



## **INSPECTION REPORT**

St. Rose's School  
Stratford Lawn, Stroud, Gloucestershire, GL5 4AP  
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DfE Number:  
URN: 115813

Principal: Mrs Sheila Talwar  
Chair of Governors: Mr John Kyffin

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**Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Clifton  
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005**

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Date of inspection: June 4-5<sup>th</sup> 2019  
Date of previous inspection: November 2012

Reporting Inspector: Mr J Skivington  
Additional Inspector: Mr F Toner



## **Description of school**

St Rose's is a non-maintained Catholic Special school, and a registered charity for children and young people aged 5 to 19 with physical and learning difficulties. The school was founded by the Dominican Sisters and remains part of the overall charity of the English Dominican Congregation. The Trustees of the Congregation devolve the day to day running of St. Rose's to its Governing Body, the Principal, and staff. The school provides both day and residential placements. Currently there are 18 students on roll of whom 6% are residential and 17% stay for additional nights. All have severe learning difficulties and disabilities, and some have complex learning difficulties, disabilities, and complex medical needs, SLD (Severe Learning Difficulties), PMLD (Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties) and AS (Autistic Spectrum). The school has strong links with the local parish, the diocese, and the local Catholic Schools Partnership, and benefits from a stable and very experienced School and College Management Team.

## **Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)**

**Grade 1**

### **This is an outstanding school because:**

- The outcomes, the provision, and the leadership and management of Catholic life are overall outstanding. Despite their severe difficulties in communication the students' friendship and respect for each other make an excellent contribution to the ethos of the school, particularly in the encouraging role modelling of the older students for the younger children.
- The outcomes, the provision and the leadership and management for religious education (RE) are outstanding. The quality of teaching is consistently good with some outstanding practice and is closely linked to students' achievement and progress. The leadership and management of RE, particularly the close monitoring and detailed, individual planning for each student, is outstanding.
- The provision for the prayer life of the school and the students' wholehearted response are outstanding as is the effectiveness of the leadership and management in monitoring and evaluating the quality of its prayer life.

### **The capacity of the school community to improve and develop is good.**

- The school has successfully maintained its high standards since the previous inspection. The areas for development highlighted in that inspection – making more explicit and further full use of every opportunity to enable students to make connections between faith and life, and to contribute to the planning and evaluation

of the school's prayer life, have been successfully addressed and is a continuing focus in planning provision and outcomes. St. Rose's has developed close and enriching partnerships with the other local Catholic schools, especially the adjoining Rosary Primary School. There is a stable senior leadership team, and a multi-disciplinary team with appropriate specialisms and experience, who are highly committed to the mission of the school. Parental approval, appreciation, and support for the school is fulsome and unanimous.

**What the school should do to improve further**

- To incorporate the new RE assessment criteria into the planning and evaluation of each student's individual learning objectives.
- To incorporate, in a more discrete way, the Church's Catholic Social teaching into the curriculum especially at Key Stages 4 and 5.

**a) The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school**

- Students appreciate, value, and participate in the Catholic life of the school, as far as their abilities allow. Some are able to articulate what is special about being in a Catholic school, and how the core values of the school translate into their outstanding behaviour and care for one another. In the recent revisit of the mission statement by trustees, governors, leaders, staff, and parents, a number of the students were able to make a clear contribution to the discussions.
- They are able to express their opinions on the Catholic life through Pupil Voice and questionnaires which seek their opinion. Their ideas are expressed through different media, such as music, art, discussion and writing, and displayed in the classrooms and around the school. The school is constantly seeking to provide even more systematic and planned opportunities for them to be more effectively involved in evaluating Catholic life.
- The students' calm and cheerful conduct and attitudes around the school reflect its Catholic character, and this makes a significant contribution to the whole ethos of the school. Their care for one another, particularly the older pupils for the younger children, is an embedded behaviour and reflects the values inculcated by the school. They value and respect one another, and all feel included in every area of school life.
- They live out the Catholic mission through their outreach to others in the community and beyond, through charity work such as the Harvest and Lent fundraising for developing countries through Cafod, the Christmas Shoebox Appeal, and local initiatives such as the raffle for the local hospice on the death of one of the students. A good number of parents, parishioners and local people support the events organised by the pupils. The links with the parish are strong and pupils are involved in parish activities.
- Pupils are happy, well- rounded individuals and prepared as best they can possibly be for the next stage of their physical, emotional, and spiritual development. So many have life limiting conditions which they are supported to manage, and as a result they have a positive approach, realising their sense of worth. They are able to contribute and be valued as highly regarded members of the community, as celebrated in the Star Moments Awards and their insightful surveys.

