



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARY AND ST JOHN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL WOLVERHAMPTON

Inspection dates 24th – 25th May 2011
Reporting Inspector Teresa Quick

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Primary
Age range of pupils	4-11 years
Number on roll	181
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mr Mark Darmody
School address	Caledonia Road Wolverhampton WV2 1HZ
Telephone number	01902 558780
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Date of previous inspection	November 2007
DCSF School Number	336 3305
Unique Reference Number	104376

Headteacher Mrs Joanne Hanslip

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one Diocesan Inspector. The inspector visited 3 full religious education (RE) lessons to observe teaching and learning, pupils' behaviour, and held meetings with governors, staff, the school chaplain and groups of pupils. She observed the school's work, including Mass and looked at a range of evidence, including key documentation such as the school's development plan, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in RE, and pupils' work.

Information about the school

St Mary and St John Catholic Primary School is a smaller than average size primary school with 181 pupils on roll of whom 25% are baptised Catholics. Many of these are drawn from the 74.4% ethnic minority population. The school is some distance from the parish church of St Mary and St John. It is a one form entry primary school with pupils coming from a wide range of ethnic and faith groups and socio-economic backgrounds. There are a number of Polish children, pupils recently arrived in this country and refugees. Many of the pupils joining the school other than in the reception year speak little or no English when they arrive. There is higher than average pupil mobility rate. This has a significant impact on standards of achievement. Attainment on entry is below average overall. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is 64%, well above the national average. Around 29% of the pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities and 53% do not have English as their first language. There have been significant staff changes since the previous inspection. After a number of temporary appointments there is now a substantive headteacher but there is no deputy headteacher.

Overall effectiveness of the school as a Catholic school

St Mary and St John is a good Catholic school. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher and her vision for the school is fully shared by the governors and staff and has the support of the parents. The school has been through a period of staff instability. Throughout the changes that have taken place in the school the Catholic life has remained solid due to the long standing Catholic traditions. Now with the headteacher and a very recently appointed subject leader for RE and the high quality of the teaching of RE, the school is again able to move forward. It is a warm welcoming school with a commitment to its mission within this multi-ethnic community. The pupils feel secure within the school and say the school is like a family. Pupils new to the school feel welcome. Only 13 of the Year 6 class have spent their primary years in the school. This high mobility of pupils effects achievement. The school is an oasis of Christianity within the area. There is a minority of Catholic staff but all staff support the ethos of the school. The Catholic ethos radiates throughout the whole school and in all that they do. There is a happy supportive environment for pupils. The quality of provision for RE is good. Pupils achieve well because of the good quality of teaching and their enjoyment in learning in RE. There is good spiritual and moral development. The nurturing of the pupils' prayer life is good and developing. Pupils enter the school with knowledge of the faith that for most pupils is very low but they make good progress and most pupils reach the satisfactory standards that are expected of them. Behaviour is good, in all lessons observed it was outstanding. Assessment identified at the last inspection continues to be an area for improvement but the very recently appointed subject leader is developing this work. The school works hard to overcome the considerable barriers to learning that are faced by many of the pupils with dedicated care, guidance and support. There is very good participation in collective worship. Morale is high and pupils are proud of their school. There are excellent links with the parish. The school is working well to achieve its mission "St Mary and St John is a Catholic school of the twenty first century. Christ is at the centre of all that happens at the school. With Christ as our example and guide we can trust, respect, care and love."

With the present leadership and management the school's capacity for sustained improvement in RE and its Catholic Life is good. There is passionate and committed leadership. The leadership has a clear picture of the school, the barriers they have to be overcome and the next steps towards

further improvement. All staff, priests and governors are supportive and work towards the aims of the school. Governors and leaders have a quest for excellence but never at the expense of dignity of the individual adult or child.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop a cohesive curriculum for RE to include all elements of RE.
- Improve assessment for learning to ensure it tracks pupils' progress to support them in reaching their potential.
- Further develop the strategic role of the governing body in relation to RE to enable them to monitor the effective delivery of religious education and the Catholic life of the school.

