



Diocese of Arundel and Brighton

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Cranmore Preparatory School**

Epsom Road, West Horsley, Surrey KT24 6AT

Telephone: 01483 280340

e-mail address: office@cranmoreprep.co.uk

DfES Number: 936 6519

Headteacher: Mr M Connolly

Chair of Governors: Monsignor Canon J Scott

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Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster  
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Date of inspection: 24 November 2008

Date of previous inspection: n/a

Reporting Inspector: Mrs M Hughes

Associate Inspector: Mrs A Ireland

## **Description of School**

Cranmore is a large independent Catholic Preparatory school educating boys from the ages of 3 to 13. A significant number join at 7+ and some pupils leave at 11+. It was founded in 1968 under the trusteeship of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton and is located in the Epsom Deanery. The mission of the school is "to be committed to the Gospel, with the aim to help all boys fulfil their potential". The school prepares the boys for the Common Entrance examinations to Public Schools, especially, Ampleforth College, Charterhouse, Cranleigh School, City of London Freeman's School, Epsom College, Reed's School, Royal Grammar School, St George's College, St John's School, Tonbridge School and Worth School. Most pupils live within a five mile radius of the school but some travel considerable distances and therefore belong to numerous parishes. The school is in the parish of Our Lady of Sorrows, Effingham and its closest neighbour is St Pius X, Merrow. There are currently 490 boys on roll. The percentage of Catholic pupils is: 40% in the Foundation Stage; 35% in Key Stage 1; 32% in Key Stage 2 and 30% in Key Stage 3. The majority of pupils come from Christian backgrounds with a small percentage from other faith traditions. There is a staff of 41 full-time and 16 part-time teachers, 37% of whom are Catholic. 19 teachers teach religious education, 5 hold CCRS qualification and 3 have other Catholic qualifications.

## **Key for inspection grades**

Grade 1: Outstanding;      Grade 2: Good;      Grade 3: Satisfactory;      Grade 4: Inadequate

## **Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school**

Cranmore is a good school with many outstanding features that identify it as distinctively Catholic. All in the community place equal importance on high academic achievement and the pupils' all round personal development. It is a place of optimism, endeavour and mutual respect based on Gospel values. Its mission, to help all fulfil their individual potential, is embedded in school culture. Community cohesion is outstanding, as all boys learn to respect diversity by strongly supporting each other and those in the wider community. Pastoral care is good. The boys feel confident that their concerns will be heard and they flourish in this reassuring atmosphere. The prayer and liturgical life of the school underpins its Catholic ethos. With the RE curriculum and the spirituality that pervades the wider curriculum, it makes a significant contribution to the pupils' good spiritual and moral development. Despite the limited time allocation for religious education, consistently strong teaching enables the boys to make good progress, so that they reach levels of attainment that exceed national expectations. As already identified by those leading RE, the introduction of a formal assessment process across the school will enable teachers to plan specifically for individual pupils' needs and so raise attainment yet further. Keys to the school's success are the strength of the leadership and management and the strong sense of teamwork. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership to a highly committed senior management team, who, in turn, share their enthusiasm for learning with the whole staff. Governors give strong support and, with the headteacher and senior managers, constantly appraise the school's work. Their evaluation of its current position is rigorous and accurate. Parents are generally very enthusiastic about the school, though a small minority would appreciate more information about the RE curriculum and about how the Catholic ethos impacts on daily life.

### **Improvement since the last inspection**

The school has not been inspected before but a full audit of provision was carried out by Diocesan officers in 2002. Some of the issues identified then have been fully addressed and others partially so. The range of teaching approaches has been extended to challenge pupils of all abilities. Planning shows differentiation and extension for the more able pupils. Some progress has been made in improving assessment systems, in providing opportunities for personal prayer and in staff development, though these all remain priorities for further development. It has been difficult for the school to extend the curriculum time for religious education but homework and focussed teaching help to alleviate the situation.

**Grade 2**

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

This is a dynamic community which is not complacent about its success. Strong management structures and a shared commitment to its future ensure the school has good capacity for continuing improvement

**Grade 2**

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

- Review the time allocation for RE in the Junior Department, so that it more closely matches the Bishops' Conference recommendations of 10% of the whole curriculum.
- Further develop communication with parents so that they fully understand the RE curriculum and the Catholic life of the school.
- Develop a formal assessment process across the school, linked to the national levels of attainment.

