



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Inspection

ST MARIA GORETTI CATHOLIC ACADEMY

All Saints Catholic Collegiate Multi-Academy Company

Aylesbury Road, Bucknall, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST2 0LY

Inspection date 30th November & 1st December 2017

Reporting Inspector Maureen O'Leary
Assistant Inspector Stephen Murphy

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Academy
Age range of pupils	3-11 years
Number on roll	234
Appropriate authority	Board of Directors
Chair of Academy Committee	Ray Chadwick
Telephone number	01782 234737
E-mail address	office@stmga.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	November 2012
DFE School Number	861/3416
Unique Reference Number	140298

Headteacher **Zoe Cooper**

Previous inspection: Good

This inspection: Good

DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



MAKING CHRIST KNOWN TODAY

Evidence

- The inspection was carried out by two Diocesan Inspectors.
- 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 inspectors observed teaching across 7 RE lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. All of these lessons were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspectors 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 governors and members of the MAC, the principal (who is also the RE subject leader), staff, and parents.
- The inspectors attended a whole school Mass, a celebration assembly 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 inspectors reviewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, data about pupils' attainment and progress, Analyse School Performance (ASP) data, the school development plan, the RE and Catholic Life action plan, the MAC development plan (Catholic Life strand), teachers' planning, Catholic life books and learning journals.

Information about the school

- St Maria Goretti Catholic Academy is an average sized primary school serving the parish of St Maria Goretti in Buxnall, Stoke-on-Trent.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic origins is broadly in line with the national average.
- The percentage of Catholic pupils is currently 48%.
- The percentage of disadvantaged pupils is significantly higher than the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) is significantly above the national average.
- Attainment on entry is well below the national average.
- Since the last inspection the school has become part of the All Saints Catholic Collegiate Multi-Academy Company (MAC), which includes St Thomas More Catholic Academy (secondary) and three other Catholic primary academies. A new principal and RE subject leader have been appointed. A significant number of new staff have also joined the school.

Main Findings

- Catholic life, RE and collective worship are all good.
- Leaders and governors are committed to providing the best Catholic education for pupils.
- The whole school community contributes well to the Catholic life of the school, which they see as a priority. The pastoral care of pupils, rooted in the teaching of Jesus that we should love one another, is a strength of all staff.
- The spiritual development of the school is supported by its many opportunities for meaningful collective worship. This worship is increasingly being led by pupils.

- The school works well with the All Saints Catholic Collegiate MAC and has led improvements to the Catholic life, RE and collective worship of the MAC. This has befitted both the school and the Multi Academy.
- The monitoring of Catholic life, collective worship and RE gives leaders an overview of standards and has led to improved provision. However, it would benefit from an increase in rigour and frequency.
- Teaching in RE is good and teachers work hard to make lessons engaging for pupils. As a result, pupils make good progress from early years.
- Teachers' and leaders' skills in the use of pupil assessment needs to be improved to advance teaching and learning even further.
- Due to significant changes in staffing, the school's leadership is still rightly addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

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

- The Catholic life of the school and pupils' spiritual and vocational development are all good. The pupils' moral development is outstanding.
- The whole school community of St Maria Goretti Catholic Academy proudly follows its four rules: *Respect for God; Respect for other people; Respect for other people's property; Respect yourself*. In doing so they live out their school mission: *With respect for God and united in faith, we place service before self to inspire hearts and minds. By achieving together through our love and faith, we place Christ at the centre of all we do*.
- All staff are highly committed to the Catholic life of the school, and a number of staff have enrolled in a MAC run programme, *Journey in Faith*. This excellent support has contributed to some staff becoming Catholics.
- The caring relationships between pupils, staff and parents truly reflect the school mission. This is a strength of the school.
- Staff give great time and energy to help pupils form and maintain good relationships. The use of peer mediators on the playground and Time to Talk areas in class have been well used by pupils. As a result, pupils' behaviour towards staff and other pupils is very positive.
- The school has a strong commitment to its most vulnerable pupils. This is seen in its employment of key pastoral workers, who value and enhance the Catholic life of the school. Pupils and parents greatly value this support and care.
- The school provides a stimulating environment that celebrates its Catholic mission. The priority given to places of reflection and prayer around school have continued even during recent building works.
- Pupils and staff contribute very generously to a number of charities such as CAFOD, The Good Shepherd Appeal, Douglas Macmillan Hospice (a local charity) and to the parish. Although pupils understand that it is good to help others, their understanding of how this is connected to Catholic values and virtues needs to be developed further. The recent introduction of a Mini Vinnies team will help the school to improve this understanding.
- Pupils recognise that a vocation is a calling from God. The school supports pupils well as they discern what this calling could be. Attendance at a Vocations Mass and visits from outside speakers have contributed to pupils' reflections.
- The introduction of the Catholic Schools' Pupil Profile has helped pupils to think about Catholic virtues. The school recognises that this resource could

now be used more effectively to aid pupils' understanding and expression of Catholic values and virtues.

