



# Archdiocese of Birmingham

## Section 48 Inspection

### ST FRANCIS' CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Nursery Rd, Handsworth, Birmingham B19 1PH

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Inspection date 16<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> February 2017  
Reporting Inspector Denis Cody  
Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Type of School Voluntary Aided  
Age range of pupils 4-11 years  
Number on roll 414  
Appropriate authority The Governing Body  
Chair of Governors Mr Nigel Smith  
Telephone number 0121 464 5072  
E-mail address enquiry@stfranrc.bham.sch.uk  
Date of previous inspection March 2012  
DFE School Number 330/3342  
Unique Reference Number 103437

**Headteacher Mr Mark Humphreys**

Previous inspection: 2

This inspection: 2

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DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



MAKING CHRIST KNOWN TODAY

## Evidence

- The inspection was carried out by one Diocesan Inspector.
- The focus of the inspection was on the quality, leadership, and impact of the school's provision of Catholic life, collective worship, and religious education (RE).
- The inspector observed teaching across two full and two part RE lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. All of these lessons were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspector completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic life, worship, and the impact of teaching on their learning over time.
- Meetings were held with several governors including the chair, with the headteacher and RE subject leader and the parish priest.
- The inspector attended a whole school Mass, class assembly and prayer service, and undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of learning and teaching in RE, the presentation of the Catholic life of the school and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, data about pupils' attainment and progress, RAISEonline, the development plan, teachers' planning, and learning journals.

## Information about the school

- St Francis' is a larger than average size, two form entry, primary school, one of two in the parish of St Francis of Assisi in Handsworth, Birmingham.
- The vast majority of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, a far higher proportion than average.
- Currently 21% of pupils are baptised Catholics.
- The degree of pupil disadvantage is significantly greater than that of most schools.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with national average figures.
- Attainment on entry is below national expectations.

## Main Findings

- The school's outstanding Catholic life is evident in its leaders' commitment to the welfare and spiritual development of the pupils within an environment built on Catholic virtues and values. It is lived out in the daily life of the school and in the attitudes and supportive relationships of the pupils.
- Collective worship is good with pupils taking part confidently in both formal and informal prayers, and contributing actively and reverently to school and class Masses.
- Religious Education is good. Pupils enjoy their lessons and work well, independently and in small groups. Teaching is good and pupils make good progress and can relate their learning to their daily lives.
- Leadership is good overall, and outstanding in its support for and promotion of Catholic life and in the high priority given to pupils' spiritual, moral and vocational development.
- Improvement planning is clearly linked to data from a range of monitoring activities.

## THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

### Catholic life, collective worship and spiritual, moral and vocational development: provision and outcomes

- Both the Catholic life of the school and its impact on pupils are outstanding. They are reflected in the pastoral care and support provided for pupils and in their spiritual, moral and vocational development.
- Catholic virtues and values, social teaching and spirituality are all at the heart of the philosophy and work of the school. Leaders have chosen to pay all staff the living, rather than the minimum, wage and the school is an accredited Unicef Rights Respecting School.
- The Catholic Schools' Pupil Profile is linked with the articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Both are emphasised and illustrated in displays throughout the school, reminding pupils of how they apply to their own lives.
- Explicit reference is made to virtues and values in the school's reward system, and certificates are presented each week by the head boy and girl to children whose actions and behaviour have clearly demonstrated their practical application.
- The children recognise and value the diversity of faith and race in their school and community, and treat each other with respect. They have a good understanding of right and wrong, and are able to discuss the meaning and relevance of the values and virtues taught.
- Prayer areas, including a prayer room, are maintained around the school and in classrooms. They provide a focus for worship, reflecting the liturgical season and the RE topics being studied. Plans are currently underway for the development of an outdoor prayer area, with full involvement of pupils through the Young Spiritual Leaders.
- Recently appointed, the Young Spiritual Leaders from each class are becoming increasingly involved in organising and leading the Catholic life of the school. In weekly discussion and training meetings with the RE leader, their role is being developed, though its impact has yet to be fully realised.
- They have begun to become involved in monitoring Catholic life, reviewing and reporting on classroom prayer areas and RE displays. The school has identified this as an area for further development.
- Staff spirituality is also given a high priority. The headteacher leads prayers for all staff at the beginning of the week, and voluntary prayers every Friday are led by different members of staff. Retreat days have also been held and a school pilgrimage to Assisi, led by the headteacher, is planned for the Summer term, comprising a small number of staff, governors, pupils and parents.
- Pupils are supportive of the Catholic ethos of the school and participate well in its Catholic life outside as well as inside school. For example, last term the school choir sang carols at two local supermarkets and visited a local day centre for people with learning difficulties, meeting people there and singing carols for them.
- Following a review, the school mission statement was simplified and made more child-friendly, emphasising respect and care for each other and valuing everyone as an individual created by God. A competition was held among pupils to produce a mandala to represent its spirit and content. Both are now displayed around the school, including on a stained glass window, and act as guidelines and reference points for pupils, alongside the school motto, 'Truth and Love.'
- St Francis floor books are carefully compiled by each class documenting all activities relating to Catholic life and spiritual and moral development, linking them to the virtues and values contained within the Catholic Schools' Pupil Profile.

