

Archdiocese of Cardiff

Inspection Report

Our Lady's RC Primary School

Inspection dates	17 th – 18 th June 2009
Reporting Inspector	Mrs A Manghan
Type of school	Primary
Age range of pupils	4 - 11
Number on roll	207
Local Authority	Herefordshire Council
Chair of Governors	Mrs C Thompson
School Address	Boycott Road Hereford HR2 7RN
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Parish(es) served	Our Lady Queen of Martyrs, Hereford St Michael and All Angels, Belmont
Date of previous inspection	24 th -25 th May 2006
Headteacher	Mrs M Woolaway

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archdiocese of Cardiff and Inspection of denominational education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Description of the School

Our Lady's RC Primary School is a voluntary aided primary school, which serves the parishes of Our Lady, Queen of Martyrs, Hereford, and St Michael and All Angels, Belmont.

The school functions under the trusteeship of the Archdiocese of Cardiff and is maintained by Herefordshire Council.

Our Lady's caters for pupils aged 4-11. At the time of inspection, two hundred and seven pupils were on roll. 62% of pupils are Catholic and the remaining 38% are from other Christian denominations. 20% of pupils are on the Special Educational Needs register and 10% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Currently, there are 34 pupils (16%) for whom English is not their first language. Most of these pupils speak Polish and some are at the early stages of acquiring English.

Since the last inspection in 2006, there have been many changes in teaching staff, including the appointment of a new head teacher in September 2007 and a new deputy head teacher in May 2009. The new chair of governors was also appointed in September 2007. Following a time of transition due to a number of staffing changes in the last two years, the school now has a settled and committed teaching team. The head teacher took on the role of religious education coordinator from April 2008.

The school supports families by hosting a breakfast club, a 'stay and play after school' club and the Merry-Go-Round nursery, which are run by private providers.

There are 7 full time teachers, including the head teacher, and 3 part-time teachers, 5 of whom are Catholic. 3 teachers hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS). The school also has 13 support assistants; 2 are Higher Level Teaching Assistants and 2 hold the Cardiff Archdiocesan Religious Education Certificate (CAREC).

The building is well maintained and clean and has recently been improved by the development of a Learning Support Unit.

Inspection grades

An overall judgement for each question is made using the following grades:

- Grade 1: outstanding
- Grade 2: good
- Grade 3: satisfactory
- Grade 4: unsatisfactory

Table of grades awarded

Key question	Inspection grade
How effective and efficient is the provision of Catholic education in meeting the needs of learners and why?	3
1. How effective are leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school/college?	1
2. How good is the provision for prayer, collective worship and the liturgical life of the school/college?	2
3. How well do learners achieve in religious education?	3
4. How effective are teaching and learning in religious education?	3
5. How well does the religious education curriculum meet the needs and interests of learners?	3
6. How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners in religious education?	3
7. How effectively do leaders and managers provide for community cohesion?	2

The diocesan reporting inspector wishes to express sincere thanks to the parish priest, governors, head teacher, staff, pupils and parents for the courtesy and co-operation received during the inspection.

Overall Effectiveness

How effective and efficient is the provision of Catholic education in meeting the needs of learners and why?

Our Lady's is an improving Catholic school, where each child is regarded as unique and where the mission statement that every one should 'have life and have it to the full' (John 10:10) is both its inspiration and motivation.

The head teacher is passionately committed to the school and, together with the deputy head teacher, the parish priest, the governors and staff, is determined to provide the very best for all pupils. The school has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to effect ongoing improvement. The self-evaluation report identifies the strengths of the school and areas in need of development. These areas are planned for in the school's action plan for the Catholic life of the school and curriculum religious education. The head teacher, who has recently taken on the role of religious education coordinator, is fully committed to its Catholic ethos.

The governing body fulfils its responsibilities, takes its role seriously and supports the community of Our Lady's school. The parish priest, who is also the religious education link governor, commends the improvements made in relation to the Catholic life of the school since the appointment of the new head teacher. The school is now more actively involved in ministry in the parish. The parish priest

notes that pupils' behaviour is greatly improved and that they are now more devout. Parents have commented to him that improvement in behaviour in school is having a positive impact at home. Pupils are prepared well for the reception of the Sacraments, showing an in-depth understanding and a growing capacity for prayer. Pupils are helped at the school to become the people God intended them to be. The chair of governors speaks of a positive change in a sense of team work in the school and reports that the governing body is supported in its strategic role by the head teacher who regularly reports to them and consults them.