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils

Standards are satisfactory and progress is good with pupils enjoying their learning in RE. Most pupils arrive at school with little or no experience of prayer or church attendance. Pupils quickly get involved in the prayer life of the school. From a very low starting point pupils make good progress and reach satisfactory standards because of the quality of the teaching and the ethos of the school. In lessons observed during the inspection teaching was never less than good, with some outstanding practice. Work is carefully matched to pupils' individual needs. Pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities have work planned to meet their needs and targeted help to achieve. They make good progress. Generally written work shows clear progression. If written work does not reach the standards expected by the leadership action is taken to improve it. Marking was an issue at the time of the last inspection. Marking is of good quality with clear directions given of how pupils can improve their learning. Pupils enjoy RE and the longer they are in the school the more aware they become of the importance of faith in their lives. This is reinforced by the example given by the staff. At the end of each key stage pupils who have been in the school for most of their primary years show good progress and have standards that are at least satisfactory. Overall pupils in Key Stage 1 make very good progress. In Key Stage 2 attainment is low but pupils achieve expected levels in Year 6. There is high mobility rate with pupils leaving and others entering the school and many of the new entrants have English as a second language. These pupils make satisfactory progress from their starting points. Year 1 pupils have a very good knowledge of the Ascension of Our Lord. Pupils respond well in their understanding that the teachings of Jesus are relevant in the world to-day. Year 6 talked with enthusiasm about Confirmation.

The extent to which pupils contribute to the Catholic life of the school is good. They benefit greatly from the Catholic life. From their early days in the school they are caught up in the Catholic life which permeates the school and rise to the expectations of the school. The school and the chaplain, who is a regular visitor to the school, enable the pupils to develop spiritually and morally. They soon learn right from wrong. They understand and absorb the values of the school where everyone is valued and respected. Social and cultural development is good. Through very good support newcomers to the area are helped to feel settled, safe and secure as are the other pupils. "If you come from another country you are made welcome." It is a very mixed and diverse community. Pupils are confident that bullying does not occur. Pupils say "There is no racism, no bullying; school is like a big family"

The pupils' response to collective worship is very good. The Mass during the inspection was well planned and pupils responded with respect and dignity. This contributes significantly to the pupils' spirituality. Pupils followed the Mass well and all sang with enthusiasm. A number of parents supported their children. A delightful touch was to see parents joining their child to go to receive Holy Communion or a blessing. Pupils' behaviour was excellent throughout the Mass. Prayer continues to develop in the school. Pupils have a developing knowledge of the traditional prayers of the Church and can write and say their own. The school chaplain is well known to the pupils and spends a day a week saying Mass or leading liturgies and joining classes for their RE lessons. He can be seen having lunch with and talking with pupils on the field in the play time. He provides

excellent support to non Catholic and recently qualified staff. Coming from Poland he is able to provide that extra support to the Polish children. Pupils take an active role in the liturgies planned by staff. There are special celebratory Sunday Masses during the sacramental period. A large number of the staff support the pupils at these special Masses. Many of the other pupils also support the Catholic pupils at these celebrations. The chaplain prepares the pupils for the reception of the sacraments. There are parents meetings in school in order to help parents to be supportive of their children's learning. Pupils' personal and religious development is significantly impacted upon by the dedicated care and guidance they receive.

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the school

The leadership of the Catholic life of the school is good. The headteacher well supported by governors and the chaplain leads the staff in taking responsibility for the Catholic life within the school. The headteacher and chaplain started at the school at the same time thus forming a partnership vital to the Catholic life of the school and the well-being of this Catholic community. A number of initiatives linked to the liturgical year are planned for at a strategic level. There is a clear understanding of the needs of the pupils and together with the priests and governing body staff work with enthusiasm. They are dedicated to improving the outcomes for the pupils. They embrace the diversity of the school without compromising the Catholic mission. At the heart of the school is the altar area. From the school entrance and all around the school are carefully produced displays, crucifixes, statues and artefacts that remind everyone that this is a Catholic school. From their visits to the school and reports from the headteacher, governors are aware of the developments in the Catholic life within the school and what needs to be improved. There are link governors for RE but the role has yet to be more formalised. The school works to improve the provision of the Catholic life to meet the ever changing needs of the school community. This is an example of a truly inclusive school where pupils are known and treated equally and care and consideration given to their individual needs.