- Based on the liturgical calendar, a whole school prayer focus is selected each month, included in the weekly newsletter and displayed around the school. It becomes a focus for classroom discussion and debate.
- The provision and quality of collective worship is good. Prayer and worship play a central role in the life of the school.
- Pupils take part reverently and enthusiastically in Masses and prayer services, contributing actively through prayers, readings, singing and discussion.
- Through their classroom prayers children become familiar with formal and informal approaches to prayer. Following a prayer audit, the school is now focusing on developing its classroom prayer life by introducing a wider range of prayers and prayer opportunities.
- Assemblies and prayer services include periods of reflection, scripture reading, prayer and reference to personal vocation. They usually focus on Catholic virtues and values, the liturgical year or special feast days, reinforcing and extending children's learning and understanding.
- Within the Caritas Christi partnership of Catholic schools, pupils have also taken part in shared liturgies with other children, across several schools.
- Although older children have some experience of leading prayers at assemblies or special prayer services, children generally do not have sufficient opportunities to develop the skills of planning and leading worship independently, and the school has identified this is an area for development.
- Through the Young Spiritual Leaders, pupils are now involved in monitoring classroom prayers and Mass preparation, surveying the opinions of their classmates. Formalised pupil contribution to monitoring of school worship has not yet, however, been embedded into the self-evaluation cycle.
- Spiritual, moral and vocational development is outstanding. The school actively promotes a culture of service and vocation by providing opportunities for pupils to assume positions of responsibility and service inside and outside the school.
- Older pupils, for example, are trained as peer mediators, playground leaders, and first aiders, living out and helping develop the Catholic ethos of the school.
- Similarly, their mission of service is evident in their active involvement with groups, such as Citizens UK, supporting families in the local community. Pupil representatives have attended a meeting with the local Police Commissioner and discussed their own concerns and those of their families in regular surgeries with local police officers.
- Pupils and their families respond generously to those in need through support for a variety of local and national charities including the Refugee Welcome campaign. Children are able to link these activities to the teachings of Jesus, to Catholic virtues and values and to our calling to support others.
- In addition, the whole school sponsors the education of a schoolboy in Sierra Leone through ongoing donations of small change in every classroom. Children are able to learn about his school and living conditions, extending their own knowledge and understanding of the world and their place and responsibilities within it.

## **LEADERSHIP**

### **Leadership of Catholic life and Collective Worship**

- Leadership of Catholic life and collective worship is good overall, and outstanding in terms of its passionate commitment to the school's Catholic mission and ethos.
- The headteacher and RE leader work effectively with the parish priest and school governors to promote their common vision of an inclusive school, rooted in its local community, dedicated to the spiritual and educational welfare of its pupils within a Catholic environment, where all are valued and respected.
- Their commitment to school worship is indicated by the appointment of a liturgy leader to work alongside the headteacher and RE leader in a strong liturgy team.
- Catholic life is included in staff training and induction so that everyone understands its unique importance in the school and their role in its promotion. Governors also attend annual diocesan training sessions on Catholic leadership.
- The parish priest and RE link governor work closely with the RE team in school to plan and review liturgy, sacramental preparation and all aspects of Catholic life.
- The school is an active member of the local Catholic community sharing close links with the parish, the neighbouring St Mary's Sisters of Mercy convent and with St Clare's, the other parish primary school. As a member of the Caritas Christi partnership, it collaborates with and supports other Catholic schools in Birmingham. In their regular meetings the headteachers work together to promote their common Catholic identity.
- Catholic life targets are always given a high priority in the school development plan and feature in performance management targets of the RE leader and other members of the senior leadership team.
- These targets derive from audits, reviews questionnaires and feedback from governors, staff and other stakeholders. The current school development plan, and the RE curriculum plan it contains, reflect the outcomes of prior Catholic life and prayer audits and a liturgy overview.
- Catholic life and collective worship are assessed through learning walks, monitoring of prayer areas, prayer services and liturgy planning. The RE leader also monitors the Catholic life floor books from each class providing written feedback and recommendations.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

