

Inspection of a good school: La Sainte Union Catholic Secondary School

Highgate Road, London NW5 1RP

Inspection dates:

2–3 October 2019

Outcome

La Sainte Union Catholic Secondary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

La Sainte Union is a Catholic school with a long history and tradition. The tradition builds on values of 'warm relationships, integrity and justice'. We experienced how these values influence the pleasant, welcoming atmosphere in the school.

Pupils explained clearly what they like best about the school – their teachers, the large grounds and the diversity of the community. Pupils are considerate of each other when they move around school, especially in the corridors, many of which are very cramped. There is a calm atmosphere, including in the playground and in lessons.

Leaders expect all pupils to achieve their best. Pupils respond well to their teachers' high expectations. They receive extra help when they need it so that they do well in their studies.

Sometimes, there are issues with friendship groups and some pupils view this as bullying. Pupils told us that they know where to go for help in school if they have any worries. Teachers work hard to put things right and most pupils agree that problems are resolved. There are many clubs and school trips. All pupils in Year 7 go on a retreat. This is very popular and helps develop pupils' skills to form positive relationships in school.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

School leaders have planned the curriculum well so that all pupils study and achieve highly in a wide range of subjects.

Curriculum leaders work as a strong team to share their skills and knowledge. Leaders organise lessons in sequences, which helps pupils build on previous learning. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. Those who are subject specialists give extra support to their colleagues, including newly qualified teachers.

Teachers use assessment effectively to identify when pupils misunderstand their work and need more help and encouragement. Teachers give extra help to pupils with special

educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers maintain their high expectations for disadvantaged pupils and provide extra time and resources to enable them to reach their potential. Pupils told us that they find their learning challenging but fun. In most subjects, pupils thrive. Each week, they know more and remember more.

Teachers also have high expectations for their pupils' behaviour. Pupils respond well to these expectations. Disruption in lessons by pupils is rare. Pupils are proud of their achievements.

Leaders are reviewing the science curriculum because it is not as well designed as other subjects. There is not a clear plan for how pupils will learn new information in a logical way or help them to link different things they know about science. Teachers' assessments in science do not pick up gaps in pupils' knowledge swiftly enough.

There is a very wide enrichment programme of extra activities for pupils. This includes subject clubs, a debating club, a drama club, a music club and many others. Pupils take part in two school drama productions each year. Pupils are currently rehearsing 'Julius Caesar'. The school's orchestra also performs three large musical events each year. Teachers encourage pupils to join the clubs. However, not enough pupils take up these opportunities, with only about half of all the pupils participating regularly.

There is a strong drive for social justice among the school community. There are many examples of pupils supporting others less fortunate than themselves. The school prepares pupils well for their studies after GCSE. Teachers give pupils advice on careers and subject choices. However, while pupils in Year 10 appreciate going on work experience, they told us they would like to have more opportunities to learn about the world of work.

Since the last inspection, the quality of the curriculum in the sixth form has improved. However, students have not developed the skills they need to use their time between lessons productively. This means that some students do not achieve as highly as they are capable of.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and teachers are vigilant in their checks and measures to keep their pupils safe. They ensure that pupils are aware of risks to their safety in the local area and that they learn how to avoid them. They take prompt action to protect pupils. There is a large team of staff in school who are specially trained to help pupils with concerns. The school will call upon specialist help, such as counselling, and work with external agencies when needed.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders should develop the science curriculum so that it is of the same high standard as those seen in other subject areas.
- Leaders should ensure that more pupils and students take part in activities to extend their learning and experience. They should also provide further opportunities for pupils to learn more about the world of work.
- There should be better support for sixth-form students to develop independent learning to deepen their subject knowledge.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 4 November 2010.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	100059
Local authority	Camden
Inspection number	10110417
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,071
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	213
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sean Flood
Headteacher	Sophie Fegan
Website	www.lasainteunion.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	25 February 2016

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, a new headteacher and senior team have been appointed.
- The school uses three alternative providers: The Royal Free Hospital School, Footsteps and WAC.
- The school is a member of the sixth-form consortium, LaSWAP.
- La Sainte Union is a Roman Catholic girls' school.

Information about this inspection

- We held meetings with the headteacher and other school leaders, governors, a trustee from the religious order and a local authority representative.
- We considered English, mathematics, geography and science in depth as part of the inspection. We met with the subject leaders and visited lessons in these and other subjects. We also held meetings with teachers and with pupils, and looked at pupils'

work. We talked to pupils and staff around the school.

- We looked at the single central register of checks on all employees and regular visitors to the school. We studied the 463 responses to the pupil survey, the 71 responses to the parents' survey and the 46 responses to the staff survey, as well as considering parents' telephone calls.

Inspection team

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