



Diocese of Westminster

INSPECTION REPORT

St Anthony's Preparatory School

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DFE Number: 202 6181

Headteacher: Mr Paul Keyte

Chair of Governors: Mr Graham Able

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

Date of inspection: 16th November 2011

Previous Inspection: 10th October 2005

Reporting Inspector: Deacon Anthony Clark

Description of School

St Anthony's Preparatory School is an independent Catholic preparatory school educating boys from the age of 4 to 13. It is situated in Hampstead in north-west London and its pupils are above the national average in ability. It is a two form entry school with 143 pupils in Junior House and 143 in Senior House. It was founded in Eastbourne in 1898 by the Patton family and refounded in Hampstead in 1952. The school was integrated into the Alpha Plus group in 2009. A member of the Patton family is on the Pastoral Board which has special oversight of the Catholic nature and life of the school. The number of teachers is 28.5 full time equivalent. 32% teachers are Catholic. One teacher has the CCRS (Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies). The number of pupils is 286; the number of Catholic pupils is 173, 72 are from other Christian denominations, 32 are from other faiths while 9 are agnostic or have declared 'no faith'. 32 pupils are on the Special Educational Needs (SEN) register though none have a statement of SEN.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

St Anthony's Preparatory school is a very good Catholic school with many outstanding features. The combination of a relaxed family atmosphere with a rigorous commitment to educational excellence provides for a school community where pupils thrive. It achieves its mission statement 'to provide high quality education in a caring, supportive and Catholic environment, infused by Christ's Gospel, in order that each of our pupils is able to develop fully as an individual, well-adjusted to the wider community'. Spiritual exploration and an inclusive Catholic identity are central in the life of the school. The senior management team and the staff members are confident in taking forward the vision of the school.

Grade 1

Improvement since the last inspection

The school has made substantial improvement since its last inspection. All five key recommendations have been responded to positively, though one still remains to be achieved i.e. reaching the Bishop's recommendation for 10% of curriculum time to be given to religious education. The school has effectively developed the process of monitoring and self evaluating the Catholic life of the school and the teaching of religious education. It has introduced the levels of attainment in assessing religious education and reviewed provision for the sufficient coverage of other faiths. The incorporation of ICT into the teaching of religious education in a way which is challenging and which adds value to the subject has been achieved.

Grade 1

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The school has substantial capacity to improve and develop. In the past eighteen months it has changed its proprietor and this has meant a refurbishment at all levels, whether at the level of vision, day to day management or increase of teaching resources. At the same time the newly

appointed headteacher has engaged in extensive review and consultation, taking forward both the staff and parents in the next stage of the school's growth. There has been a sustained focus on how to develop the Catholic life of the school and the quality of religious education teaching, which has led to a better awareness of how the school can achieve its aims. The appointment of the deputy headteacher from January next year, who will also be the Head of Religious Education, means that yet further review and development will ensure the school's growth in these areas.

Grade 1

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop further opportunities for the pupils to pray in an ex-tempore way as well as using set prayers and texts.
- Increase awareness of scriptural texts and themes in the prayer and assemblies in the school.
- Encourage senior management and teachers to obtain the CCRS (Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies).
- Continue and develop the use of levels of attainment in assessing religious education.
- Review the curriculum in the light of the Bishop's recommendation of 10% curriculum time being given to religious education.

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

The leadership and management of the school have gone through a major transformation in the past two years. The ownership of the school went from the founding Patton family to the educational provider, Alpha Plus, a limited company. All parties cooperated with the diocese to ensure a system was put in place so that the Catholic character and foundation of the school continues to be safeguarded. To this end, a Pastoral Board was established, with the approval of the Diocese, which advises Alpha Plus on matters relating to its Catholic nature. The Pastoral Board, made up of individuals from the Catholic community, including the parish priest of the parish in which the school is situated, and the founding family, has met regularly and carried out its function well. The Board is effective in liaising, monitoring and making recommendations to both Alpha Plus and the school, which ensures the Catholic nature of the school is safeguarded and is in accordance with Bishop's expectations of a Catholic school. Alpha Plus have been exemplary in respecting these arrangements and have shown great support, e.g. in using the school as a centre for music in the context of the wider community. The headteacher is outstanding in communicating a Catholic vision to staff, pupils and parents. Coupled with his academic achievements in Catholic theology and culture, his enthusiasm and curiosity to understand all things deeply, encourages staff and pupils to both appreciate and question received traditions. The senior staff, a number of whom are not Catholic, support and take forward the ethos and traditions of the school in a loyal and insightful manner.

