



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Canonical Inspection Report

ORATORY PREPARATORY SCHOOL

Goring Heath, South Oxfordshire, RG8 7SF

Inspection dates:

19th-20th March 2019

Lead Inspector:

Maureen O'Leary

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS:

Requires Improvement

Catholic Life:

Requires Improvement

Religious Education:

Good

Collective Worship:

Requires Improvement

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

- The school's leaders and governors have a commitment to the Catholic heritage of the school which provides a solid foundation for current pupils and Oratorian alumni;
- The school chaplain, with the support of the current and previous Religious Education subject leaders, has ensured that the Catholic Life of the school is active and is a valued aspect of daily life;
- Pupils are engaged in Religious Education lessons and enjoy their work. Teachers have established very good relationships with pupils and provide them with individual support for their learning. Consequently, pupils make good progress in lessons;
- Collective Worship is a daily experience for the whole school community. Times of prayer are entered into reverently and sincerely by staff and pupils.

It is not yet Good because:

- Senior leaders and governors have not ensured that Catholic Life is given the appropriate priority when planning whole school developments;
- Key recommendations from the previous diocesan monitoring visit have not been addressed;
- Monitoring and evaluation of Catholic Life and Collective Worship does not provide accurate judgements about standards nor adequately inform improvement planning;
- Governors do not have an accurate understanding of the standards of Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship;
- The Religious Education subject knowledge of some teachers requires improvement;
- Pupils have limited opportunities to lead aspects of Catholic Life and Collective Worship.

FULL REPORT**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure that Catholic Life is at the forefront of the school development plan;
- Establish comprehensive monitoring and evaluation processes for Catholic Life and Collective Worship that inform improvement planning;
- Governors should have greater involvement in the self-evaluation of the Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship of the school;
- Establish a core staff team to develop the Catholic Life of the school;
 - Develop staff understanding and engagement in the Catholic Life of the school;
 - **Ensure that new staff are formally and fully inducted into the Catholic Life** of the school;
- Ensure that there is consistently good teacher subject knowledge in Religious Education;
- Provide increasingly meaningful times of prayer that are integral to all school life;
- **Increase the opportunities for pupils to initiate, plan and lead Catholic Life and Collective Worship.**

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The quality of the Catholic Life of the school.	Requires Improvement
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.	Good
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.	Good
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school.	Requires Improvement

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.**The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.**

- Pupils have a good understanding of their school mission. The school motto, 'Heart speaks to Heart', teaches pupils that they are a community that not only helps each other but also those in need beyond their school.
- The school supports a range of charities, including the Good Shepherd Appeal and a school in South Africa. Pupils have actively promoted fund raising events and taken part in a number of events including class toy sales and completing chores at home.
- The school's celebration of its monthly values helps to shape the pupils' behaviour and aspirations in all areas of school and home life. For example, pupils could discuss how sportsmanship was a way of living their school values. Pupils see these values as an expression of the Catholic Life of the school, although they are not overtly linked to the Oratorian charism. The behaviour of pupils throughout the school is excellent. This attitude to behaviour was expressed very eloquently by one pupil, "Our school prayer says, 'courteous, considerate and kind', that's what this school teaches you."
- Most pupils know that Blessed John Henry Newman is their school founder. Assemblies and the names of the 'Houses' help to inform pupils about him. Older pupils have a greater understanding of his life and his influence on their school. Pupils from various year groups have visited the Oratory in Birmingham, Littlemore in Oxford and Rome. They have gained much from these visits organised by the chaplain and Religious Education subject leaders.

- Pupils are very appreciative of staff, who have established very good relationships with pupils. They see tutors as their, "appointed supportive teacher." The recent appointment of a deputy headteacher, responsible for pastoral support, has been effective in supporting pupils in times of need.
- The work of the school chaplain is greatly valued by pupils, staff and parents. Through his work, he effectively supports the Catholic Life of the school. He produces a weekly chapel timetable that includes the liturgical colours of the day and relevant information about the Church's calendar. This is a very good resource for both staff and pupils. Parents and staff spoke very appreciatively of all the daily pastoral care that he offers to them and especially when faced with life's challenges.
- The school environment reflects its Catholic tradition and includes statues of Our Lady, displays about the school founder and charitable outreach.
- Relationships and sex education is taught as part of the PHSE programme supplemented by the use of diocesan resources.
- Although pupils have an understanding of their duty to serve others, they have a very limited understanding of vocation as a call from God.
- Pupils have a sense of their links with the diocese and the local parish. For example, Years 5 and 6 took part in Adoremus, led by the Archbishop, and the Archbishop celebrated Mass at the school on the founder's feast day. The pupils who board attend Sunday Mass at the local parish and, occasionally, the school choristers sing at Sunday parish Mass.
- Pupils are prepared for the sacraments by the chaplain and members of the religious education department. As part of their First Holy Communion preparation the pupils take part in a retreat with the Sisters at Littlemore.
- Pupils have an awareness of other faiths and visit places of worship of other world religions. They speak with respect and tolerance about those who have beliefs different to their own.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school.

