

# Westminster Diocese Inspection Report

## St Rose's Catholic Infants' School

Green End Rd, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP1 1QW



Date of inspection: 5<sup>th</sup> November 2015

### A. Classroom Religious Education

**What is the overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing pupils' religious literacy?**

**Overall Grade 2**

The effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing pupils' literacy is good. The Come and See scheme of work which the school follows ensures that the content meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory. Pupils make good progress in religious education and there are good tracking mechanisms in place to monitor this progress. The quality of teaching is good and in many instances outstanding. The leadership and management of religious education are effective. There is good evidence of the improvements being achieved through the increased emphases by the leadership team and staff in respect of pace, challenge and differentiation. On these fronts it is a still work in progress and further improvement is expected in the coming years. Governors have good systems in place to support and monitor the progress and improvement of religious education. The parents experience a constructive partnership with the school in the growth in religious literacy of their children.

### B. The Catholic life of the school

**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 the school is outstandingly effective in developing the pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing. The pupils come to see and understand the presence of God in their school community, their family and themselves. Prayer is encouraged and pupils find expression of their response in a variety of prayer settings, including personal and spontaneous prayer. Through the assemblies and the termly Masses, and along with the sharing of the Wednesday Word with their families, children experience a rich participation in the worship and prayer of the Church. Based on their growing understanding of the meaning of their baptism, they work generously to raise funds for local and international charities. The partnership of the school with the parents, their parishes, local Catholic and other schools, and diocesan representatives of the Bishop ensures the school is fully playing its part in building community at all levels. The school benefits from a governing body committed to promoting its Catholic life.

## Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent 1 day in school, visited 7 lessons and 4 classroom acts of worship, and carried out 7 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 and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of St Rose's Catholic Infants' School, Hemel Hempstead was carried out under the requirements of the Canon 806 and Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Archbishop of Westminster. The inspectors are appointed by the 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.

## Inspection Team

Deacon Anthony Clark  
Mrs Catherine McMahon  
Miss Liz Doonan

Lead Inspector  
Associate Inspector  
Associate Inspector

## Description of School

This voluntary aided school is a two form entry in the LA of Hertfordshire and the locality of Dacorum. The school serves the parishes of SS Mary & Joseph, Boxmoor, St. Marks, Warners End, Church of the Resurrection, Grovehill, Our Lady Queen of All Creation, Adeyfield and Our Lady Mother of the Saviour, Chipperfield. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 90%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 6%, from other Faiths 1% and no faith declared 3%. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 62%.

There are 207 pupils on roll, with one pupil with a statement of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health & Care Plan (EHC). The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is below average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is below average. There is a well below average rate of families claiming free school meals. Six pupils receive the Pupil Premium.

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Headteacher: Mrs Rebecca Tregear  
Chair of Governors: Mrs Abi Whittaker

Date of previous inspection: 5<sup>th</sup> October 2009  
Previous Inspection grades: Good

<b>Key for inspection grades:</b>	<i>Grade 1</i>	<i>Outstanding</i>
	<i>Grade 2</i>	<i>Good</i>
	<i>Grade 3</i>	<i>Requires improvement</i>
	<i>Grade 4</i>	<i>Causing Concern</i>

## **A. Classroom 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?*

### **What has improved in classroom religious education since the last inspection?**

The previous inspection made recommendations in respect of both classroom religious education and Catholic life. For religious education it recommended that cross curricular links be made more explicit and developed. The school has not only fulfilled this recommendation but taken religious education to a new level. The emphasis on challenge, better pace, differentiation and clearer focus was evident in the lessons observed.

### **How well does the content of classroom religious education meet the requirements of the Curriculum Directory?**

#### **Grade 2**

The content of classroom religious education meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD) well. There is appropriate knowledge and awareness of the RECD on the part of the staff. In following the Come and See programme, the school is effective in ensuring the coverage of the directory is mostly achieved. It was evident that the school is clear in its focus on religious literacy as the goal of classroom religious education. This focus is demonstrated by the openness to discussion, to links with other areas of study, to pauses for wonder. The school gives proper introduction to Key Stage I pupils of one world faith, Judaism. All pupils have on their uniform the badge of St Dominic and the motto Veritas – Truth. The school could make more reference to its Dominican foundation and charism by engaging the pupils in their journeys of discovery with the Dominican traditions of search and humility before the facts.