## **b) The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school**

- The outstanding provision for the Catholic life of the school ensures the school's mission and Catholic ethos are at the centre of all the school does. It is a beacon and a strong voice in the proclamation of the Gospel and a community which teaches us all that the weakest and neediest in society can inspire and teach the strongest, and that they are more beautiful than they dare believe.
- St. Rose's is a welcoming and inclusive community where all are valued and invited to participate. As a result, all have a strong sense of belonging to a community that celebrates difference and diversity. This also comes through the pupils multi faith work on Judaism, Islam and Hinduism which are displayed around the school, alongside work on Catholic identity and core values. and celebrations of the Church's liturgical year.
- The Pastoral programme is a real strength of the school, with well-planned links between PSHE, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and the Catholic values the school promotes. Very effective pastoral support and care is given to the students and their families, and this enables them to thrive. There are also many opportunities for the pupil's spiritual and moral development right across the curriculum.
- Improved provision and new ideas are well supported by the school's fruitful links with the local Catholic schools' partnership. This enables the students to work with their peers in the other schools. Pupils from the adjoining Rosary School come in to lead and accompany prayer and reflection sessions.

## **c) How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school**

- Leaders and governors are strongly committed to promoting the Catholic ethos of the school through the governors' EHC (Education, Health and Care) committee. This committee meets termly and Catholic Ethos is monitored and reviewed, as well as being a standing item on the Leadership and Management meeting agenda. Governors are closely involved in the school. They have successfully ensured that the effectiveness of the school's mission is a real expression of the wider mission of the Church, and for example, have created an attractive brochure with the school's values prominently

laid out. They offer excellent models of good practice as leaders of Catholic life, ensuring all parents and children are fully included in the school's life.

- Governors keep themselves up to date with appropriate diocesan training, and they are aware of the Pastoral Vision for the Diocese – A Future full of Hope. In this Year of Prayer the school has hosted the Journey of the Cross and walked in procession from Rosary School with parishioners and parents. Leaders ensure that spiritual and moral education are informed by Catholic Social teaching and are aware that there is still work to be done to fully incorporate the teaching across the curriculum. The school is open to advice and collaboration with the other partner Catholic schools in the group.
- The quality and frequency of induction and CPD for staff to develop their understanding and commitment to the Church's and the school's mission is very effective, with frequent Inset both in school, and with the partner schools, on Catholic life and RE. All staff are helped through example and CPD to understand the Catholic nature of the school, and as a result they become fully committed to its mission and are real role models for the children. The School and College Management Team take every opportunity to attend diocesan meetings and training days, particularly the Principal and Vice Principal, so that they themselves and the staff are fully up to date.
- Governors visit the school and attend assemblies and liturgies both formally and informally, including random visits and formal learning walks - all detailed in the Governor's Visit book. Their evaluation of Catholic life, in terms of the quality and range of opportunities for pupils' and the staffs' spiritual and moral development, and their understanding of it, is well informed, systematic, and is fed into improvement planning with measurable objectives. The good links with parents ensures that they too can support and reinforce their children's spiritual development and learning at home.

