



Diocese of Westminster

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

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DFE Number: 9195200

URN Number: 117560

Headteacher: Mr R A D Dunbar

Chair of Governors: Mr D Jones

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: 24 January 2013
Date of previous inspection: June 2008

Reporting Inspector: Mr S Flood

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 one day in school, visited lessons, observed a class liturgy, a whole school assembly and also carried out interviews with school staff, pupils and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons, examination of school documents, and attendance at religious services where possible.

The Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Royston 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

St Mary's is a one form entry school in Royston in the Local Authority of Hertfordshire.

The school serves the parish of Royston.

The proportion of children who are baptised Catholic is 58%.

The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 30% and from other faiths 4%.

There are 212 pupils currently on roll, this classifies the school as smaller than the average sized primary school.

The proportion of pupils' known to be eligible for free school meals is significantly below average at 0.7%

There is one pupil with a Statement of Special Educational Needs; this is well below the national average.

The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is 9.9%; this is below the national average.

The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is 14.7%; this is below the national average.

There is a 3% rate of families claiming free school meals; this is well below the national average.

There are 11 teachers in the school, 9 of whom are Catholic. 1 of the teachers has the CCRS or other Catholic qualification.

The Mission Statement of the school states:

"Give your heart to everything that is good.

Be a real family, warm-hearted in your care for one another, thinking better of others than of yourselves.

In hard times stand your ground; never forget to pray."

Key for inspection grades.

Grade 1: Outstanding;*

Grade 1: Very Good;

Grade 2: Good;

Grade 3: Satisfactory;

Grade 4: Causing Concern.

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?

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

Overall Grade: [2]

The overall effectiveness of religious education is good.
The school is currently using the Here I Am scheme in conjunction with the model units from the Year of Faith. The school is also trialling a new scheme in some classes: The Way, Truth and Life. The use and implementation of the Curriculum Directory is progressing well and provides a good programme of religious education across the key stages. Planning is good and is being mapped to the Curriculum Directory.
Pupil attainment in religious education is very good at both key stages and progress is also good from Nursery onwards. Teaching seen during this inspection was highly variable with a wide range of judgements but overall judged to be at least good, and equally most pupils achieve at above age expectation levels.
Teachers have mostly good subject knowledge.
ICT is being used well by teachers to enhance RE lessons
Staff development is well planned in this school.
The leadership of the subject from the head is good and committed.
The school self-evaluation needs to be carefully reviewed and updated in the light of this inspection.
The place and importance of religious education in the life of the school is evidenced by the leadership of the subject from the head, the senior leadership team and chair of governors.

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

The last inspection identified marking and assessment as areas to be developed. The school has done effective work on marking and some good practice is evident. This needs to be more consistent across the school. This review of assessment is on-going as it is in all schools in the light of new diocesan guidelines.
The last inspection also called for more formal religious education systems to raise standards even further. Again there is evidence of this developing across the school.
ICT has also clearly improved and is now effectively used in almost all lessons.

To improve even further the school needs to:

Review the quality of teaching to raise standards even further so that all lessons are at least good in religious education right across the school.
Marking needs further consideration to ensure consistency and application. The evidence of "next steps" marking seen in some areas of the school needs to be consistently applied so that pupils know what they have to do to improve their work even further.
Review its self evaluation to make it more evaluative and focussed on strengths and weaknesses across the school.

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

Grade [2]

The Curriculum Directory does form the basis of the content for religious education lessons. The core scheme of the school is Here I Am. The school is currently developing new curriculum units to support the Year of Faith and is also trialling the scheme The Way, The Truth and The Life in Years 2, 5 and 6. There is evidence of planning to adapt the Curriculum Directory to pupils' needs and to show links to the Directory, for example Revelation, Church, Celebration and Life in Christ. The overall effectiveness of religious education is good. The use and implementation of the Curriculum Directory is making good progress and currently provides a good programme of religious education across the school. Resources are good and links are being made to other areas of learning such as learning about other faiths. There is evidence of enhancement in the curriculum through music, art and drama.