## **The Catholic Life of the School**

### **Leadership and Management**

Leaders at all levels provide clear direction for the Catholic life of the school. They ensure its mission is demonstrated in daily practice. The ethos of Cranmore strongly reflects a commitment to nurturing each boy as unique and valuable for who he is and not solely for what he might achieve. Governors willingly share their expertise for the good of the school. They provide excellent support and are extremely knowledgeable about priorities for development, through the work of the Academic, Pastoral and Staffing Committee and through focussed classroom visits. Their work strengthens the school's dynamic Catholic ethos. The headteacher's vision and drive to succeed inspire governors and staff to strive for excellence in all aspects of the boys' educational and personal development. His purposeful, charismatic leadership shapes and guides the school as a Catholic community. He is strongly supported by a highly effective deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher and unified senior management team, who all share a common purpose in working to promote the academic, spiritual, moral and social development of the pupils. The impact of this cohesive team is seen in the promotion of high quality teaching and learning within a stable, encouraging environment. It is also seen in the good care, guidance and support provided for pupils. Pastoral care reflects the Gospel values of the Mission Statement. The school has enjoyed the services of a chaplain, who helped the boys

through their personal difficulties. At present that role is shared while the school eagerly awaits the arrival of the newly appointed chaplain. Very effective systems are in place to support the pupils, particularly in the Progress Unit, where sensitive help is given to ensure that all boys are fully involved with the life of the school. The vast majority of parents are firm advocates of the school and appreciate the care and education their children receive. The questionnaires showed that most valued its ethos and saw the school as distinctively Catholic. Communication through newsletters and the highly informative website is good, although a small minority of parents said they would find it helpful to know more about the religious education curriculum and about how the Catholic ethos of the school manifests itself in its daily life.

**Grade 2**

### **The Prayer Life of the School**

There is recognition at Cranmore that all pupils have different experiences of Church and worship. Consequently, teachers endeavour to develop a more personal belief through prayer, while encouraging collective celebration of faith. Parents are encouraged to join the worshipping community during the weekly Liturgy of the Word and are invited to share the celebration of the Mass on many occasions. Staff too are offered the chance for quiet reflection during the weekly "Calm sessions" and willingly bear witness to the faith during collective worship. In this way the adults in the school act as good role models for the boys. The liturgical life of the school is pivotal to its Catholic identity. Mass is celebrated each month by the school priest, and the boys are encouraged to take a full part in its preparation. Collective worship underpins the school day. A good programme of assemblies, following the liturgical year and supporting the religious education curriculum, provides a range of opportunities for prayer and collective worship. Both assemblies visited were very well prepared to match the experiences and faith development of the pupils. The junior assembly brought the message of the Parable of the Lost Sheep into the pupils' own lives and allowed them to interpret it in today's world. A model sheep had been hidden in each classroom, so the boys were sent from the assembly and directed to find the sheep and to act as good shepherds themselves. This was an excellent way to bring the scripture to life. The senior assembly was also age appropriate. It was intellectually challenging as it brought the Feast of Christ the King into focus for everyone. The boys were engaged in answering questions as pictures of cathedrals and icons were used to demonstrate artistic interpretation of the subject. They responded with interest, prayed reverently and listened intently to the joyful music of the orchestra. Both occasions offered good opportunities for traditional prayer but pupils would have benefited from opportunities for more personal prayer or reflection. At other times in the day, pupils are encouraged to pray. Many compose their own prayers, some good examples of which were displayed in the senior R.E room. Most RE lessons include a time for prayer, though this practice is inconsistent. In the Early Years class, work started with a quiet reflection on Advent and its meaning for today, while in the Senior Class, pupils were encouraged to reflect on the implications of God's covenant with Abraham. Both offered valuable moments for personal prayer. All junior classrooms and senior RE rooms have a colourful focal point for prayer while prayer boxes, such as "The Tardis" and the book of intentions in the chapel, encourage pupils to pray for others. The school is fortunate in having a beautiful chapel, which is well used as a place for quiet reflection. Collective worship makes a valuable contribution to the pupils' spiritual and moral development, which is good. Spirituality is further nurtured through the Day of Reflection for older pupils and through the wider curriculum. It is evident in the many stunning art displays in the corridors and in the high quality music echoing from the practice rooms.

