



Diocese of Westminster

Our Lady of Lourdes

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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**

Date of inspection: 16th March 2012

Date of previous inspection: November 2008

Reporting Inspector: Mrs. T. Cleugh

Introduction

The inspector would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspector spent a day in school, visited three lessons and two assemblies, and carried out several interviews with school staff, pupils, parents and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, discussion with local clergy, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons, examination of school documents, and attendance at religious assemblies.

The Inspection of Our Lady of Lourdes, Brent was carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework and Schedule for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Archbishop of Westminster. The inspectors are appointed by Archbishop. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self evaluation.

Description of School

The school is a one form entry Primary School, in the Local Authority of Brent and the locality of Stonebridge, North London. The school serves the parishes of The Five Precious Wounds, Stonebridge, and St. Patrick's, Neasden. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 82%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 11% and from other Faiths 7%.

There are 235 pupils on roll, with 79 pupils on the Special Educational Needs Register and 5 pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average. There is a well above average rate of families claiming free school meals.

Key for inspection grades.

Grade 1*: Outstanding;
Grade 1: Very Good;
Grade 2: Good;
Grade 3: Satisfactory;
Grade 4: Inadequate.

A. Curriculum Religious Education

How religiously literate are pupils in the teachings and traditions of the Catholic faith and how well do they know, understand and appreciate the importance of religious faith and practice in everyday life?

How well does the content of curriculum religious education meet the requirements of the Curriculum Directory?

Grade [1]

Religious Education is valued and recognised by the school, given due status in the School Development Plan and the Four Areas of the Curriculum Directory inform the medium term planning.

The school incorporates the Here I Am programme of study, linked to the four themes of Revelation, Church, Celebration and Life in Christ.

The teachers gain a clear understanding of expectations, whilst developing creative links, incorporating those recommended by Diocesan advisory in-service. These include the effective use of liturgical art, drama and external cross-curricular activities. This provides stimulus and inspiration,

including the coverage of other faiths, which was evident through scrutiny of work in the books, portfolios and the very high quality of photographic displays.

The subject leader in religious education has provided all staff with planning grids which map the links succinctly to the Curriculum Directory. These are shaded and dated according to delivery of the areas of learning, within the Here I Am topics. Planning is monitored termly by the Senior Leadership Team and this was evident in the Leader's detailed and very well organised recording system in the file.

Pupil achievement (as well as attainment and progress) in religious education

Grade [2]

Pupils enter the school from a variety of attainment levels. The school serves a highly deprived area, where there is evidence of progress in religious education by the end of EYFS and Key Stage 1. Progress in religious education is effective and there is regular moderation to ensure pupils attain higher levels in religious education. There is evidence from the work recorded and from discussion with the pupils how their levels of knowledge and understanding are developing. The subject leader in religious education has provided in-service and other support and guidance to staff to moderate levels of learning. These are measured against the revised levels of attainment in religious education. All pupils have targets set against the "I can.." statements, which encourages self-assessment, peer-assessment and independent learning opportunities. During the inspection it is evident that teachers are setting challenging extension activities, have revised their marking strategies and encourage pupils to extend their learning.

The quality of teaching

Grade [2]

Teaching is good overall. The lessons observed during the inspection identified how pupils are challenged through clearly planned questioning. These included scaffolded questions to meet the need of less able pupils, whilst providing opportunities for more able pupils to reflect on earlier learning. It was clear during the observations that more able pupils were empowered with opportunities to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the key areas being covered. An example of this excellent practice was in the case where the pupils were reflecting on the similarities and differences between the traditional and scriptural versions of the Passion of Christ. Behaviour in all lessons was good and all pupils remained focussed and showed respect for one another. The use of "talking partners" was effective, which supported pupils to reflect on earlier learning and to re-cap in readiness to move their learning forward to the next stage. Pupils are encouraged to use the "I wonder" strategy to research their own enquiry and use "post-it" notes to record their query and follow the response either in class or at home. This practice is being developed across the school. The school leadership team provide evidence of how the monitoring process informs the next stage of improvement in the quality of teaching to impact on the learning of all pupils across the phases. The subject leader in religious education, in partnership with the Headteacher, is fully aware of the school's commitment to providing consistency across all classes. Teachers' strong subject knowledge and enthusiasm is reflected in the detailed information provided for the inspector. They have robust and challenging targets for all teachers and support staff, to ensure all pupils are fully challenged and sharply focussed to achieve.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade [1]

The strong partnership, between the Headteacher and the subject leader in religious education, is driven by their enthusiasm, commitment and secure knowledge and understanding of what is needed to continue to improve. They both attend a range of Diocesan in-service, Deanery network meetings and Conferences. They are fully up to date with all aspects of the revised programmes being delivered by the Diocese, which is then embedded into the school's Continuing Professional Development, (CPD), programmes throughout the academic year. They welcome the support and

guidance from the Diocesan Advisor, particularly in developing their identified areas to continue to move the school forward.