The subject leader is very new to the role but has already shown that she has the knowledge, drive and enthusiasm to support the headteacher and to take this demanding role forward. In a short time much work has already been achieved. Teachers teach from the units of the *Curriculum Strategy for Religious Education*. The provision has had limited monitoring to ensure progression in planning and continuity of learning and links to other areas of the RE curriculum. Governors fulfil their canonical responsibilities well and are active in shaping the direction of the school. The chair encourages governors to challenge and support leaders and managers. They are guided by what is right, and do not flinch from occasions needing firm and decisive action in order to secure the good of the school. Governors regularly visit the school and are aware of the Catholic life and the needs. Standards that pupils achieve are satisfactory as pupils have benefited from some high quality teaching. The active involvement of the chaplain for a whole day a week has had a beneficial effect on the Catholic life of the school and the pupils' participation. The school is now in the position to move forward. Staff are supportive of the mission to provide the best possible religious education and Catholic life for the pupils. Where possible the school extends the pupils' understanding of their Catholic heritage with visits to their own parish church led by the chaplain, to Oscott College and the Oratory.

The school promotes community cohesion well. The staff reflect the diversity of the school community. Pupils work and play well together and are supportive of each other. The school has excellent links with the parish. Pupils develop their understanding of justice and peace through their RE teaching, assemblies, SEAL (social and emotional aspects of Learning) and the ethos of the school. They are proud of their efforts to support CAFOD and the Good Shepherd collection. The school works closely with the priests of the Pauline Fathers who run the parish and strive to provide for the needs of the community. The school has strong links with and have had a number of exchange visits with a Catholic school in Poland thus aiming to embed community cohesion and an understanding of the world wide nature of the Church. Pupils learn about other faiths and benefit from the knowledge of staff who profess a different faith and visits to the places of worship of other religions. Pupils show respect for other faiths and cultures. Members of the school council have

enjoyed their visits to City led projects. There are close links with the local Catholic schools, the Catholic cluster group and the local primary schools in the City.

The quality of the school's work in providing Catholic education

The quality of teaching is good. This judgement was made from the teaching seen and the quality and breadth of evidence in the pupils' books, from displays and from discussion with the pupils. Planning lacks a holistic approach over the school and the wider RE curriculum. Within individual classes teachers deliver the *Curriculum Strategy for Religious Education* well and respond to the differing abilities of the pupils. Classes have the benefit of the regular presence of the priest in the RE lessons. Continuity of learning is not formally monitored at present. The curriculum, though broad, lacks cohesion. Book trawls have been done but there has been little observation of teaching and learning during the last year. Teachers have developed a good knowledge of the curriculum and employ a good range of teaching styles. Good questioning skills are employed. Teachers convey a confidence to the pupils. Some skilled teaching assistants provide a very good level of support in particular providing for pupils who require more support whether linguistically or other special educational needs. Pupils say they enjoy their RE lessons are enthusiastic and well motivated. Pupils' behaviour in all lessons observed was excellent. Written work generally matches pupils' needs. Marking was a focus for improvement at the time of the last inspection but marking is now good supporting the improvement of pupils' learning. Limited use of ICT by the pupils to support learning in RE was evident. The assessment process is a target for development. Resources are sufficient for the needs of the curriculum. A good range of library books and resources had been established by the school. There is a need to continue to improve resources to meet the breadth of the RE curriculum. Some teaching showed excellent links to the literacy curriculum. There are other informal links to PSHE, ICT music, art and SEAL. Teaching about other faiths supports the greater understanding of the beliefs of other people and their beliefs in the local area. Sex and Relationship education follows the diocesan scheme *All that I am*. Children learn not just from lessons but from the assemblies, Masses, cross-curricular experiences and the whole Catholic ethos of the school. Enrichment activities including carol services, school parish Masses make the RE curriculum increasingly relevant to the pupils' lives outside school. The Catholic life of the school has maintained a high priority and religious education is a focus for staffing and curriculum development. RE is taught as a discrete subject but can also form part of cross-curricular work. The percentage of time allocated for RE is in line with that agreed by the Bishop's Conference, but there are certain times when there is a concentration of religious based work.

Provision for collective worship is good. Evidence shows that much work has been done to develop the prayer life of the school. Each classroom has a prayer focus with appropriate artefacts. Prayer is an important part of the school day. All pupils are actively involved in and are exposed to different types of prayer and liturgies linked to the Church's year. Collective worship supports pupils' spiritual and moral development.