Our Lady's is a happy school, where pupils' spiritual growth is nourished through acts of collective worship. These impact positively on improved standards of behaviour, which in turn are also beginning to impact positively on standards of teaching and learning. During the period of inspection, teaching was good overall, with pupils making satisfactory progress throughout the school. The quality and quantity of recorded work, however, is variable. The majority of pupils show positive attitudes towards their work and orally show a depth of knowledge and understanding. Teachers and learning support staff enjoy constructive working relationships with each other and with their pupils.

Pupils report that they are given many opportunities to become involved in the life of the school and to participate in charitable projects. They enjoy a number of extra curricular activities and express enjoyment of school life. They agree that their teachers are approachable and that they deal effectively with any difficulties they may have.

The school values parents and they are invited into the school for assemblies, information evenings, appointment evenings, consultation groups and activities related to their child's learning. They are sent a newsletter to inform them of the religious education topics being studied and the school's website has been recently updated in order to improve communication. The school self-evaluation report identifies the need to further develop effective communication to enhance their parent and parish partnership.

Improvement since the last inspection

Key issue 1:

Address inconsistencies in short term planning, presentation and marking.

Planning has recently been reviewed following guidance from the archdiocese and there is now evidence of greater consistency. Assessment for learning is also beginning to be introduced. There are signs of recent improvement in the marking of pupils' work in line with learning objectives and in the help pupils are given to improve their work. The presentation of work is, however, still variable and there is a need to be clear about expectations in this regard for all pupils.

Key issue 2:

Continue to update resources and artefacts.

An audit of resources has taken place and resources have been relocated to a central area for easy access by all teaching staff. Some progress has been made towards the purchase of resources e.g. a data projector for use in assemblies and school/parish liturgies, world faith resources, a variety of coloured cloths for use in display and a selection of CDs and assembly books. The positive impact of the use of these resources is evident. There is an urgent need, however, to purchase *God's Story* to support the scripture strand of the religious education programme and *Church's Story* to support the tradition strand.

Key Issue 3:

Continue to develop self-evaluation processes and documentation.

The archdiocesan self-evaluation tool has been used to evaluate the quality of the provision for prayer and worship in the school. This has led to the involvement of the governing body in monitoring the prayer focus in each classroom and speaking with pupils about their needs and response to provision in this regard. Two very committed teaching assistants have been given responsibility for the development of liturgy, which has given rise to guidance being provided for staff in relation to acts of worship and the Wednesday reflective assembly. In this assembly, pupils and staff are given time to become aware of, and to appreciate, the indwelling of God and to consider the relevance of His Word for their everyday lives. Pupils respond very positively to these times of prayer and express their appreciation of 'time to be quiet and to reflect' and the opportunity to 'prayer spontaneously for our needs'.

The good practice in terms of staff, governor and pupil evaluation of provision for collective worship needs now to be applied to a more rigorous review of curriculum religious education.

Capacity to improve

The self-evaluation report is broadly accurate in its description of the school's good features and it identifies areas for development which are largely in line with the findings of the inspection. The existing plans resulting from the self-review process, supported by the inspection findings and recommendations, provide a foundation on which to build continued improvement. The head teacher, governors and staff are committed to improving the priorities identified.

Grade: 3

What the school should do to improve further

- ❖ Further develop an effective monitoring, evaluation and reporting system with an emphasis on raising standards of curriculum religious education.
- ❖ Continue the development of religious education using the revised NBRIA levels of attainment and support material from the archdiocese, in planning, assessment, moderating standards of work and tracking pupil progress.

- ❖ Ensure that a budget for expenditure for religious education is set for each financial year and plan for the future purchase of resources to support curriculum religious education.
- ❖ Further the provision for prayer and worship by developing the variety of forms of prayer pupils can engage in and the planned central area for prayer.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL/COLLEGE

Leadership and Management

1. How effective are leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school?

Good features

Our Lady's School is a good Catholic school where each child is regarded as unique and where developments in school life are constantly supported by the teachings and example of Christ. The school's mission statement: 'We aspire that, through the love of Jesus, everyone should have life and have it to the full', underpins policy statements and every feature of the decision-making process. The governing body is committed to the mission of the school and are well-informed about the spiritual, moral and social development of pupils through regular visits, monitoring and reports from the head teacher, who is also the religious education coordinator. They uphold the religious character of the school by endeavouring to appoint practising Catholic staff and those who are supportive and willing to contribute to its distinctive ethos. They have formed a 'spirituality committee' to monitor, evaluate and promote the Catholic life of the school. The parish priest, who supports the school pastorally and is the link governor for religious education, meets regularly with the head teacher/RE coordinator to review and discuss developments in religious education. He recently led a 'pupil voice' exercise in reviewing prayer and worship opportunities in the school.