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

#### **Grade 2**

Pupils' achievement is good. From the youngest classes, they show an appropriate level of understanding when using religious language; Foundation Stage children were able to talk about the signs and symbols of Baptism, whilst Year 2 children could explain the difference between the Paschal Candle and a Baptismal candle. A new scheme of work was introduced just over a year ago and has given staff the chance to assess children more frequently and more closely in line with the Diocesan Agreed Understandings. This shows that children are now achieving similar levels in religious education to those in other subjects. The target sheets at the beginning of each topic help the children know what they need to do to achieve well. Children show a good attitude to their learning, participating fully in their lessons and this helps them to make good progress. Internal moderation of results is now clearly embedded in the school monitoring cycle and staff also moderate with other deanery schools and with the Diocese. They are looking to extend their use of moderation with other Key Stage I practitioners.

## **The quality of teaching**

### **Grade 2**

Teaching is good. Teachers plan lessons in a variety of styles which allow all children to participate and enjoy their learning; they show very positive attitudes and behave well. In the best lessons, teachers use questioning to draw out deeper understanding or to correct misunderstandings. In Reception, children were supported to talk about the sequence of events during a Baptism and then given the chance to act out the ceremony in the role play area. Marking has developed over the last year and in many places challenges the children to think more about their work. The children are usually given time to respond to this, which they do in a sensible way. Children are able to assess their own work, using their target sheets in each topic and also comment on each other's work, before the teacher adds their own assessment. The new scheme supports the teachers to have high expectations of the children and all the staff showed strong subject knowledge. Teachers were supported very well by teaching assistants in the observed lessons. Teachers use various forms of differentiation to ensure that children are able to make appropriate progress. Home learning has been introduced which links the work done in class with the home. Children and parents talk about this enthusiastically. This has worked particularly well in the work on Baptism where children had been encouraged to write to their godparents, many of whom wrote back.

## **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education**

### **Grade 2**

The leadership and management of religious education are good. The senior leadership team and members of the governing body have a strong vision for the place of religious education in the school and have communicated this clearly to all the staff and other stakeholders. The subject leader with the support of the head has achieved a strong focus and vision for the outcomes of religious education. This is shown in the wholehearted support given by all staff to implementing the new scheme of work over the last year. Clear systems and structures have been put into place which will see the rigour and standards in religious education continue to improve as they become firmly embedded into the school. Teaching is regularly monitored and the senior team work hard to make sure that staff are fully supported in their delivery of religious education through focussed continuing professional development and individual support where necessary. The senior team shows a good awareness of their own work; what they have done to get to this point and what they need to do to continue their journey of improvement.

## **What should the school do to develop further in classroom religious education?**

- Continue to develop its priorities for the development of religious education, in particular challenge, better pace, differentiation and focus.
- Research ways to introduce more awareness of the Dominican educational traditions of the search for truth in line with the school's foundation and charism.

## **B. The Catholic life of the school**

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

### **What has improved since the last inspection?**

The last inspection recommended that the pupils be invited to participate in a wider variety of forms of prayer. The school has been effective in meeting this recommendation and in the course of the inspection we witnessed children being involved in prayer in a variety of ways, especially in spontaneously giving thanks for something special that has happened. In the meeting with the parents the inspectors heard parents speaking warmly of their children suddenly breaking into a little prayer of thanks for something when they are out shopping. The last inspection also recommended the role of the RE link governor be developed and this has been successfully implemented.