Grade 1

The Prayer Life of the School

Daily prayer is integral in the life of the school and its provision is very good. The different house assemblies are well planned and organized. Both the assemblies witnessed in the course of the inspection contained both elements of prayer and elements of understanding the implications of faith more deeply, whether about the concurrence of science and religion in

today's world, or the issues of morality in discerning just wars in contemporary conflicts as well as past wars. The day begins and ends in prayer and there is grace said before and after meals. On a number of occasions each term the whole school goes to the nearby parish church for a school Mass. Pupils participate with great ease and the clarity with which the pupils read or say the bidding prayers is very good. A number of parents attend and this enhances the sense of the shared religious and moral life of the school. The recent building of a music studio/classroom has led to a renewed emphasis on music and the integration of twelve Catholic composers, one for each month, into the curriculum is commended. The school choir have grown in expertise and confidence, singing to a very high standard and being up to date with musical settings appropriate to the new translation of the Mass. The current parish priest, and his locum, while he is away on sabbatical studies, are very supportive of the school. The First Communion preparation class is a focus of good cooperation between school and parish. Classroom prayer begins all religious education lessons. Preparation is good but more opportunity for spontaneous and reflective prayer should be built in. Both the public areas and the classrooms have good displays of religious posters and artefacts, and there is a prayer focus in each classroom.

Grade 1

How effectively does the school /college promote community cohesion?

The school promotes community cohesion in a number of ways and its promotion of it is very good. Both the assemblies and the curriculum frequently address issues of wider moral commitments on the part of everybody in the school. The ethos of the school is outward looking in its style and this is well demonstrated by the charities the pupils collect for. There is a charity committee made up of parents who organise and promote different fund raising activities and who encourage involvement on the part of the staff, the pupils and the parents. There is a spirit of generosity and substantial donations are collected a number of times each year. Some of the pupils weren't always sure which charity was currently being supported and it would help if a noticeboard in a well visited location could carry a display of what the current charity is. The multicultural background of the pupils is cherished and opportunities to explore different faiths are well constructed. The pupils are confident to talk about their own faiths and will discuss their Bar Mitzvahs, their Divali celebrations, what Ramadan is like as well as their First Communion plans. The school is linked to a school in Nepal which it supports in an ongoing way, and is also specially supportive of the Westminster Children's Society and the Cardinal Hume Centre.

Grade 1

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

The pupils at St Anthony's School achieve high standards in religious education. The subject is central in the life of the school and is the crossroads for many elements in the daily programme of study, including assemblies, money raising for charity, music and topics for outside speakers. The spiritual, social, moral and cultural development of the pupils is well supported by the religious education curriculum. This is where the unique value of each person is explicitly explored and understood. Pupils show a keen interest in the subject and are well able to discuss both the content and the implications of what they are learning. The older pupils who sit the

Common Entrance exam (Catholic Syllabus B) do well in the subject, sometimes gaining higher levels in religious education than in other subjects.

Grade 1

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

The teaching of religious education is very good. All teachers of the subject were visited in the course of the inspection and all lessons were either very good or good. The lessons were well paced with opportunity for discussion as well as clarity over the achievement of the lesson objectives. The teachers displayed confidence and ease of use when employing ICT, and the interactive whiteboards functioned as a place of intrigue and challenge as well as good writing boards. Assessment tasks were regularly built into the lesson plans and teachers had a very accurate perception of each pupil's level of both achievement and best next step. The pupils' work books were well maintained and all marking was up to date. The marking was both encouraging in tone and analytical in how to improve. The teachers have a constructive approach to planning their lessons so as to maximise pupil involvement and interest, and the pupils clearly enjoy their lessons and make good progress.

Grade 1

Quality of the Curriculum

The curriculum is based on the religious education programme *The Way, the Truth and the Life*. The text books are constructively used and at the same time the pupils are encouraged to question and take their curiosity forward. The school has built up a substantial deposit of core texts and extension activities on the intranet and the teachers have a wealth of materials to choose from. The Curriculum Directory for Religious Education as well as the Levels of Attainment are on the intranet and instantly accessible. The taught curriculum conforms to the Curriculum Directory. The school has made progress towards devoting 10% of curriculum time to religious education but has not yet reached the Bishops' recommendation. The school has begun to develop a cross curricular model which may lead to the achievement of this objective. The headteacher provides personal encouragement to both staff and pupils with such devices as Paul's Puzzle where he sets a weekly dilemma and dialogues in various contexts over possible solutions to it. In this context and others it will be important to develop scriptural awareness alongside the philosophical and theological.

Grade 2

Leadership and management of Religious Education

Leadership and Management of the department is currently very good. Religious Education is led by the headteacher assisted by the Junior House Religious Education Coordinator. It will change in emphasis when the new Deputy Head arrives in the new year as he will be the Head of Religious Education and will include the Junior House Religious Education coordinator in his team. The stability in leadership will be continued through the close cooperation at senior management level. The present levels of good background knowledge will be enhanced when more members of the staff responsible for religious education follow the studies leading to the CCRS. At present only one member of staff has the CCRS as well as the headteacher and another religious studies teacher having a degree in theology and philosophy. The use of external websites, especially those relating to programme of study used in the school, have led to more imaginative and diverse teaching approaches. The school devotes sufficient resources to religious education for its good delivery. The ongoing oversight of the Governors, and especially the Pastoral Board, ensure that the subject is supported.

Grade 1