Head and subject leader in religious education are very well supported by the Governing Body, many of whom are long-serving past parents of the school. They are fully dedicated and generous in the time and pro-active energy they provide for the school. The inspector met a small group of Governors. Their clear vision for their school was described by one of them as “ever changing.” She explained how “the children are allowed to be children” and that religious education “permeates the whole of our education here”. She is proud of how the leadership of religious education is “embedded” in all that is achieved.

What has improved in curriculum religious education since the last inspection and what should the school do to further improve in curriculum religious education?

Assessment has been a key area of improvement, borne out from the scrutiny of the electronic tracking systems now in place across the phases of the school. The marking is consistent with opportunities for pupils to reflect and extend their understanding from the comments made by the teachers. They are addressing the improvement in effective moderation, with this as a priority area identified by the school for on-going improvement, in line with the Diocesan Advisory programmes. The School has ensured the SEF has been updated annually, with the new revised SEF also now in place. This has been shared across the school, with the Governing Body, and is their key document which informs their improvement agenda.

The inspector carried out discussions on the sections of the SEF with the Headteacher and subject leader in religious education.

The school has agreed the following areas for continued improvement in curriculum religious education:-

- School to continue to prioritise planned differentiation through the “Relate” sections in topics being delivered
- The new Religious Education Leadership Team will provide opportunities for focussed modelling and coaching through sharing existing, outstanding school best practice
- Continue existing moderation, (including Pan Deanery), to attain secure level 3 and level 5 within the revised Diocesan guidelines, to be above average overall

What is the overall effectiveness of curriculum religious education in developing pupils’ religious literacy?

Overall Grade: [2]

The curriculum religious education is good overall in developing pupils’ religious literacy. The Curriculum Directory forms the basis and underpins all that is provided across the phases of the school.

The teachers plan for good provision for all pupils, with evidence during the inspection including the high range of learning observed, recorded and witnessed by the inspector.

Leadership of the subject is very good, with all staff supported and empowered to continue to develop and improve.

The systems, structures and robust planning and expectations are firmly in place, consistently delivered and the areas for improvement clearly identified and recognised.

The whole school commitment to providing high quality religious education, through the clear vision of the Headteacher and the subject leader in religious education, informs the whole school self-evaluation process. This process has supported the identified areas for on-going improvement and development.

B. The school as a Catholic Community

How well do pupils experience the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing through all areas of school life?

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum - time, resources, budget

Grade [1*]

The school fully meets the 10% requirement of the Curriculum Directory. The extra-curricular life of the school embraces the opportunities for valuable links as a worshipping, living Catholic community. It is evident that resources are richly and generously provided by the Governing Body. The funding dedicated to the Religious Education programmes, the range of Catholic banners, statues, crosses, crucifixes, artefacts, books and CD programmes, is testimony to the high status and priority given to funding and resourcing across the school, against other core areas. The Chair of Governors and other Governors who met with the inspector are proud of their role in governing the school. They referred to many examples and minutes of their meetings where they dedicate planned expenditure, hold discussions within curriculum and building development meetings, to ensure the school is providing a rich resource for their community. All stakeholders were evidently proud of their school, as observed by the inspector, and the vibrant, colourful, fresh and inspiring range of indoor and outdoor facilities, gardens, displays, technology, demonstrating the wide variety of the provision across so many curricular and extra-curricular areas was indeed worthy of praise.

The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community.

Grade [1*]

It is evident from the inspection that prayer, liturgy and worship are central to all that is the hallmark of this Catholic school. It was described by one of the parents as the “oasis” for their family. The parents were particularly proud of how “Catholic” the school is and how much their children love to pray, with one parent of a large family declaring, “I wouldn’t put my children in any other school”.

The centrality of Christ in the school is shared in classrooms, evident during the observations in the way the pupils across the phases were so readily comfortable and reverent in their private prayer and reflections. The inclusiveness of the school was borne out through the two observed assemblies where pupils with significant Special Educational Needs and Disability were actively participating. Our Lady is pivotal in the devotions across the liturgical cycle, in particular how the children know and understand about her role in the Church.

The “Many Faces of Mary” display outlines her national and international shrines and her titles in the Church. In one of the observed lessons, a pupil described with such empathy how Mary “felt” following the Crucifixion.

Class Masses are frequently celebrated. The two members of the clergy are significant in the life of the school. The prayer life of the school is celebrated, lived and continues to grow within the whole school community.

The outstanding assemblies observed during the inspection were from the Early Years, as a “Thanksgiving for Mothers”, and the Key Stage 1 celebration of the mission and message of “St. Patrick”. They provided the very well attended audience of parents and grandparents, an opportunity to participate in the prayers, hymns and to reflect silently.

The school has developed prayerful links with home through the “Prayer Bag” in the Early Years and the “Talking Homework” linked to the weekly Gospel message and topics being delivered, for the older pupils.

The commitment and contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice.

