

Notre Dame Preparatory School

URN: 125447

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Arundel & Brighton

30–31 January 2025

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

2

Catholic life and mission (p.3)

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission

2

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

1

Collective worship (p.7)

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

2

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

Compliance statement

- Notre Dame is compliant with the general norms of the Bishops' Conference in relation to 10% curriculum time.
- Notre Dame implements the diocesan bishop's requirements in relation to phased implementation of the *Religious Education Directory* and the Relationships, Sex and Health Education curriculum stipulation.
- Notre Dame has fully responded to the areas of improvement from the previous inspection.

What the school does well

- Pupils are passionate about their religious education learning; they produce work of a very high standard and are religiously literate young people.
- Teachers have a high level of confidence when teaching religious education and use a range of strategies to skilfully support and extend learning for all pupils.
- Leaders of religious education have secured high quality provision resulting in teaching that is enabling pupils to achieve excellent outcomes.
- Staff are exemplary role models of the school's particular charism and show high levels of care and attention to their pupils.
- From the youngest to the oldest, all pupils actively participate in collective worship and behave respectfully at all times.

What the school needs to improve

- Pupils need to be able to articulate and exemplify what the charism of St Jeanne calls them to do.
- Train all staff to fully understand what engaging prayer and liturgy looks like and embed this into everyday school life.
- Leaders and governors need to embed a rigorous self-evaluation schedule to bring about further improvements.

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

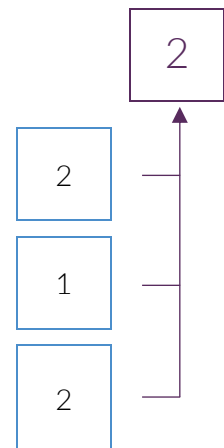
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school



Pupils are proud to be part of the Notre Dame school family and the charism of St Jeanne. They know this guides the school's work but find it difficult to remember and articulate all 5 key teachings of this charism. However, they know and understand what the Church calls them to do, saying for example that 'we raise money and help others because we want to follow in Jesus' footsteps'. Pupils can express an understanding that they are valued and cared for as individuals and as a result they are happy, confident and secure leading to exemplary behaviour at all times. Pupils are engaged in a range of social action activities, for example, writing birthday cards to residents of Whiteley Village, and contributing to the whole school charity chosen for the year by pupils in the senior school. Consequently, pupils respond well to opportunities to enact Catholic social teaching principles; however, not all pupils lead and make connections between these charitable actions and the teachings behind them. Pupils are extremely proud of the school's chaplaincy provision and joyfully embrace any opportunity to participate in activities; one pupil told inspectors, 'We love our time with the chaplain.'

Catholic tradition and the charism of St Jeanne is rooted in school life: staff are highly committed to this charism and are living witnesses to it. All staff are passionate about what they are called to do, with one staff member commenting that, 'Everyone at this school works within the ethos of St Jeanne.' Staff are exemplary role models for pupils, treating them and each other with respect and genuine care. Relationships are extremely strong and there is a real sense of community and welcome with Christ at its heart. For example, the monthly Valued Colleague Award allows staff to nominate each other for making a significant impact on the school's mission. There is a full-time school chaplain shared with the senior school who is highly valued by pupils and staff, for example leading prayer sessions for staff and parents, supporting pupil-

led prayer and helping promote the Catholic nature of the school: the school's chaplaincy provision is therefore central to the life of the school. The school's environment effectively witnesses its Catholic identity through statues, paintings, and the prayer garden; school leaders recognise the need for an accessible area where members of the school community could engage in prayer independently.

Leaders and governors are dedicated to promoting and leading the school's Catholic life. They treat staff with respect for their dignity, resulting in a highly motivated and committed team. Staff speak warmly of the headmistress' open-door policy and the pastoral support of the chaplain. Leaders and governors work hard to involve parents in the Catholic life of the school and as a result parents know and appreciate that the school provides their children with a nurturing and faith-filled environment which enables them to explore and strengthen their relationship with God. One parent explained that, 'It is a wonderful school led by a wonderful headmistress,' and another commented that, 'The school is full of love and somewhere for your child to be nurtured.' There are effective links with several local parishes: the parish priest from Cobham regularly celebrates Mass, visits the school and is well-known and respected by the pupils. Although leaders and governors have implemented a schedule of self-evaluation, this is not always entirely accurate as it is focused more on provision than on the actual outcomes and lived experiences of the pupils: they should therefore embed a more rigorous self-evaluation system to ensure that pupil outcomes are consistently strong.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

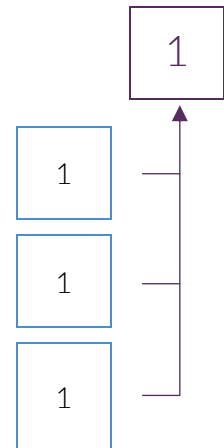
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education



Pupils are passionate about their religious education lessons, saying that ‘lessons are fun’ because they get the opportunity to learn about Jesus. When sharing their work with inspectors, all pupils spoke with enthusiasm and joy about their learning, struggling to identify which was their favourite piece. Pupils are religiously literate and make strong connections to their prior learning. For example, pupils in Year 5 were able to make links between Moses and Jesus, saying that ‘Both Moses and Jesus are trying to help us live the life that God wants us to live’. Pupils are actively engaged in lessons and, because of this, their behaviour in lessons is exemplary, showing a curiosity and love for their learning in religious education. Work in books is of a very high standard, varied, detailed and well-presented and demonstrating a clear understanding of the subject. Therefore, attainment in religious education aligns with that in other core subjects. As a result of teacher feedback, pupils understand how well they have met the aims of a lesson and what their next steps are. In a particularly appropriate unit of work, pupils were able to talk with enthusiasm about God’s calling to women and relate it to the calling of the Sisters who founded Notre Dame School.