**Grade 2**

### **How effectively does the school promote community cohesion?**

The leadership of the school strongly promotes community cohesion through its policies and practices, which show clearly that diversity is valued. All staff respect difference and ensure equal opportunities for all pupils. The school welcomes boys from different faith backgrounds and respects their beliefs. The pupils know that they can learn from the faith traditions of others and that their own belief can be strengthened by that knowledge. They demonstrate this in lively discussions. One parent commented "Our son has grown in confidence and in the understanding of his own convictions. He has never been made to feel wrong in not being Catholic". Provision for collective worship enables pupils to pray easily together, while the RE curriculum provides for the study of other world faiths. The colourful display on Divali in the Junior Department is testimony to the time given to such study. Teachers are committed to developing harmony, tolerance and justice for all. Relationships in the school are extremely positive. Staff and pupils treat each other with respect and understanding. The result is a happy community in which pupils learn to care for each other. The Golden Rules, based on the maxim "Treat others as you would like to be treated", underpin their view of behaviour. The older boys happily support each other through the house system and through becoming "buddies" to the younger boys. Throughout the school, the pupils are articulate, polite and confident. Their behaviour is excellent. A wide range of after school clubs, offering extensive opportunities to enjoy a number of sports, music and other activities encourages the boys to work and play together. They do this with great pride, taking part in competitions and concerts in the wider community. While appreciating their good fortune, they recognise their responsibilities towards those less fortunate than themselves and support various local and national charities, such as the Cherry Trees respite home and CAFOD. The school takes a strong position in the neighbourhood by embracing opportunities to work with others, particularly the elderly people, whom they invite into school. Cranmore is extremely blessed in its facilities and happily shares them with other schools and with groups from the local community. Liaison with other Catholic independent schools in Surrey is strong and has been reinforced by recent new initiatives, which contribute to the development of Catholic education in the Diocese.

**Grade 1**

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## **Religious Education**

### **Achievement and Standards in Religious Education**

On starting school, the boys' skills and understanding are broadly typical of their age group. Through good teaching, strengthened by warm, supportive relationships, pupils achieve well from the Early Years onwards. Many exceed expected standards by the time they leave the Junior Department. Teachers have a good understanding of individual pupils' abilities and ensure their needs are addressed, so all make progress. Although there is no formal assessment data to offer evidence of above average attainment, the boys' oral responses in lessons demonstrate a very good knowledge of RE. They are able to discuss issues in depth, thinking spiritually and ethically even at such a young age. This good level of achievement is matched by the recorded work in pupils' books, despite opportunities for extended writing being limited, due to the restrictions of the timetable. In the Senior Department, where RE is taught by subject specialists, achievement is high, as evidenced by the assessment tasks. At Common Entrance and Scholarship level the majority of pupils achieve very well. Senior books show that pupils are able to record their work in a variety of ways and are able to engage in sustained and reflective writing. Throughout the school, pupils are able to question theories and ideas and understand the use of Biblical metaphor. Year 6 pupils have written their own parables, relating Gospel teaching to their own lives. They understand the significance of scripture in making decisions

about right and wrong. The older pupils apply academic rigour to their interpretation of the Bible, as seen in their work on Abraham's covenant with God. The younger boys can retell some of the stories of The Old Testament and know that they took place before Jesus was born. Pupils are highly motivated and develop positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy their lessons, with one commenting: "Teachers make learning really fun".

