

Inspection of La Sainte Union Catholic Secondary School

Highgate Road, London NW5 1RP

Inspection dates:	3 and 4 December 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's values of service, dignity, respect, academia, cooperation and excellence are embedded in the life of La Sainte Union. Pupils demonstrate kindness towards each other. Bullying is rare, and typically staff are effective in dealing with incidents if they occur. Pupils are kept safe and taught how to stay safe.

Pupils benefit from the wide extra-curricular offer. They develop their interests through the range of clubs available, including football, drama and philosophy. Pupils enhance their leadership skills through a range of roles, for example as school council representatives or as reading mentors. Students in the sixth form read with pupils in Year 7 during tutor times, which helps to support their transition into the school.

The school has high expectations of pupils' achievement. Pupils are keen to do well, and they are ambitious for their futures. Their successes are reflected in the outcomes they achieve at the end of Year 11. Across the school, pupils and students in the sixth form typically learn well.

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

Leaders have designed a broad curriculum which offers a wide range of subjects, including Latin and drama. In all subjects, leaders have set out clearly what they want pupils to learn and when. This is sequenced so that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), build their understanding over time. For example, in history, Year 7 pupils begin learning about the nature of power when they study Boudicca. They develop an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the concept of power each year. As a result, students in Year 13 have a deeply connected understanding to draw on in their studies of Stuart England. Over time, the school has taken effective action to improve the quality of education for students in the sixth form. The published outcomes in 2023 do not fully reflect the strength of the curriculum. Students currently in the sixth form are learning well.

Pupils with SEND are appropriately identified and supported. The school reviews the provision, including using feedback from pupils and their families. 'Key workers' contribute to the development of strategy sheets for these pupils that help staff to make appropriate adaptations. The school uses a range of programmes to ensure that pupils are becoming more confident readers. Pupils who struggle to read well receive targeted support to catch up. Sometimes, staff are not consistently checking for understanding and adapting teaching to support pupils as effectively as they could, based on their starting points. This means that some pupils, including some with SEND, are not developing their understanding and fluency across subjects.

Pupils behave well in lessons and focus on their learning. However, some of the systems are at the earlier stages of being implemented. This means that the conduct of some pupils during social times is less positive. Leaders are working with groups of pupils to support them to self-manage their behaviour more effectively. The school is also working with staff and pupils, including those with SEND and who are new to the school, to ensure

that any incidents of weaker behaviour are followed up consistently. Pupils attend well and on time. Leaders are working closely with pupils and their families where attendance remains below expectations so that attendance continues to improve.

The programme for personal development is well considered. For example, pupils develop their understanding of fundamental British values, such as the rule of law and democracy, through dedicated sessions and assemblies. Additionally, pupils are taught to appreciate and respect difference. This learning is enhanced by a programme of visitors. For example, pupils heard a thought-provoking presentation about the negative impact of Islamophobia and antisemitism. Pupils benefit from comprehensive guidance on future careers and pathways. Sessions are delivered by teachers or by external providers, such as higher education institutions. Pupils with SEND are particularly well supported in making a positive transition into the next phase of their education or training. The school uses a variety of external providers to secure meaningful work experience placements, including for students in the sixth form. This means that pupils are well prepared for life in modern society.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel supported with their well-being. Typically, staff feel that demands on their workload are carefully considered. Leaders and those responsible for governance are aware of their statutory duties and fulfil these well. While pupils with SEND are supported well, the school currently does not have a member of staff with the requisite SEND qualifications. Plans are in place to rectify this as a priority. Some systems and policies are more recent. At times, the school does not have sufficient oversight of whether these are having the intended impact on pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with SEND.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At times, teaching adaptations are not as effective as they could be. This means that pupils, including those with SEND, are not developing their knowledge as well as they might. The school should ensure that staff are suitably trained to adapt their teaching to support pupils, and students in the sixth form, to develop their independence and fluency across subjects.
- Recently introduced systems for managing behaviour are not consistently applied, particularly during informal times. This means the conduct of some pupils is not as positive. Additionally, some pupils, including those with SEND and some who are new to the school, are unclear how behaviour issues will be followed up. The school should ensure that expectations are clearly communicated to staff and pupils, and that staff have the support that they need to apply the school's agreed approaches consistently well.

- At times, the school and governors do not have sufficient oversight of whether newer policies are having the intended impact. This means that the vision is not fully translated into practice because goals are not understood by all stakeholders and coherently coordinated. The school should continue to review and refine policies to ensure that they are effective for pupils, including those with SEND and who are disadvantaged.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

Further information

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

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	100059
Local authority	Camden
Inspection number	10345622
Type of school	Secondary
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	585
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Susan McQueen
Headteacher	Sophie Fegan
Website	www.lasainteunion.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	2 and 3 October 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- La Sainte Union Catholic Secondary School has a religious designation and is part of the Archdiocese of Westminster. Schools with a religious character are inspected every three to five years. The last section 48 inspection was in May 2023.
- The school is a member of the sixth-form collaboration, 'LaSWAP'.
- The school runs its own breakfast and after-school clubs.
- The school currently uses two registered alternative provisions. The school also makes some use of off-site therapeutic services.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Year 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. She also spoke with the local authority school improvement partner and the diocesan adviser.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: drama, modern foreign languages, history and science. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work. The inspectors also considered the curriculum in other subjects.
- Some sixth-form students undertake some of their studies at the three other schools in the 'LaSWAP' collaboration. Inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with some students about their learning and looked at samples of their work. Inspectors did not visit the other schools in the collaboration as these are inspected separately.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record of pre-employment checks; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation provided by leaders, including their priorities for improvement.
- The inspectors considered the views of parents, pupils and staff through discussions and their responses to Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

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