Staff demonstrate a deep commitment to religious education, and this is subsequently reflected well by the pupils. In all lessons observed by inspectors, the quality of teaching and subject knowledge of the staff was of a very high standard. In a Year 6 lesson, for example, pupils were debating and exploring the divine and human nature of Jesus with apt and incisive interventions from the teacher, with one pupil articulating that ‘divine nature means the special qualities that Jesus can do that we can’t do, like turning water into wine’. Teachers are skilful in using questions to prompt the pupils to think more reflectively about their answers as seen in a Year 2 lesson where pupils were asked why Jesus called his disciples fishers of men and what this actually meant. Pupils are given opportunities to present their learning through various forms of

expression, including art, poetry, prayers and creative writing, which helps stimulate their enjoyment of the subject. Teachers use feedback to recognise and celebrate pupils' efforts, which is reflected in the pride pupils take in the quality and presentation of their work. This detailed and thorough feedback also enables pupils to self-assess their work and know how well they are doing.

Leaders of religious education have secured high quality provision resulting in teaching that is enabling pupils to achieve excellent outcomes. Regular staff training, such as recent sessions on success criteria and Catholic social teaching, have ensured that all relevant staff are confident and knowledgeable to teach the content of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. Staff therefore feel supported and empowered. The subject leader for religious education works with leaders from other schools within the deanery to share good practice and keep up to date, for example with the introduction of the new diocese scheme of work. Leaders and governors have shown their commitment to the subject by dedicating a classroom to be the religious education classroom and by appointing a specialist religious education teacher to lead the subject and teach in the upper year groups. The monitoring and evaluation process, which includes lesson observations, and reviewing books, ensures that priorities for improvement are clearly identified. Through the Lestonnac Committee, governors contribute to the evaluation process and challenge leaders appropriately.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

2

2

Pupils enjoy the varied opportunities they have for prayer and are active participants in them. In all acts of collective worship seen during the inspection, all pupils joined in enthusiastically with responses and were keen to answer questions. Their singing is joyful and a considerable feature of the school and during moments of quiet reflection, they behave reverently, sitting still and reflecting on the Word of God. Pupils undertake ministries, such as altar serving, reading, leading prayers and monitoring and maintaining the classroom prayer corners. They work well with others and especially the chaplain to prepare and deliver meaningful prayer and liturgy, such as in a Year 3 celebration of the Word, where a group of pupils confidently asked questions about the Gospel reading. Some pupils are involved in evaluating the quality of collective worship and the school should now look at how to expand this and how pupils can use these evaluations to improve their experiences of prayer. Although pupils enjoy and respond well to the prayer experiences provided, the school now needs to support pupils to recognise and demonstrate that collective worship is a special and sacred time and different to all other parts of the day.

A pattern of prayer throughout the day is embedded throughout the school, meaning pupils recognise and value the importance of prayer as the opportunity to talk to God: for example, all pupils told inspectors about the times in the day when they pray as a class. The range of ways in which this school community prays is growing, with the recent introduction of the Sacrament of Reconciliation alongside regular celebrations of the Eucharist. Most collective worship is well-constructed and delivered. In a particularly engaging prayer session for the Nursery children, for example, the chaplain read a short passage from the Bible and used relevant objects such as a teddy bear, balloon and bubble to help the children understand the concept of loving each other. However, sometimes there is an emphasis on questioning and performing which changes the mood and atmosphere from the spiritual to the temporal. As pupils move through the school,

leaders should consider how they will maintain this sense of awe and wonder and develop the spirituality of older pupils within the breadth and richness of the Catholic tradition. Much use is made of the school chapel; however, leaders should consider whether this is always the most appropriate space for collective worship or whether the space could be organised in a more effective way for the pupils involved.

Leaders ensure that the school's prayer and liturgy are strategically planned through an annual plan of provision linked to the liturgical year. Holy days of obligation are celebrated with Mass as well as feast days that are special to the school community, such as the days dedicated to St Jeanne, of which pupils, staff and parents speak enthusiastically. There are many beautiful displays and prayer focuses around the school site, which are well cared-for, but limited opportunities for pupils to make use of them for their own individual prayer: leaders should look at how best to provide time and dedicated space accessible to all, both indoors and outdoors, for personal and reflective prayer. Leaders and governors strive to include parents in the prayer life of the school by, for example, organising a parents' prayer group and making use of social media to invite parents to particular events. Whilst pupils' evaluation of liturgy is regularly sought, leaders now need to develop a rigorous schedule of self-evaluation which will result in a wider range of high-quality prayer experiences for the school community.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Notre Dame Preparatory School
School unique reference number (URN)	125447
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9366570
Full postal address of the school	Notre Dame Preparatory School, Burwood House, Convent Lane, KT11 1HA
School phone number	01932869990
Headteacher	Amelie Morgan
Chair of governors	Simon Frost
School Website	www.notredame.co.uk
Trusteeship	Order of the Company of Mary Our Lady
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	All Through
Type of school	Catholic Independent School
Admissions policy	Selective
Age-range of pupils	2-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	12 th June 2008
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

Michael Lobo
Sarah Norville

Lead
Team

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement