



# **DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT**

incorporating Section 48 and Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on  
behalf of the Archbishop of Southwark

**118949**

**Beechwood Sacred Heart Independent School**

**12 Pembury Road**

**Tunbridge Wells, Kent**

**TN2 3QD**

**Inspection date:** 16th and 17th January 2020  
**Chair of Governors:** Mrs Constance Williams  
**Acting Headteacher:** Mr Paul Kershaw  
**Consultant Headteacher:** Mrs Helen Rowe  
**Inspectors:** Mrs Catherine Burnett  
Mrs Helen Frostick

## **EDUCATION COMMISSION**

St Edward's House, St Paul's Wood Hill, Orpington, Kent BR5 2SR

Tel 01689 829331

**Director of Education: Dr Simon Hughes**



## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

## FULL REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Beechwood Sacred Heart School, founded in 1915, is a co-educational independent day and boarding school for in the Deanery of Tunbridge Wells in the Archdiocese of Southwark. The school caters for girls and boys aged 3 – 18, which comprises a Nursery, Preparatory School and Senior School, with boarding for girls and boys aged 11 – 18. Beechwood is situated on a 25 acre campus in Tunbridge Wells, Kent. The school is part of the Sacred Heart Network who commit themselves to educate for personal growth in an atmosphere of wise freedom.

The school organises pupils into two schools, Preparatory, early years through to Year 6, and Senior School years 7 to 13. There are currently 86 pupils on roll in the Preparatory school and 230 in the Senior school of which 50 are boarders. Most boarders are international pupils.

The school has relatively new leadership at senior level and in governance, with a change in senior leadership from January 2020. The deputy head is currently acting headteacher supported by the headteacher part time, as consultant headteacher. At the time of inspection neither the chair of governors nor acting headteacher were available in school. The acting headteacher was attending CISC 2020 in Glasgow (Catholic Independent Schools Conference). This was agreed by the school's Foundation Governors. The chair of governors was not able to be present during the inspection, but made herself available by phone.

Religious Education is taught through humanities in the preparatory school with dedicated Religious Education lessons from Year 7. Religious Education is an optional subject in Year 11, 12 and 13 but has recently become a compulsory GCSE subject from Year 10. Pupils in Years 11, 12 and 13 take 'core' Religious Education. The amount of scheduled Religious Education is below the requirements of the Bishops' Conference in every year group except Year 10 and where students in Years 11, 12 and 13 have opted for Religious Education as an examination subject. In other year groups the percentage of taught Religious Education is at or less than 5%, being as low as 1.7% in Year 11. The school does not, therefore, currently meet the requirements of the Bishops' Conference for curriculum time for Religious Education.

The school has a dedicated chaplain who also works part-time for pupil boarding. There is a large chapel within the main building, with a small adjacent chapel for private prayer. The chapel is open every day, with the word of the Lord and Gospels for the day displayed on the altar. To the rear of the chapel a multi-faith corner is used to display objects used



by other faiths for worship. The chapel also hosts a small religious library. The school hall was a chapel and place of worship previously for the local area and is also available for collective worship. The local priest from St Augustine's is not always available therefore the school uses other links for scheduled Masses and celebrations at key points in the liturgical calendar. The local parish priest was not available during the inspection. Heads of division, the school's leaders and the chaplain lead daily prayer and liturgies throughout the week.

This is the school's first Denominational Inspection under Section 48 of the Education Act, 2005.



## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

Beechwood Sacred Heart School is a Good Catholic school because:

- Prayer forms an integral part of school life through the programme of Espacio which staff and students value highly.
- A comprehensive programme of liturgical events and acts of Catholic worship are built into the weekly and annual calendar, forming a foundation for Catholic ethos which exudes from all members of the school community.
- All members of this inclusive and diverse community are provided with a wide range of opportunities to explore faith and spirituality, through the Catholic life of the school.
- There is a strategic plan in place supported by the governing board, led through the Foundation Governing Board, to bring the school in line with the requirements of the Bishops' Conference
- There is a collective sense of nurture in all aspects of this community which all stakeholders are proud to celebrate.

## WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

- Provide the required amount of curriculum time for all pupils in the school in line with the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. This includes the schools Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) which is a requirement in independent schools by September 2020.
- Secure the commitment of all stakeholders responsible for strategic leadership of the school to place Religious Education at the core of the curriculum, following the school's mission statement of "providing an education rooted in our Catholic Christian faith and in the Sacred Heart tradition".
- Implement a whole staff professional development programme which supports and enables all staff to deliver and enhance the Catholic life of the school throughout daily school life.
- Extend opportunities for students' leadership of prayer and liturgy.



## Overall Effectiveness

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.

2

### Catholic Life

2

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.

2

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

2

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

2

### Religious Education

3

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.

3

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.

3

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

3

### Collective Worship

1

How well pupils respond to and participate in the schools' Collective Worship.

1

The quality of provision for Collective Worship.

1

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

2



## CATHOLIC LIFE

2

**The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is good.**

- Pupils in Years 6-10 take part in an annual retreat at Aylesford Priory run by the Southwark Catholic Youth Service. Years 3-6 pupils have a dedicated day in school which includes meditation and reflection. There are plans to extend retreats for Year 12 next academic year. All retreats also focus on the Sacred Heart goal selected for that year.
- Pupils, parents and staff speak highly of the school community describing it as a 'family atmosphere' where 'everyone helps and respects each other'.
- Pupils and staff talk openly about the tremendous sense of care and community expressing how much they enjoy the atmosphere in the school.
- Fundraising occurs regularly at the school, with each house being allocated a week to do their chosen events. The school has committed £1000 of funds to a project in the Philippines through the Sacred Heart network.
- The focus this year is on Sacred Heart Goal Three, a commitment to educate to a social awareness which impels action. In this commitment the school has a strategy in place to become free of single use plastics.
- Pupils spoke excitedly about the Eco Club who have created an eco-garden and a Go Green campaign.
- Every class has a form captain and eco captain who represent the form group and act as ambassadors for the school.
- Core Religious Education at Key Stage 5 is used to create opportunities for pupils to volunteer in the community. Pupils welcome this opportunity and talked with enthusiasm about the work they do in service to others.

**The quality of provision of the Catholic Life of the school is good.**

- The chapel is at the heart of the school and is open to everyone to use. Pupils and teachers of all faiths spoke appreciatively of the access to prayer, and opportunities to meditate and reflect.
- The introduction of a part-time lay chaplain in 2014 has enabled the school to extend provision across the school. This includes divisional liturgies, religious themes, hymn practice as well as supporting pupils to write bidding prayers for masses.
- The chaplain provides 'little book of Advent and Lent' to guide prayer and reflections during that time.
- All Year 7 pupils have scheduled time with the chaplain early in the academic year.
- Espacio is part of tutor prayer at least once a week. The chaplain provides eight Espacio meditations each month. The quotes provided are either from Madeleine Sophie Barat, founder of the Society of the Sacred Heart, or are faith focused.
- Parents, pupils and staff spoke highly of the annual Eighth Weekend celebration, for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, describing it as a highlight in the school's calendar.
- During the inspection, parents spoke highly of the school and commented how much more confident their children had become since joining the school.



- A high-quality pastoral care programme is embedded through the Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education, PSHCE, programme and Sacred Heart goals. Parents commented on how the school 'goes out of its way to ensure your child is settled'.
- The school has a relationships and sex education policy in place, but provision is not in line with the Diocesan guidelines.
- British values are embedded through both the subject-based and pastoral programmes and linked to the Sacred Heart goals. The phrase 'In a world where you can be anything, be kind' was highly visible throughout the school.

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

- Leaders ensure that resources are available on the school shared drive to support staff in delivery and writing of prayers. Staff training took place in 2017 on Espacio and how to pray.
- Staff and governors model the use of prayer with staff prayer taking place in the chapel every Thursday break time and governors starting meetings with prayer.
- A Foundation Governors' Board oversees all aspects of Catholic Life and attend events and masses whenever possible.
- The school chaplain regularly monitors use of prayer across the school through conversations with pupils.
- All new staff receive training on the Catholic as part of their induction.
- The part-time consultant Headteacher, who has been at the school previously as deputy head then as headteacher, has provided strong and effective leadership to the school community, providing a clear vision over the academic and spiritual formation of the pupils. The school is currently advertising for a new headteacher and has an acting headteacher in place since January. The acting headteacher was not present during the inspection. The acting headteacher was attending CISC 2020 in Glasgow (Catholic Independent Schools Conference), the main annual conference for Catholic Independent Schools in the UK. This was agreed by the school's Foundation Governors.
- The school benefits from support and guidance from a lay member of the Sacred Heart Network.
- The Governing Board is proactive in seeking Catholic governors, with one governor, the chair, being alumni.
- The lay chaplain regularly attends Sacred Heart network meetings.



## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

**How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is requiring improvement.**

- Pupils generally respond positively to their Religious Education lessons and have built strong relationships with their established teachers.
- In a year 10 lesson observed by inspectors, pupils were guided through a reflection on St Mark's Gospel assisting them in relating the message to their lives.
- In an early years' lesson, pupils were using scripture to emphasise Jesus' love for everyone.
- Pupils opting for Religious Education, where it is not compulsory, speak highly of the value and quality of the subject and their teachers.
- Pupils benefit from the small group teaching which supports the relatively high number of students requiring additional support in learning or language.
- Teaching and Learning in the Senior School is supported by a team of six highly skilled staff who are all dyslexia specialists. The team also includes a speech and language specialist and a Level 7 trained member for access arrangements.
- Religious Education in the school is enhanced through dedicated lessons in the chapel, led by the chaplain, to explain, for example, the Mass and its importance.