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

Grade [1]

Progress is good and overall attainment in religious education is very good. Pupils' spoken and oral knowledge of religious education is very good and pupils are keen and eager to share their knowledge and understanding. The religious literacy of older pupils is very good. Pupil attainment on entry at Nursery is broadly average although the school self evaluation notes that pupils enter the foundation stage with limited religious vocabulary and limited experience of religious worship. Evidence in books, data provided and other work on display around the school, shows that pupils make good progress at every level. Progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 is good. Religious literacy is above average at the end of key stage 2 and achievement overall is very good. Pupils and staff are growing in knowledge of the Levels of Attainment and this has been identified as a school priority for development. School is aiming to attain even higher levels of religious literacy in the years ahead. Work is almost always well presented and pupils do take evident pride in their work. Pupils in discussions around the school were highly articulate, friendly and were clearly enjoying their current topics in religious education. In an outstanding Year 4 lesson pupils were very eager to share their special objects and explain the importance and significance of these objects in their daily lives.

The quality of teaching

Grade [2]

Quality of teaching is very variable across the school ranging from inadequate to outstanding. Overall, based on a review of pupil's work and a wide range of other evidence the quality of teaching is judged to be good. As a result of this good teaching most pupils are achieving at least age expectation levels with a high standard of pupil response and engagement. Children get a good start in the Nursery and Reception Classes where teaching is also good. Teachers demonstrate a good subject knowledge overall. ICT is being used effectively by teachers in almost all lessons to enhance the teaching of RE. Homework is being used to support pupil learning in many classes. Pupil behaviour seen in almost all lessons was outstanding with high levels of engagement and enthusiasm. Teaching assistants and support staff played a crucial role in all lessons seen mostly supporting pupils with special educational needs. This was especially evident in one very good lesson seen in Year 2 where teaching assistants played a highly effective role.

Most teachers assess pupils' progress regularly and quite accurately, although this area does need reviewing.
Marking is developing well and in several classes children are informed what they need to do to improve their work even further. This again is an area that needs further attention and review.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade [2]

The leadership of the subject is good and aims for high standards in religious education.
The head teacher gives a good lead to the further development of religious education in this school. He is well assisted by an effective senior management team.
The RE subject leader is experienced and is effective in ensuring that RE is well resourced around the school. There is a clear commitment to the educational mission of the Church.
Assessment for learning informs teaching and most staff have appropriate expectations of pupils. All staff are expected to support the Catholic ethos and policies of the school.
Targets are currently linked to improving pupils' levels of attainment and staff understanding of the new curriculum.
There is a good range of resources for religious education and care and attention is given to the overall learning environment in religious education. Every class has an RE focus area with some equally high quality displays seen around the school.
The Mission Statement of the school is not prominently displayed or widely known by pupils and this area needs addressing.

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?

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 overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school is very good in the following ways:

Religious education has a high priority in the life of the school.

The School Development Plan outlines a prominent role and some good ideas for developing the Catholic life of the school. Resources, staffing and accommodation are all good for the needs of this school community.

Worship and prayer are very good in the school and pupils are actively engaged in both the planning and preparation of liturgies.

Links with parents, the parish and Diocese are being reviewed and ways to strengthen them even further are being developed by the governors.

Parents are mostly positive about the Catholic life and experience offered by the school.

The Head leads by practice and example in developing the overall Catholic life of the school. He is being well supported and also challenged by a knowledgeable and committed Chair of Governors.

Leadership at all levels demonstrates a strong vision of Catholic education and is striving to ensure that this is put into practice.

Governance is very good and governors are kept fully involved in developing and seeking ways to further improve the Catholic life of the school.

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

Parish – school links are now strong and pupils are becoming more pro-active in their approach to Mass.