### **The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum – time, staffing, accommodation, resources, budget**

#### **Grade I**

The place of religious education is clearly and generously at the core of the curriculum. Both in the subject guidance and in the lesson plans, the place of religious education as the springboard for both religious literacy and its expression in the other subjects was evident. The pupils at their own level could speak of the message of Jesus and the love of God being central in their life and learning. The school fully complies with the requirements of the Bishops' Conference that 10% of curriculum time is devoted to religious education. The school is fully supportive of continuing professional development (CPD) in religious education for its staff and especially for the newly qualified teachers, both Catholic and non-Catholic. All the senior leadership team (SLT) and the governors have high expectations of the continuing drive to improve religious education. Staff appraisal and monitoring always begins with reviewing the first target which is always related to religious education. The budget allocated to religious education is comprehensive and provides concrete evidence of the high regard the school has for the place of religious education.

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

#### **Grade I**

Prayer and worship are clearly central to the everyday life of the school and great improvements have been made since the last inspection. The children are involved in a variety of forms of worship including whole school masses, worship assemblies and Lenten reflections. An outstanding programme of quality class worship, planned and led by children, also takes place in all classes weekly. Daily prayer is embedded across the school which is clear through the reverence and keen participation of all children and staff. Despite the children not being able to take part in the Eucharist, Mass is celebrated four times during the year giving pupils the opportunity to worship in the church and for a large number of parents to be involved in whole school worship. Worship assemblies also give the opportunity for the whole community to celebrate together. The strong link to the liturgical year and variety of forms of worship helps the children form a solid spiritual faith foundation within the Catholic tradition.

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

### **Grade I**

The school has an excellent commitment to supporting a number of charities in a variety of ways throughout the school year. The strong link with the local old peoples' home is very inspiring and gives the children the opportunity to see their faith in action. There is outstanding support of a range of global and local charities and excellent plans are already in place for developing the commitment to supporting different causes during the Year of Mercy. The children can talk clearly about how they help others and know that they do this because Jesus taught us that we should. Opportunities for children to discuss moral issues in other subjects across the curriculum also help them to understand the call to justice and peace at a level appropriate to their age. The school has a very strong understanding of the call to 'human flourishing'. It has a variety of creative and meaningful ways in which it celebrates children's behaviour, contributions and talents. A number of different initiatives including School Council, Eco Warriors and Rocket Leaders also allow children to take on responsibility for acts of service within the school.

## **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 I**

For the majority of pupils the educational journey they will make is to start at St Rose's infant school, move on to St Cuthbert Mayne junior school and then on to John F Kennedy secondary school. The partnership between these three schools is very well established and is conducive to pupils making excellent progress. The school has established good relationships with other schools in the environs of the town as well as with the Catholic schools across Hertfordshire. The school accepts pupils from all five parishes in Hemel Hempstead and provides a focus for unity and progress in the pupils' journey of faith. The presence and visits of the parish priest are built into the liturgical planning and school life of St Rose's. The Wednesday Word is sent home weekly and it helps promote hearing more deeply the gospel message each Sunday on the part of both the pupils and their families. Both staff and governors attend the relevant in-service and CPD offered by the diocese. The RE adviser is a welcome visitor and the school participates in both local, county and diocesan moderation meetings. The partnership with the parents is outstanding, characterised by good communication, opportunities for meetings, prayer and on occasions Mass, and an outreach that is inclusive.

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

### **Grade I**

The senior leadership team works outstandingly well together. During the two years she has been in post, the head has been devoted to promoting and building a sense of team cooperation, through which she has established an effective vision, powerfully taking forward the new emphases in the teaching of religious education and in the development of prayer. The focus on promoting the fullness of the school's mission statement is constant; 'We live, love and learn happily in our work and play as part of God's family'. The Governors are confident in their role of governance and carry out their roles of both support and being a critical friend very effectively. The annual appraisals of the headteacher on her leadership of both the development of religious education and the further

building of the Catholic life of the school are clearly rigorous. A concrete example of the effectiveness is the way the Pope's encyclical *The Joy of the Gospel* informed the lessons and also the displays across the school with bite size extracts included. A similar strategy is being planned for the Year of Mercy.

**What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?**

- Develop greater knowledge and awareness of the school's Dominican foundation and charism, as well as a higher profile of St Dominic in the school along with St Rose.
- Build up the links in the awareness of the children between their focus on environmental issues and the Pope's teaching in *Laudato Si*.