**Grade 2**

## **Teaching and learning in Religious Education**

Good and sometimes very good teaching enables pupils to achieve personally and academically. High expectations, which are communicated positively, create a productive atmosphere for learning. All teachers demonstrate excellent subject knowledge. They plan their lessons well, providing a range of lively, creative activities to engage pupils. They meet the needs of the boys by planning for a variety of learning styles and generally differentiate lessons to extend the more able. Exceptionally good questioning invites pupils to develop their ideas and reflect on their answers, as teachers interact sensitively with them during discussions. Positive affirmation of all answers allows the boys to take risks and to ask searching questions themselves. In this way they are made to feel responsible for their own learning. Very high level thinking skills are encouraged, particularly in the Senior School, where boys were heard discussing why the Advent Wreath is based on a circle. The same boys also examined ethical issues concerned with the preparation for Christmas. Key links with other areas of the curriculum enhance learning. For example, the younger boys were encouraged to use their literacy and art skills as they cut and placed pictures of Mary and Elizabeth onto a background picture of Judea. These boys were reflective and readily empathised with how the two women might have been feeling at their meeting. In the Junior Department a variety of informal strategies is used to assess pupils' learning. In the Senior Department, assessments take place half termly, with grades for effort and attainment being shared with parents. At present, there is no consistent approach to assessment across the school, so individual pupil progress is difficult to track. With the introduction of the new RE programme, "The Way, The Truth and the Light", it would be appropriate to introduce an assessment process which is matched to national levels of attainment. This would enable all teachers to monitor achievement across the school and to adjust their lesson planning according to individual pupil need. Homework is used very effectively to reinforce learning in the classroom. It makes a valuable contribution to achievement in RE, especially in the Senior School.

**Grade 2**

## **Quality of the Curriculum**

In the Junior Department a well planned curriculum, based on the "Here I Am" programme promotes the pupils' all round development by relating directly to their own experiences. It builds on the foundation of home and is organised round the life and teachings of the Church. It fosters equality and addresses discrimination, ensuring that all boys are granted the opportunities to achieve their potential, in accordance with the school's Mission Statement. In the Senior Department, the RE curriculum is afforded the same academic rigour as other subjects. It stimulates pupils to achieve well, while at the same time, contributing to their spiritual and moral development. The Common Entrance and Scholarship syllabus is based on Catholic tradition and challenges the boys to question matters of faith and morals. A new programme "The Way, the Truth and the Life" is being used to extend provision and will be incorporated into the curriculum for both departments, bringing consistency across the school. The current curriculum allows all pupils, irrespective of ability or faith background, to make progress. They are encouraged to reflect and to become aware of the demands of religious commitment on everyday life. Although the school is unable to designate 10% of curriculum

time to RE, as required by the Bishops' Conference, there is considerable evidence to show that spiritual development permeates the school day. RE is at the core of school life, challenging pupils to ask questions about the world and themselves. Creative cross curricular links with ICT, history, geography and philosophy greatly enhance the quality of provision and make RE more meaningful to the boys. The curriculum is well planned and sharply focussed, to make the very best use of the time available. With the introduction of the new programme, the time allocation should be kept under review, particularly in the Junior Department. Visits, such as those to Womersley and Aylesford, and visitors, such as the CAFOD representatives, bring a richness and depth to the curriculum. The programme for personal, health and social education (PHSE) also contributes appreciably to the pupils' spiritual and moral development, by equipping them to deal with sensitive and personal issues. With the philosophy course in the 6<sup>th</sup> form and the whole RE curriculum, it prepares them well to face the challenges of modern life.

**Grade 2**

### **Leadership and management of Religious Education**

The head of department and the newly appointed RE co-ordinator work successfully together to secure clear direction for RE through appropriate policies and focussed action planning. They are both knowledgeable, flexible and models of good practice; motivating staff and pupils to achieve well. Their leadership and management are very good. The head of department is an experienced and outstanding practitioner. She leads a strongly committed team, working to promote the school's Catholic ethos. The junior co-ordinator ensures teachers, especially those who are not Catholic, are fully supported in their planning, so that they feel confident in their teaching. Leaders of both departments meet regularly to discuss issues pertinent to the curriculum and to the liturgical life of the school. They each work to a Departmental Development Plan, which effectively identifies priorities for improvement, one of which is the introduction of a consistent assessment process. They monitor teaching and learning effectively with a view to promoting excellence and enhancing staff development. Teaching is appraised through lesson observation, with constructive feedback being given to staff as an aid to improving practice. Learning is monitored through viewing teachers' planning and through scrutinising pupils' books. The process is rigorous and reflects a culture of continuous evaluation. Staff in the Senior Department are well qualified to teach RE and those in the Junior Department are well supported. All involved in the teaching of RE work collaboratively and gain considerable strength from each other. Good links have been forged with the Diocese so that subject leaders keep up to date with new initiatives and disseminate information to staff. Good quality resources are reviewed regularly and are efficiently deployed to have a positive effect on the curriculum. Rooms used for RE are bright and cheerful with good displays of pupils' work. Junior classrooms are especially colourful because work in RE is celebrated through photographs and eye-catching pictures.

**Grade 2**