The head teacher and deputy head teacher witness to faith in the community by leading acts of worship, serving the parish community through active ministry and promoting the Catholic life of the school and curriculum religious education. Members of staff act as good role models through their relationships with the pupils and one another. The performance management of the head teacher and staff includes an objective that promotes the Catholic life of the school.

The self-evaluation report, produced in consultation with the staff and governors, is broadly accurate and in general, the inspection validates the school's own judgements.

The head teacher, supported by the deputy head teacher, has a clear vision for the future of the school and a very good understanding of its role in the educational mission of the Church. The head teacher, in the short time she has been appointed, has worked hard to secure a calm and purposeful environment, focussing on pupils' spiritual and moral development as a foundation for much

needed improvement in standards of education. This is proving to be successful, particularly when pupils are being helped to take responsibility for their actions and to develop self-discipline and control. The school's investment in the training and work of the Pupil Peer Supporters, Playground Buddies, Learning Mentor and Behaviour Support staff, contributes well to the happiness of the children and to creating an environment where pupils can begin to fulfil their potential.

Shortcomings

There are no significant shortcomings.

Grade: 1

Collective Worship

2. How good is the provision for prayer, collective worship and the liturgical life of the school?

Good features

The provision for prayer, collective worship and the liturgical life of the school is good and impacts very positively on the spiritual and moral development of pupils. All statutory requirements are met. These acts of worship are central to the life of the school. They are well-planned; reflect the liturgical year, the religious education topic, the 'value' or 'virtue' of the month and/or mark special events. The particularly reflective Wednesday assembly on the theme of the 'loving heart of Jesus', led by an experienced teaching assistant, and the assembly led by the head teacher on the theme of 'Choices', which used a powerful image depicting the 'Parable of the Prodigal Son', are very good examples of pupils being given the opportunity to become more aware of the presence of God within them, to recognise that they are utterly loved by God, to reflect on the impact that this can have on their everyday lives and to respond naturally and easily with spontaneous prayer and joyful song.

An attractive interactive 'prayer focus', either based on the 'Sacred Heart of Jesus' or the current topic 'Choices', is a feature of each classroom and pupils use these areas for personal and private prayer throughout the day. Traditional class prayers are said at the beginning and end of each day and 'grace' is said in the dining hall before and after lunch. There is evidence that pupils are beginning to plan and lead their own liturgies.

Mass is celebrated at the beginning and end of term with pupils and staff acting as ministers. Non-Eucharistic services such as a May Procession, the Rosary, the Stations of the Cross and the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation also take place. The school supports the parish in preparing year 3 pupils for the reception of first Reconciliation and Holy Communion. The parish priest is particularly supportive of these events and works in close partnership with the school in planning the various liturgies. He comments very favourably on the preparation given for the reception of the Sacraments, the response by pupils and on 'their impressive thoughtfulness and maturity'. Pupils, whatever their faith background, are given opportunities to be involved in all acts of worship and

pupils report that they feel included and are made to feel welcome. Pupils and parents are invited to take part in a prayer group before the start of the school day in Advent and in Lent and are invited to various celebrations via the newsletters and recently developed website. Almost all parents who responded to the inspection parent questionnaire commented that the school enabled their child to develop spiritually through prayer and worship and that they are happy with the values and attitudes that the school fosters and are made to feel welcome.

The school monitors and evaluates the quality of the provision for prayer and worship through the School Council review, led by the link governor for religious education and parish priest, staff peer evaluation, the Governor Spirituality Committee review of the classroom prayer focus, the assembly record sheet and evaluation box. This together with the appointment of two teaching assistants with special responsibility for the development of the Liturgy is a strength of the school. It has led to clear action being taken to effect improvement, the pupils expressing their appreciation and a very positive impact on behaviour.

Shortcomings

There are no significant shortcomings.

Grade: 2

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and Standards

3. How well do learners achieve in religious education?

Good features

Pupils' oral response to questioning and their growing ability in key stage 2 to pose their own questions shows that they are making good progress and have good knowledge and understanding in religious education. This is not sufficiently evident, however, in recorded work, though very recent evidence shows some improvement.

