-judged teaching strategies to match pupils' learning needs ensuring that they are engaging and challenging. Year 10 pupils were encouraged to draw links between the music they listen to and the Psalms; Year 11 pupils looking at examples of Kingdom values used information about Irene Sendler, linking her work not only to Kingdom values but also with the recent Holocaust Memorial day. Staff in the RE team have excellent subject knowledge which they impart with confidence and authority. This is also true of the non-specialist teachers who deliver some of the challenging core RE syllabus to the sixth form. As a result, pupils are engaged in reflecting on the deeper significance of religious belief and practice. Opportunities are taken to link not only with prior learning in RE, but also across the curriculum. Year 9 pupils worked to produce power points on Mary Seacole and Martin Luther King as people transformed by the Holy Spirit. Pupils were also invited to reflect on how these different people were treated by society, linking their academic learning to the work they do with the

school's 'Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation' group. The skilful, high quality questioning in lessons draws on previous learning and enables pupils to clarify their learning and deepen their knowledge. Pupils are confident to ask questions themselves to explore their learning further knowing that staff will enter into intellectual discussions with them. Pupils know that they can approach staff for extra support should they need it. Religious education is delivered with the highest expectations of all staff, the highest aspirations for all pupils and addresses the learning needs of all groups.

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

All staff share in the vision of RE as the centre of the school. The subject leader for RE is ably supported by the senior leadership team to promote excellence in the subject and has instigated a thorough programme of monitoring and tracking which means that there is a clear understanding of the strengths and development points for the department. The SEF clearly reflects this. There is an annual report sent to the Loreto Education Trust board each year which also emphasises the place of RE at the heart of the curriculum. Governors are actively involved in the monitoring of RE and the chair of governors acts as link to the subject, meeting with the subject leader to review standards. The subject leader has a skilled team of teachers who are able to deliver the curriculum in a way which engages and enthuses the pupils. They are able to draw upon their own expert knowledge and also have access to ongoing professional development. RE teachers take an active part in the making sure that RE is central to the life of the school running many extra-curricular activities which underline this. They are supported in the teaching of core RE by members of other departments and this overlap emphasises the importance of the subject. The high percentage of students taking RE at A level shows that it is recognised as a valuable academic subject. The subject leader, the senior leadership team and governors are all clear that their job is to give the pupils in their care every opportunity to achieve their potential.

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

- Staff should ensure that every opportunity is taken to extend and challenge pupils
- Although the marking policy is followed, it is possible that written feedback could be used more effectively in moving learning forward

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

10% of curriculum time is given to RE at KS3 and KS4, 5% at KS5. This is fully in accordance with the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. At KS5, a challenging core RE programme is taught to all students, making sure that they continue to deepen their faith even if they are not pursuing formal qualifications. Collective worship take many forms during the school year, ranging from form prayers in the morning, through year group assemblies to whole school Mass. All of these are monitored and evaluated by the senior leadership team.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

is outstanding

Religious education is at the heart of this school. The school gives the full time allocation required by the Bishops' Conference to the subject. The department is located in classrooms which support the learning of the pupils with displays and resources related to their learning. An ample budget ensures that pupils are supported to get the most from their formal RE education and to develop their own spirituality. The environment reflects the centrality of Catholicism to the whole school. The richness and quality of the displays reflect the ethos and the place of the school in the worldwide community of the Loreto order. Displays in the RE classrooms link to the schemes of work and the curriculum while displays around the school reinforce the life and values of Mary Ward alongside other Christian values. Iconography is subtle and well placed.

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

is outstanding

Pupils are invited to take part in a rich variety of prayer and liturgy. They are keen to embrace these opportunities and there is a high take-up of all the different events put on by the school. The school has a beautiful chapel which is at the heart of its prayer life, being used not only for Mass but also for assemblies, the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Stations of the Cross. As well as weekly Mass led by the different forms in the chapel, the school is also able to use the parish church for Holy days of obligation and for whole school celebrations, such as the birthday of Mary Ward. A strong liturgy team, consisting of staff and pupils, ensures the delivery of a dynamic and vibrant programme of worship and prayer. The lay chaplain supports the daily prayer life of the school by providing weekly prayers for staff. He works with the liturgy team to train pupils as Eucharistic ministers and has recently encouraged altar servers to continue their ministry during school Masses. He supports the local parish in the preparation of young people for Confirmation. Prayer is used in a variety of forms. The school diaries provide traditional prayers and the order of the Mass for all pupils; a Taize style service of Remembrance is held in November. There is a range of retreats for the pupils throughout their time at the school and they also have the opportunity to take part in trips to Rome and to the Bar Convent in York.