### **a) How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education**

- Most students make consistently good and often better progress and enjoy their learning despite their complex physical, medical and learning challenges. For some more complex students RE is delivered as part of a holistic, sensory curriculum. Students with SLD (Severe learning Difficulties) benefit from a semi-formal learning programme which promotes life skills. Technology plays a vital role in promoting learning; for example, a variety of switches and communication aids, signage and symbols, the plasma screen and appropriate software. The school's expertise in this area is widely acknowledged and shared with other schools and special needs practitioners.
- In lessons pupils are very positive and are able to communicate their ideas in a variety of ways, using the latest technology. Some very thoughtful and reflective work is displayed in the classrooms, indicating their understanding of the RE topics, and their grasp of ethical questions. They are able to link core Gospel values to how they behave and treat others. They think about their own faith and make links with the beliefs of others, through learning about other faiths such as Judaism, Sikhism and Islam.
- The extent of students' religious literacy develops in small steps as they go through the key stages, and in discussion they show a good grasp of key concepts. Pupils enjoy their RE lessons and can learn independently, in pairs, and in groups. In a lesson observed three students in wheelchairs played a short variant game of Boccia which included breaking rules. This generated a discussion on ethical behaviour in which they all joined in and demonstrated a sound understanding of why values of honesty and fairness are important.

### **b) The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education**

- The quality of teaching is consistently good, and this promotes good and better learning, as well as the enjoyment and progress of the pupils. Teachers use a good range of strategies including art, music, drama and role play which the pupils enjoy, and which helps them to learn. Teachers plan in great detail, with clear learning objectives shared with each student and teaching assistant.
- Teachers of RE have a secure subject knowledge, a good rapport with the pupils, and have high expectations of effort. Questioning is effective because it checks understanding, challenges pupils to think more deeply and provide reasons for

their opinions and make links to scripture and their life experience. Teaching assistants are always present to help and to record each student's response.

- The quality of assessment is exemplary and a strength of the school because it is used very effectively to plan future lessons building on what students have already grasped. All students showed improved progress in achieving their IP targets for PSD. These are entered into B squared and their progress can be shown using Caspa data. Mapp is also used to show progress for the PMLD students. A student in post-16 completed a qualification in RE OCR Entry level in RE over two years.

**c) How well leaders and governors monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education**

- The evaluation of RE provision is an area of leadership and management which is highly effective and the driver of improvement. Leaders and governors monitor and track RE through lesson observations and book scrutiny, and feedback to teachers demonstrates rigour and challenge. The governors carry out the Annual Governors' Monitoring and Evaluation Programme (AGMEP) throughout the year.
- The inspirational RE subject leader, together with the RE link governor who has long expertise and experience in teaching RE, are excellent supportive role models for the teachers in developing their subject knowledge and practice. All aspects of the subject are thoroughly planned in frequent staff meetings and Inset, and swift action taken where needed, often the result of a detailed review of the curriculum modules in teacher feedback. The RE planning is drawn up in a detailed working document with clear, measurable objectives. Together with the positive support provided through diocesan training and collaboration with the other RE leaders in the Gloucestershire Partnership, teachers new to the subject are rapidly up-skilled and confident.
- The RE curriculum meets the Bishops' Conference requirements, as well as any additional requirements of the diocesan Bishop. Extracurricular enrichment is in place through visits, retreats, multi faith days, and the many charity and outreach activities. For example, a group visited the synagogue in Bristol.
- Leaders and governors take into account the views of parents and pupils in evaluating RE through questionnaires and conferencing. Parents are very positive in their feedback to the school and could become even more involved in decision making and partnership. There were 20 replies to the inspection parental questionnaire, an indication of parents' unanimous approval, gratitude

and close interest in what the governors and leadership are providing for their children.