It is evident that pupils enjoy their work in religious education. All classes were well behaved, engaged with the activities and at times gave animated, thoughtful and provoking responses, particularly when exploring what examining one's conscience means, why the Sacrament of Reconciliation is important to Catholics and how making the right choice can sometimes be a great challenge. The programme for developing gospel values also contributes to pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes to work.

All lessons observed integrated prayer very well and allowed time for reflection upon, and the celebration of, learning.

Shortcomings

The rigorous monitoring and evaluation of religious education, that identifies areas of strength and areas in need of improvement, has not been in place long enough to show sufficient evidence of its impact on raising standards.

There is insufficient recorded evidence of work, and in particular, more in depth and extended writing.

Grade: 3

Quality of provision for religious education

4. How effective are teaching and learning in religious education?

Good features

Teaching follows the recommended archdiocesan religious education programme, thus fulfilling the requirements of the *Curriculum Directory for Religious Education*. This is enhanced by quality acts of worship that support teaching and learning about the Liturgical Year, the Person of Christ, the Saints, Mary the Mother of God and areas of social and environmental concern. 10% of curriculum time is given to the teaching of religious education as required by the Bishops' of England and Wales. In all lessons observed during the inspection, the teaching is good with teachers planning effectively, making the learning objective clear, and using a range of strategies with good use of ICT by the use of a photo story, flipchart and projected images. In one class, pupils used the interactive white board. Differentiated activities were planned and teaching assistants used effectively. Teachers are knowledgeable and give an authentic witness to faith. Pupils' workbooks indicate that marking is affirming and there is the beginning of evidence that teachers help pupils to improve their work through their written comments and pupils respond positively to this. Teachers assess understanding by the use of probing questions and plenary sessions. In some instances, teaching assistants record outcomes for particular groups of pupils. There is the beginnings of good practice evident where planning accounts for differentiation and relates to the NBRIA levels of attainment; where there is an increased coverage of the 'relate' aspect of the religious education programme; more opportunity for writing in a variety of genres; more in-depth and extended work; use of assessment for learning, where marking helps pupils to improve their work; and use of peer assessment.

Pupils with additional needs are ably supported by the effective employment of teaching assistants. This is a strength of the school. Parents are informed about what their children are taught through the topic newsletter and informed about progress in the annual report and parents meetings. The appointment of a skilled Learning Mentor and Behaviour Support assistant, together with the Education Welfare Officer, Year 6 Peer Supporters and Playground Buddies, contributes to the wellbeing of pupils and an improved work ethic. Pupils make a positive contribution to the school community through such things as the School Council,

Eco Council, Year 6 Peer Support Group and Playground Buddy System and support a number of local, national and international charities.

Shortcomings

Planning and assessment for learning is not embedded in school practice.

There is little evidence of pupils using ICT to enhance independent learning.

There is insufficient evidence of work to challenge the more able.

The standard of the presentation of work is variable.

There is no school portfolio for religious education that contains standardised, moderated work.

Grade: 3

5. How well does the religious education curriculum meet the needs and interests of learners?

Good features

Out of the seven full time and three part time teachers, five are Catholic. Three teachers hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies and one Higher Level Teaching Assistant and one Teaching Assistant, who have responsibility for the development of Liturgy in the school, have recently been awarded the Cardiff Archdiocesan Religious Education Certificate. The head teacher, who is the religious education coordinator, has studied theology and trained at a Catholic teacher training college.

All lessons observed during the inspection were interesting and stimulating, built on prior learning and helped pupils to understand how religious education can relate to everyday life. The religious education curriculum is linked closely to the 'values for life' programme and has a strong spiritual basis which is impacting on the moral development of pupils. This in turn is linked to education in personal relationships and, where appropriate, sex and relationship education. Pupils are friendly and welcoming to visitors, and pupils whose English is an additional language report that they are happy, made to feel welcome and supported by staff and their peers. The head teacher and some parents report issues in the past relating to poor behaviour and bullying but strong leadership and a supportive team of teachers and assistants has provided, in recent times, a calm and orderly environment for learning, with clear strategies and support in place to deal with any problems that might arise.

Shortcomings

Some pupils need to be encouraged to engage in more independent and challenging learning.

Some activities lack finely-tuned success criteria to give pupils clear guidance for success and next steps in learning.