- The headmaster of the school is committed to the school's Catholic mission in education. However, when planning school development, Catholic Life is not included as a priority.
- Whilst the governors are keen to maintain the Catholic Life of the school, they have little involvement in its self-evaluation. The recent visit to the school by governors is a good first step in improving their involvement in its self-evaluation.
- There has been very little formal staff training or induction of new staff in regard to Catholic Life. As a result, although staff are supportive of the Catholic mission, some of them they do not have a developed understanding of its scope and potential impact.
- Senior leaders do not regularly seek the views of pupils about the Catholic Life of the school. Leaders have conducted annual general parent and staff wellbeing questionnaires.
- The school chaplain has an astute and accurate understanding of the Catholic Life of the school. He provides an annual report to governors. He clearly recognises that greater importance, resources and time need to be given to its promotion and development.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The quality of Religious Education.	Good
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.	Good
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.	Good
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.	Good

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.

- As a result of mostly good teaching, pupils make good progress in Religious Education.
- Nearly all pupils are motivated in Religious Education lessons to do their best. They are keen to take part in lessons and readily engage in discussion with their teachers and other pupils. Pupils are particularly engaged in those lessons that include drama or art. For example, pupils observed in Year 4 were able to identify with the feelings of the people watching Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, as they acted out Palm Sunday.
- Teachers' subject knowledge in Religious Education is mainly good but some teachers would benefit from support to improve their knowledge of key events in the Bible and their use of religious vocabulary.
- Pupils are mainly very religiously literate. They can confidently use a wide range of vocabulary and recall numerous events from the Bible.
- Teachers help pupils to develop appropriate attitudes in Religious Education that encourage pupils to think critically, spiritually and to make informed judgements. Discussion and debate are used particularly in Years 6-8 to stimulate independent thinking. This supports their study of more analytical and discursive Common Entrance questions. Consequently, pupils achieve very well in Religious Education for Common Entrance.
- Teachers cater well for individual pupils' needs and offer support where necessary. As a result, the behaviour of pupils in lessons is very good.
- Teachers ensure that pupils' learning in Religious Education lessons is linked to their own actions and lives. For example, when discussing the school's values, one pupil in Year 3 reflected that, "Jesus wants us to be honest. God wants us to be the best person we can be."
- Teachers give pupils useful individual feedback verbally during Religious Education lessons and through the use of written termly report cards. These report cards allow pupils to self-evaluate their progress. This feedback praises pupils for their achievements and identifies areas in which they need to improve. **Marking in books is regular but is less developmental.**

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

- The newly appointed Religious Education subject leader has a clear vision for teaching and learning and has a good level of expertise in securing this vision.
- The school's Religious Education subject leaders have actively engaged with the diocese and regularly attended cluster meetings and training. The new subject leader is keen to work collaboratively with other independent Catholic schools to further raise standards in teaching and learning.

- The previous and current subject leaders have taken effective action to ensure that the Religious Education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. An action plan is in place to transition the current scheme of work to fully implement the diocesan scheme, 'Learning and Growing as People of God', into key stage one and two.
- School leaders have addressed the need to provide 10% of the taught curriculum for Religious Education and progress has been made to meet this requirement. However, key stage one still does not currently receive 10%. School leaders are aware of this and are taking action to increase lesson time.
- Religious Education is adequately monitored by the subject leader through lesson observations, pupil interviews, book scrutiny and assessment analysis. Evaluation of this monitoring is shared with staff and senior leaders.
- Governors are generally aware of standards in Religious Education, but they would benefit from a more active involvement in self-evaluation of the subject. This would enable them to challenge and support the school further.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The quality of Collective Worship.	Requires Improvement
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.	Good
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.	Good
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.	Requires Improvement

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship. The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.