To further develop the Catholic life of the school the school needs to:

Use pupil's own ideas and thoughts for further developing the Catholic life of the school.

Develop further the links with other faiths.

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

Grade [2]

10% of curriculum time is devoted to the teaching of religious education across all key stages every week.

Teachers have good subject knowledge of religious education in accordance with the Curriculum Directory for England and Wales.

Other faiths are studied within the core curriculum.

The school allocates a reasonable and comparable budget to teaching about the Catholic faith and resources are carefully chosen to cover all areas of the curriculum.

In- service training is taking place for all staff.

Training has taken place on the new levels of attainment and the levelling of pupil's work.

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

Grade [1]

Catholic worship, prayer and liturgy is very good in this school and is given a high profile. Prayer and worship are integral to the life of the school and good opportunities are provided from an early age.

A quite outstanding school assembly was seen during this inspection commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day. It was reverent, it dealt with contemporary issues and at the end was inspirational for the children, and indeed also this RE Inspector. It was one of the best assemblies one could ever wish to see. It was very well planned and led by the Year 6 teacher.

The head teacher also led the school in a very good and contemplative meditation session.

Pupils' spiritual development is enabled through the opportunities they have for quiet reflection and class discussion.

Pupils' spoken and oral knowledge of the Catholic faith is very good. Pupils are very religiously literate even though there are a comparatively small number of Catholic pupils.

The celebration of the Eucharist and other sacramental celebrations are offered at key times during the liturgical year and the school regularly visits the adjacent church.

Stations of the Cross are held regularly for KS2 pupils during Lent.

Prayer, liturgy and Catholic worship are a major strength of this school.

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

Grade [1]

The school does have an understanding of the importance of the Gospel call to justice and service. There are long term links to overseas charities in Kanyike in Uganda and also to the Sisters of Charity. Children spoken to were aware of these links and could articulate well how they helped global development. Pupils clearly enjoyed this aspect of RE and were keen to do even more.

The school also regularly participated in events such as Comic Relief, Children in Need and Mary's Meals.

The older Year 6 pupils attend Churches Together – Ecumenical Lenten Lunches.

Also in the local community the Years 5 and 6 entertain elderly people in the community arranged by the St Vincent de Paul Society. There are very good opportunities for pupils to engage in service to those in need.

Respect and outstanding behaviour is evident at all times during the school day.

The school does teach about other faiths and is looking to establish closer links with especially the Jewish community.

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 [2]

The head teacher and senior management team attends a wide variety of Diocesan conferences and North Hertfordshire Deanery events.

The religious education adviser is a frequent and welcome visitor to the school.

Staff and pupils are very active in the adjacent parish church. The head helps with the confirmation programme and the deputy attends First Holy Communion celebrations.

The school choir regularly sings at Sunday Mass.

Many teaching assistants are also involved in wide range of parish activities

Parents are invited to celebrate Mass with the school.

RE Curriculum Newsletters inform parents of learning in religious education as well as other links to school and parish life.

All policies and practices follow Diocesan guidelines.

The whole school community have a shared vision of the Catholic nature of education.

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

Grade [2]

The Mission Statement of the school states:

“Give your heart to everything that is good.

Be a real family, warm-hearted in your care for one another, thinking better of others than of yourselves.

In hard times stand your ground; never forget to pray.”

Leadership demonstrates a strong commitment to Catholic education.

Governors are well informed, ambitious and provide a very good balance of challenge and support.

The school conducts a wide range of monitoring activities relating to its provision and outcomes.

Staff development on the religious nature of Catholic education is regularly offered.

The school self-evaluation provides a mostly accurate grading of the school’s strengths but needs to focus more on key areas for development. In light of this inspection this self-evaluation now needs reviewing.

The head teacher regularly gathers the views of parents and is now looking at ways to involve pupil’s voices and ideas in developing the school further.

Parents are very proud of the Catholic life of the school and are very happy that their children attend this school.