Grade [1*]

The school’s generosity to others in need is indeed a wonderful witness to the Common Good. They support a range of Diocesan, Catholic and Global charities. The families despite in many cases, their own hardships, are most generous with over £4,000 donated in the past year to a variety of worthy causes.

The pupils demonstrated their commitment to service and social justice through their contributions during this holy season of Lent, in their pledges, promises, prayers and ways they want to “give” to others. The pupils are indeed most proud of their school, take great care of their environment and respect and value their provision.

The curriculum is planned well to include creative opportunities for the pupils to explore historical perspectives of courageous leaders, including their work during black history month and other research opportunities.

Their commitment to being an “eco-school”, (with their Silver Award), the “Thames 21” project, and the global ecological needs, is further enhanced through their responsibility for their “Garden” in the outdoor areas.

Their annual “international week” activities, including their support to their global link school in Morocco, (with their International School award), through their “Connecting Classrooms” project, is woven through their other curriculum activities. These enable the pupils to appreciate the needs and responsibilities they have to take care of others and their world.

Their understanding of their “call to serve Our Lord” is a source of great pride which the children shared during their interview. They were animated to boast how they link their daily life in school to the UNICEF Charter of the “Rights of the Child”. This underpins their behaviour and dealing with bullying policy and practice, their Home-School Agreement, through the “Rights Respecting” guidance. The pupils demonstrate their responsibility also through their roles as monitors, buddies, friends to new pupils, wearing their “red hats” proudly. The selection process, including job descriptions and contracts, attending “board meetings” with the Headteacher, as members of the School Council, typifies the opportunities offered for the children to develop their leadership skills.

Enabling the authentic partnership between parents, school and parish as an integral part of the Diocese, particularly through its relationship with the Diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf;
Grade [1*]

The Diocesan links have further developed with the Diocesan Advisor requesting the skills of the subject leader in religious education to support some local in-service in the Deanery.

The long-serving Chair of Governors is fully committed and dedicated in her role, attending and implementing an historical and current range of Diocesan policy and practice.

This was endorsed by the group of parents meeting the inspector, many of whom exuded their delight in how “Catholic” their children are. They referred to the way the school shares the religious education programmes with them. 64% of the families responded to the questionnaire and were overwhelmingly supportive of the school.

The school is very proud of its Diocesan links, and are fully aware and committed to its responsibility to the Church, and to furthering the mission and vision of the Church.

There is a real sense of the presence of Jesus Christ which is very much at the heart of the daily life of this Catholic school. The school SEF states that “Jesus Christ is at our centre, recognised as the best role model, teacher and guide to Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School”.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school.

Grade [1*]

The strong commitment and vision of the leaders and managers in promoting the catholic life across all levels of the school, is outstanding.

The experienced and informed Governing Body work in close partnership with the school, whilst retaining their robust attention to detail through their termly meetings, agenda and responsibility to be fully compliant in all statutory and legislative regulation and responsibility.

They nurture the community through their active presence, participation in key liturgies and celebrations. The Chair of Governors knows the families and their children well, is a keen active parishioner and vital link within the triple partnership of home, school and parish. The Headteacher, in partnership with the Religious Education Leader, is fully aware and determined to empower the leadership across the school. The school mission statement is woven into all aspects of the school and reflects the school's commitment to, "love and serve Christ by living, working, learning and growing together in God's family".

What has improved since the last inspection and what should the school do to further develop the Catholic life of the school ?

The school has developed its links with the parish and the parents. The revised weekly newsletters include a dedicated section to inform parents regarding the school's progress in religious education and the catholic life, including assemblies and special celebrations.

There is now a flourishing relationship with the clergy, particularly influenced by the pro-active involvement of the two clergy, whose regular presence inspires both staff and pupils alike.

They enable the pupils to recognise their influence where they teach as messengers of God.

The school has incorporated the Performance Management process with the identified Religious Education and Catholic Life whole school targets within the review cycle. They have identified the following areas for continued improvement and development:-

- Monitor the quality of the class assemblies with written records, linked to Diocesan requirements, including opportunities for oral and written feedback to teachers.
- Continue the "talking homework" related to topics being delivered and the current gospel message, and monitor the consistency across all classes.

What is the overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing?

Overall Grade: [1*]

The Catholic life of Our Lady of Lourdes is outstanding overall. The reflective quality prayer life is highly commendable.

The pupils are clearly confident, articulate and proud of their school, their faith and their role in the Church. They are familiar and confident to pray publicly, they know their prayers and the traditions and rituals celebrated across the liturgical cycle, as evident during the inspection. The School 'Prayer Book', with its colourful and relevant illustrations, includes prayers for the different parts of the day, special times, liturgical seasons and dedication to Our Blessed Lady.

The staff embrace the school priorities, share regular weekly prayer, are representative of the local community and are fully committed to excellence for the pupils in their care.

The Headteacher, with her Leadership Team, is fully aware and in control of her vision to promote excellence at all levels within the school, and through its links beyond the community, locally, nationally and globally.