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

is outstanding

It is clear that not only do pupils actively engage in acts of service but they have an excellent understanding of the theology underpinning their actions. The 'JPIC' (Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation) group exemplifies outstanding service and social justice in a school. It is led by sixth form students with support by a staff member. A theme is chosen each year by the pupils along with two representatives from each class. This year homelessness was chosen and the pupils have visited homeless shelters and collected enough food for over 1700 meals. Their commitment to this project

is commendable. Ethics of the market place and the moral issues in society are regularly discussed and examined in light of Catholic Social Teaching both within and outside of lessons. There is a long tradition of supporting the local food bank and hampers are put together during Advent which are distributed to disadvantaged members of the parish. National and international charities such as Cafod and the Catholic Children's Society are also supported, as are many of the Loreto schools overseas. One year group raised money for the lavatories in a sister school in India. Service is an everyday part of the life of the school, with members of the sixth form supporting pupils in the lower school with their work, or by delivering the catechetical programme in local primary schools.

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

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, with over 250 of them returning the diocesan questionnaire. Comments included, '...there is an excellent spiritual ethos in this school' and 'There is a very strong Catholic ethos in the school, one which instils strong moral values and promotes Christ's teachings through thoughts, words and deeds.' Parents are invited to the school on many occasions, starting with the Year 7 Welcome Mass. There is a flourishing Parents' Association; it supports events throughout the school year which enhance the community. The chapel provides a setting for many concerts and events to which parents are invited. The school takes in pupils from over 60 primary schools and works hard to maintain links with them. It works with the local parish in particular, with staff and sixth formers taking part in the catechetical programme. They also allow the church use of the grounds for parking for Sunday Mass and other parish events. The school works closely with the diocese, making full use of its training programme and the advice of the diocesan advisor. In addition to this, the school hosts the local delivery of the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS) programme and the head of RE works as associate diocesan inspector.

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

is outstanding

All school leaders are committed to providing the vision of Mary Ward that all girls should have access to the highest quality education. The support from the Loreto community enhances all aspects of the school. All new staff take part in a clearly planned induction, including a two-day residential at the Bar Convent looking at the values of Mary Ward which underpin the school. School governors have a clear understanding of the school and how it works. They are regular visitors and show a clear understanding of the challenges facing schools at this time. They helped in the production of the 'Loreto Governance Handbook' which is used across the Loreto schools. There are regular meetings held across the schools and governors offer valuable support and challenge. The headteacher is a Loreto trustee. The school self-evaluation shows that the senior team have a clear and accurate picture of where the school is on its journey and what it needs to do next to maintain its high standards.

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

- Greater focus on making morning prayer a meaningful act of worship in each classroom.
- To continue to contribute to the plans for the future of the Loreto schools.

Information about this school

- The school is a five-form entry Catholic academy in the locality of St Albans.
- The school serves parishes across a wide area of north London and Hertfordshire.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 90%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 5 % and from other faiths is 1.6%. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 52%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 11.
- There are 12% of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 6 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 above average.
- There is a well below average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 100 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (11%).

Department for Education Number	9194620
Unique Reference Number	117588
Local Authority	Hertfordshire

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Female (with males in sixth form)
Number of pupils on roll	951
The appropriate authority	Board of Governors and Loreto Education Trust
Chair	Mr David Keiley
Headteacher	Mrs Maire Lynch
Telephone number	01727 856206
Website	www.loreto.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@loreto.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12-14 November 2014
Grades from previous inspection:	
Classroom religious education	Outstanding
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 27 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended 8 assemblies and a number of 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 Catherine McMahon	Lead Inspector
Mrs Rose-Marie Sorohan	Associate Inspector
Ms Susan Grace	Associate Inspector
Miss Catherine Bryan	Associate Inspector
Mrs Katie McManamon	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>

Vaughan House
46 Francis Street,
London
SW1P 1QN

T: 020 7798 9005
E: education@rcdow.org.uk
W: <http://rcdow.org.uk/education>