### a) How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's prayer life

- Every student regardless of faith background feels welcome to participate fully in the school's prayer life and collective worship. The pupils show great reverence and attentiveness at prayer and a willingness to play a part in assemblies and whole school celebrations to the best of their ability. They participate in daily acts of worship by the use of signs and support from staff and are encouraged to lead and respond to daily acts of worship. There are many moving examples of their participation recorded on video and photographic displays.
- The whole school assembly observed during the inspection showed students were fully engaged and responded using signing or body gestures, and eye pointing with the support of staff. A more able student read, and older pupils interacted with the others moving around the assembly.
- Music plays an important part in the liturgy and the hymn chosen by the students themselves was uplifting. They have formed a small orchestra and produce some excellent ensemble work. The musical experience is not only an accessible form of prayer but also opens up their integration with others.
- Students are asked for their feedback and their responses show their engagement with what is happening. There are useful planning aids to guide the pupils in their worship preparation, and reviews and evaluations of their efforts and suggested improvement.
- The prayer life of the school contributes significantly to the spiritual and moral development of the children. As pupils move through the school there is a corresponding progression in prayer, including the traditional Catholic prayers, and an understanding of the structure of the Mass as well as the liturgical year. They are able to compose their own prayers and reflections and enjoy working and praying with visiting pupils from the partner schools. The prayer areas in each class are an attractive, reflective focus for daily prayer and have examples of the pupils' own reflections and insights.
- The parish priest is a frequent presence to the whole school community, collaborating with the RE coordinator in planning the liturgical programme, and there are fruitful links between parish and school. The adjoining church is an

ideal resource for the pupils and an alternative venue for their special assemblies and liturgies.

**b) The quality of the prayer life provided by the school**

- The provision for the prayer life of the school makes an outstanding contribution to the spiritual life of the whole school community and is part and parcel of every school day. This is evident not only in the Masses and assemblies reflecting the Church's liturgical year, but also the school's whole environment, with appropriate statues and colourful classroom and corridor displays. The attractive gardens and school grounds are also a wonderful resource for informal reflection or outside liturgies such as the procession for the Journey of the Cross.
- The centrality of prayer life reaches out to all pupils, regardless of faith or family background, and includes both staff and parents. Significant moments, such as Harvest, Remembrance Day, Advent and Lent, and traditional Catholic practices, are celebrated as a whole community and are well supported by parents and parish. Students have the opportunity to participate in shared reflection days with their peers in the other Catholic partner schools.
- The staff are knowledgeable and skilled in planning, leading, and evaluating worship, using every communication aid and up to date technology, so that every student can access the liturgy and express their response howsoever they can. Makaton plays a vital part in this and if they wish students are able to write their own prayers using symbols. The school continually searches for further ways to involve the students in taking more ownership of their assemblies and class prayers.

**c) How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the prayer life of the school.**

- Leaders and governors sustain and nurture the prayer life of the school community well and ensure provision and opportunities for prayer and collective worship are in place. There are planned procedures to monitor, evaluate, and further enrich prayer life, and there is ample written evidence of systematic appraisal, review and evaluation in documentation such as the governors' Education, Health and Care Committee minutes and feedback from regular Catholic Ethos walks. This data is then fed into the school improvement plans which are working documents, amended or added to frequently.
- The spirituality of the staff is well supported through days of training and reflection. They are very well supported by the RE leader in planning for worship

and so becoming more knowledgeable about the liturgical rhythm of the Church. This training is held in great importance, not least because as teachers become more confident in modelling high quality inspirational presentations, they have the confidence to hand over planning and presentation to the pupils themselves at every opportunity.

## Summary of Parental Questionnaires

*There were 20 parental questionnaires received. All were very positive about the school and their children's education, but also challenging and ready to suggest positive improvements. Some typical responses included:*

***'The school provides excellent care, education, and therapies to assist our daughter to maximise her potential'.***

***'There is a Christian family atmosphere of care and respect. The spiritual life and ethos of the school is very strong and a real highlight'.***

***'We chose St. Rose's because of its caring, holistic ethos.... consideration and respect shown to students by outstanding staff'.***

***'There is no other school like it.... the staff are experienced and can meet the complex needs of all the students.'***

***'The school gives exceptional care. It has a very calm and happy atmosphere. excellent education and nursing.... it offers social activities and physio which is essential. Also wonderful overnight care which can be a lifeline to parents and carers'.***

***'It is close to the Rosary school, the community and the parish....my son has the opportunity to join with them many times'.***