- Pupils are able to take part in a range of Collective Worship including regular Mass, whole school assembly and class prayers. At appropriate times in the Church's year, the Stations of the Cross and a guided adoration have taken place; in addition the whole school takes part in a Corpus Christi celebration and the Crowning of Our Lady's statue in the school grounds. The vast majority of pupils take part in these times of prayer with reverence and interest. They understand that through prayer they are able to talk to God, to pray for their own needs and the needs of others.
- Since the previous monitoring visit, class prayer has been established as a daily routine. Pupils are often given the responsibility to lead their class as they recite their daily prayers. Pupils now need to be given the opportunity to initiate and plan these times of prayer beyond the recitation of set prayers.
- Each class has a prayer area. These sacred spaces are valued by pupils and help them to focus during times of class prayer. Pupils enjoy using high quality class prayer bags to pray independently in their own classrooms.
- Mass is celebrated most days in school by the chaplain. Pupils in Years 3-8 are able to attend Mass weekly and younger pupils attend Mass each half term. Whole school Mass is also celebrated each half term and also on Holy Days of obligation. The chaplain has built excellent relationships with pupils and he puts great effort into ensuring that his homilies are age appropriate and accessible to pupils.
- Many pupils volunteer to serve and read at Mass. An older pupil is an enthusiastic chapel prefect, helping younger pupils and assisting the chaplain. This support is greatly appreciated by the chaplain.

- Some school assemblies have a religious focus and develop pupils spiritually and morally. For example, the assembly for Armistice Day had a profound effect on pupils and staff. However, more assemblies with a religious focus would allow for further regular times of whole school prayer and reflection.
- The chaplain is keen to provide as many opportunities for pupils' spiritual development as his timetable allows. He provides the opportunity for pupils to receive the sacrament of reconciliation each term and he is keen to increase the times he is able to lead boarders in night prayer.
- There are currently very few opportunities for pupils to attend voluntary acts of worship. The school has identified this as an area for development.
- Adults associated with the school are invited to attend some acts of Collective Worship but these opportunities could be increased.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

- Leaders know how to plan and deliver Collective Worship that reflects the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts. However, care should be taken to ensure that all acts of worship are suitably planned to be age appropriate and accessible to pupils.
- There is very little formal monitoring of Collective Worship. However, it is monitored informally by the chaplain on a regular basis and some evaluations are shared with the director of music and headmaster. As a result, leaders and governors rarely review Collective Worship as part of their self-evaluation processes.
- There is very little staff training in ways to deliver Collective Worship and how to support pupils in planning worship.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Registered Charity Number	309111
DfE number	931/6055
<i>This inspection was carried out under canon 806 of Canon Law.</i>	
Type of school	Preparatory
School category	Independent
Age range	2-13 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	406
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Matthew Stilwell
Headteacher	Robert Stewart
Telephone number	01189 844511
Website address	http://www.oratoryprep.co.uk
Email address	office@oratoryprep.co.uk

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS SCHOOL

- The Oratory Preparatory School is an independent school in Goring Heath, Reading.
- The percentage of Catholic pupils is currently 28%.
- The percentage of disadvantaged pupils is significantly below the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly below the national average.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic origins is broadly below the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language is broadly below the national average.
- Attainment on entry is broadly above age related expectations.
- A new headmaster and head of Religious Education have been appointed since the last inspection.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION

- The inspection was carried out by two Diocesan Inspectors – Maureen O’Leary and Julie-Anne Tallon.
- The focus of the inspection was on the impact, quality and leadership of the school’s provision of Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship.
- The inspectors observed teaching across nine Religious Education lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. All of these lesson observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspectors completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic Life, the impact of Religious Education teaching on their learning over time and their experience of Collective Worship.
- Meetings were held with two governors, the headteacher, the Religious Education subject leader, a group of staff and the priest chaplain.
- The inspectors attended a whole school Mass, class Collective Worship and undertook a learning walk to look at the presentation of the Catholic Life of the school and pupils’ behaviour.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documents including the school’s self-evaluation, data about pupils’ attainment and progress, the school development plan, the Religious Education action plan, teachers’ planning and learning journals.