### **Leadership, outcomes from and provision for religious education**

- Leadership and provision of RE are good, as are the outcomes for pupils in terms of their learning and attainment.
- Governors understand their role and display strong commitment to the school. They regularly visit the school in a supportive capacity and know its strengths and areas for development.
- They are involved in monitoring all aspects of RE, receiving termly reports from the headteacher which include updates on progress towards achievement of RE and Catholic life targets and on pupil attainment. The RE governor also takes part in learning walks and book trawls with the subject leader.
- The school self-evaluation document was produced by senior leaders in school and then discussed and agreed with governors. Rather than remain a one-off document it should now be incorporated into the school self-evaluation and improvement

process. Review of different sections should be a regular agenda item at staff and governor meetings, so it is constantly kept up to date.

- The subject leader provides strong and effective leadership of RE. Teachers' planning is examined termly and pupils' work inspected in order to monitor delivery of the curriculum and pupils' learning. The subject leader supports non-Catholic and newly qualified teachers in their planning and teaching, by modelling lesson delivery and teaching strategies, and ensuring understanding of the RE curriculum.
- Pupils' work is regularly assessed in line with diocesan recommendations and their progress tracked throughout the school. Baseline assessment carried out on entry to reception class shows that most pupils arrive at school with very little knowledge or experience of religion.
- To ensure the accuracy and consistency of teachers' assessment judgements, levelled assessments of RE work are moderated at phase and cluster meetings and with colleagues from other schools in Caritas Christi meetings.
- Analysis of assessment data shows pupils progress slowly at first from this low base, but more steadily as they move through Key Stage 1. Older pupils make significant progress in Key Stage 2, so that most meet diocesan expectations by the time they leave the school.
- More detailed analysis introduced last year showed this pattern of progress generally applied to all groups of children. Alternative ways of recording for pupils with special education needs are used so their RE knowledge and skills can be recorded effectively.
- This data comparing performance of different groups within each class would be more effectively used were it to be compiled and analysed termly by class teachers themselves and shared with the RE leader along with any planned response. With more ownership of their own class data, they would have immediate feedback on their teaching and planning and could intervene quickly to support individuals or groups of children as necessary.
- Teaching in RE is good. Pupils have a very positive attitude towards RE and enjoy their learning. They work well together in small groups and independently.
- Teaching and learning are monitored through a programme of lesson observations, book trawls and pupil interviews, with subsequent feedback provided to staff, as well as through the use of attainment data.
- Teachers develop the quality of pupils' learning through strategic questioning during lessons and through marking and feedback that helps them move their learning forward. 'Gap Tasks' and 'Green Cup' challenges extend thinking and make links with pupils' own experience and the teachings of Christ.
- Lesson objectives and success criteria help pupils develop the skills of evaluating and improving their own work.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. Lessons are well planned to meet the needs of all pupils and build on previous learning. In the best lesson planning, clear links are made to the Catholic Schools' Pupil Profile's virtues and values.
- The RE curriculum is based on the diocesan scheme, *'Learning and Growing as the People of God,'* and follows its recommendations in terms of planning and assessment.
- Governors and school leaders strongly support the pivotal position of RE in the school curriculum. They ensure that the requirements of the Bishops' Conference are met in terms of curriculum time for RE.

- Through its 'creative curriculum' the school ensures that Catholic Christian virtues and values are incorporated into all areas of teaching.
- Sacramental preparation is delivered in school led by the RE leader and actively supported by the parish priest, governors and the Sisters of Mercy who organise retreats for the children.
- Family life and sex education teaching is delivered through the 'All that I am' programme.
- Children learn about other faiths and cultures and are able to visit different places of worship.

## **Recommendations**

### **In order to improve the school should:**

- Ensure systematic pupil involvement in leading and monitoring Catholic life and collective worship.
- Give class teachers responsibility for compiling and analysing pupil attainment data.
- Incorporate the school self-evaluation document, with input from school leaders, governors and staff, into the improvement planning process for all aspects of Catholic life and RE.