Grade: 3

Leadership and management of religious education

6. How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners in religious education?

Good features

The leadership and management of the school is committed to its Catholic mission and faith development. The focus of self-evaluation has been on spiritual and moral development and this is having a positive and powerful influence on the working environment. The school's overall evaluation of the Catholic life of the school and curriculum religious education is broadly accurate in terms of the good features identified and areas in need of improvement.

The performance management cycle includes objectives that directly relate to the Catholic ethos of the school.

The school has developed a 'learning support unit' which is used for learning, behaviour and additional needs support.

Recent in-service training has been immediately built upon to improve planning for, and the assessment of, pupils' work. The staff participated in a day of reflection at Belmont Abbey in January 2009.

A recent audit of resources has identified materials to be purchased for the future support of classroom religious education.

The governing body takes a keen interest in the school and is supportive of the staff. Governors work hard to raise standards and bring about improvement. They have begun a more rigorous approach to self-evaluation and strategic oversight of provision and are developing good practice as 'critical friends' of the school.

Shortcomings

Monitoring, evaluation and reporting on curriculum religious education has not been systematic and rigorous in the long term.

Resources to support curriculum religious education are in short supply.

Grade: 3

7. How effectively do leaders and managers provide for community cohesion?

Good features

The school mission statement recognises the dignity of all, made in the image and likeness of God, and the school strives to ensure that everyone in the community 'has life and has it to the full.' (John 10.10) Policies such as those for Anti-Bullying, Behaviour Management, Anti-Racism, Pastoral Support Plans and 'Gospel values for living' facilitate this.

Pupils support one another and pupil's opinions are expressed through the School Council and through a survey conducted by the governing body's spirituality committee. The Learning Mentor has provided an impressive training programme for Year 6 Peer Supporters and Playground Buddies. Pupils are clear and confident about their role.

Links are developing with a school in Tanzania, through a positive link with the local Catholic high school. There is a teaching assistant with responsibility for the support of pupils and families with English as an additional language. There is an after school club to support families with English as an additional language, which also includes those in the wider community. Coffee mornings are held in the school for families. An interpreter is employed to support parents at agency meetings, induction meetings and parent/teacher meetings.

Prayers and songs are said and sung in other languages and teachers greet each individual pupil by name at morning and afternoon registration. All acts of worship are inclusive of all and particular attention given to those pupils who are not of the Catholic faith to ensure they are made to feel welcome and able to participate.

Other world faiths are taught in line with guidance from the Bishops' of England and Wales, with Judaism being taught for one week during the Autumn Term and Islam/and or Hinduism for a week in the Spring or Summer term.

Year 4 hold a cultural Friday, when cakes from different cultures are made and sold in aid of a charity. The school supports CAFOD and a number of other more local charitable projects.

On Global Day, pupils are invited to attend school in a National Dress and donations raised are given to a project in Tanzania.

Shortcomings

There is no policy for community cohesion.

Grade: 2

The School's Response to the Inspection

We are pleased that the inspection findings recognise that we are an improving school and are proud of our achievements over a short time as a recently formed new team, particularly in developing the Catholic life of the school, which was deemed to be outstanding in the report.

We are delighted that across the 7 key areas for inspection there are many good features.

Our Lady's School has much to celebrate with the findings of this report.

- Teaching is good overall
- Liturgy is a strength of the school
- pupils have a good knowledge and understanding in RE

The inspection report acknowledges the skill and dedication of staff. "The head teacher is passionately committed to the school, and together with the deputy head teacher, the parish priest, the governors and staff, is determined to provide the very best for all pupils"

We are confident that we can address the key areas for development and an action plan will be put in place for Sep 09 – 10 to address the recommendations in the inspection report.

The school would like to express thanks to Mrs Anne Manghan for her thorough work during the inspection and insight into the life of Our Lady's School community.

Evidence Base for the Inspection

- The school's self-evaluation report, school information form and religious education action plan
- Religious education and other related policies
- Pre-inspection meetings with the chair of governors, parish priest and link governor for religious education
- Completed parent questionnaires
- Discussions with the headteacher/ religious education coordinator, deputy head teacher, teaching staff, behaviour support and learning mentor
- Discussions with the teaching assistants responsible for the development of liturgy in the school
- Lesson observations
- Scrutiny of planning and assessment
- Scrutiny of pupils' work
- Scrutiny of the classroom prayer focus, displays and resources
- Evidence of previous work and activities
- Attendance at a whole school and a key stage 2 act of worship
- Discussion with the school council
- Observation of daily routines