**The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education requires improvement.**

- This is because the amount of curriculum time available for Religious Education does not meet the expectations of the Bishops' Conference
- However, the majority of teaching observed in Religious Education was good.
- Marking and assessment is limited. Where it is at its best, pupils receive comments and feedback which they respond to demonstrating progress. There is no assessment in the Preparatory years.
- Qualitative monitoring is undertaken in the Preparatory years by the Head of School, the last data presented being February 2019. In the Senior School the Head of Religious Education monitors books and provides qualitative feedback.
- Pupils' ability to retain information and therefore to make progress in Religious Education is hindered by their lack of access to the subject with some books showing little or no progress and minimal subject matter covered.

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

- Religious Education is not prioritised as a core subject.
- Religious Education in the Preparatory school is taught through humanities often by non-specialists supported by the Head of Religious Education.
- Governors discuss matters relating to Religious Education and its provision and are aware of the requirements of the Bishops' Conference.
- The percentage of Religious Education provided is well below the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. This has been acknowledged by the Foundation Board and a strategic plan is in place for the Senior School. From September 2019, GCSE Religious Education has become compulsory from Year 10.





- The self-evaluation form (SEF) refers to work with the outgoing headteacher and has not been fully updated to reflect the new leadership arrangements. At the time of the inspection, the acting headteacher had been in post for eight days. The SEF had been updated to reflect the leadership changes in Section One (Data Capture Form) and Section Two (pages 2, 4, 6 and 8).



## COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

1

**How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.**

- When interviewed as part of the inspection, the pupils expressed how highly they value collective worship whatever their faith. They were keen to express how much they valued the liturgies, Masses and whole school celebrations as part of their whole school community which was repeatedly referred to as a 'family'.
- In the moving divisional liturgy observed, pupils respectfully engaged with tasks, discussions and silent reflections on the theme of hope and faith
- Hymn practice is provided weekly in the Preparatory school and fortnightly in the senior school. The senior hymn practice observed was a preparation for the forthcoming Lenten Mass. Pupils actively engaged in the practice and had a clear sense of purpose and reverence.
- Pupils are encouraged to write bidding prayers in their own language reflecting the international diversity of the school.
- In the Preparatory school assembly led by the Head of Prep, there was a clear sense of enjoyment and engagement among the pupils. The assembly explored 'How each of us is special' focusing on an appreciation of diversity.

**The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.**

- Collective worship is planned into the core life of the school.
- Masses are held throughout the year to celebrate key points in the liturgical calendar as well as welcome Masses at the start of the year. Pupils are prepared well for these events, to enable them to take a full part in the celebrations. This was evident in the hymn practice attended by all senior school students not taking examinations that day.
- Daily prayers in form time are used to assist pupils in reflecting on their day and achievements. Prayers are age-appropriate ranging from prayer jars in younger years through to prayer resources on the school's shared drive.
- Annual celebrations, such as The Feast of the Immaculate Conception, are prepared for in Religious Education lessons. Pupils, staff, parents and governors spoke most highly of these events and appreciate the opportunity to take part whenever invited.
- Espacio is used to provide a focus for daily prayer, meditation and group worship. This programme is highly effective in engaging the whole school community.
- In the Preparatory School, all pupils and their families take part in the May procession from Fountain Lawn to Our Lady's grotto in the school grounds.
- During the season of Advent, pupils in Key Stage 1 produce a nativity for their families which is well attended. Pupils in Key Stage 2 host a carol service based on 'Nine Lessons and Carols' for their parents and families. In the Senior School, the carol service is led by the *Schola Cantorum* based on the 'Eight Lessons and Carols', which staff speak of as being well attended and 'a wonderful highlight to the last week of term'.



**How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is good.**

- Members of the Foundation Governing Board evidently review worship and liturgies regularly. They participate in events, which enables them to develop a thorough understanding of the collective worship provided.
- Members of the senior and middle leadership teams are actively involved in leading worship and supporting events.
- The lay chaplain monitors the use of prayer and worship and is actively involved in supporting the capability and confidence of others, so that they extend their skills in delivering worship.
- It was clear in discussion with staff delivering worship, that they feel comfortable seeking advice and guidance for collective worship from the consultant headteacher.
- The school would benefit from formal monitoring of collective worship to capture and share excellent practice and ensure consistency of provision across the school.