- Last year the school introduced class saints. This initiative has been used successfully by staff to teach pupils about the values Christians try to live by. Pupils are keen to live by these values in their own lives.
- Although each pupil is a member of a House, the lives of the House saints are less well known by pupils than their class saints. The school is, rightly, considering how to improve pupils' knowledge of these saints.
- Pupils are involved in evaluating the Catholic life of the school through the work of the spiritual leaders. Over the last few years Year 6 pupils have evaluated the prayer areas in school and made valuable suggestions about how they can be improved.
- The role of pupil spiritual leaders is now being enthusiastically developed throughout the school. Since the start of the school year pupils of all ages have had many positive experiences of planning and leading class collective worship. A number of these acts of worship have been recorded in class Catholic life books. Even the youngest pupils are involved as they choose religious objects to put on a prayer focus.
- The school has also established a Catholic life working party that involves parents, staff and pupils to help monitor the Catholic life of the school.
- All Year 6 pupils have a leadership role within school. They are proud of these roles and understand that as they carry them out they give service to others in their school community.
- The school provides very good opportunities for collective worship and pupils respond well to these experiences.
- At the start of each week the headteacher leads a whole school Gospel assembly. These help pupils to reflect on the liturgical seasons of the Church and how to follow Gospel values. A weekly celebration assembly provides many opportunities for pupils to be praised for their God given talents and faith-filled lives. Older pupils are confident in leading much of this assembly.
- *Wednesday Word* collective worship is a strength of the school. This worship takes place in small phase gatherings and is thoughtfully planned by staff. As a result, a prayerful environment is created that helps pupils to pray deeply.
- The school prepares and leads a parish Mass regularly. Pupils are very well prepared to participate fully in this celebration of the Eucharist. They read and act as altar servers with confidence. All pupils sing joyfully.
- The school has very good links with the local parish. Parishioners are delighted to be part of school led weekday Masses and pupils are equally welcomed at parish Sunday Masses.
- The parish and school have developed a strong sacramental programme that both parents and pupils appreciate. This is very well supported by the parish priest and a member of staff, who is also a parish catechist. Some Polish pupils receive the sacraments for the first time at Catholic churches within the Polish community. This is supported by the school and some members of staff kindly take time to attend these events. This is much appreciated by the Polish families.
- All adults are committed to creating a prayerful atmosphere as pupils enter places for collective worship. They support pupils and model how to be still and reflective. Consequently, pupils' behaviour and attitudes during all acts of collective worship are excellent. From the very youngest pupils, every child shows the greatest respect and reverence during times of prayer.
- Pupils are keen to respond to thought provoking questions during collective worship. However, their answers could be developed further. The school is aware of this need and are active in helping pupils to reflect more deeply.

- The school is making very good efforts to ensure pupils know all the appropriate traditional prayers of the Church. These prayers are made available to pupils in class and to families on the school website, and the schools' social media Facebook and Twitter accounts.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the Church's liturgical year. When talking with the inspectors they understood that the green cloth on their class prayer tables showed that it was ordinary time and that it would soon change to purple for advent.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership of Catholic life and Collective Worship

Leadership

- The headteacher, acting deputy headteacher and governors are all deeply committed to Catholic education at St Maria Goretti Academy and across the MAC. Leaders ensure that the Catholic life of the school is always a priority for whole school improvement. As a result, all staff have a Catholic life performance management target.
- Leaders have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development regarding Catholic life. This knowledge is based upon a range of monitoring activities that include a MAC led peer review. The previous executive headteacher and a Specialist Leader of Education. (SLE) both took an active part in this review. Meetings were also held with the RE link governor.
- The headteacher, and previously the executive headteacher, regularly inform governors about the key areas for development through termly reports.
- Some monitoring that has taken place has led to improvements in provision. For example, a review of Wednesday Word collective worship, by the head of school and executive headteacher last year, resulted in a change of delivery from whole school worship to worship in phases.
- Although there is currently good monitoring of Catholic life, this could be more securely rooted in robust, regular, formal monitoring.
- The school has very good working relationship with the other schools within the MAC. Representatives from each academy meet termly to evaluate Catholic life. This has supported the development of Catholic life within all schools.
- A number of joint MAC events strongly support the spiritual development and understanding of Catholic life for all staff. This collaboration is a strength of the school and is highly regarded by all staff across the MAC.
- Leaders and governors place a strong emphasis on staff induction to a Catholic school and staff spiritual development, and this is a strength of the school. Staff who are new to teaching in a Catholic school receive a comprehensive induction to Catholic life and collective worship. Staff are actively encouraged to attend the MAC led Journey in Faith programme.
- The headteacher and governors have correctly identified the need to increase the number of Catholic pupils who transition to Catholic secondary schools. The strong links with the MAC secondary school will, hopefully, assist them in this area of development.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Leadership, outcomes from and provision for religious education

- The leadership, outcomes and provision for religious education are all good.

- Leaders have a good overall understanding of the strengths and areas for development of teaching in RE. However, this could be improved by increasing the frequency and rigour of monitoring.
- Greater rigour is especially needed when monitoring the timetabling of RE lessons. At present a minority of classes are teaching RE in one session, rather than in two separate lessons, as recommended by the diocese. On being made aware of this recommendation, the school has plans to implement it immediately.
- Although the school assesses pupils termly in line with diocesan recommendations, not all teachers' judgements are secure. The school has already identified this as an area for improvement and has plans to improve staff assessment skills.
- Senior leaders also need to improve the analysis of assessment data to make sure it accurately identifies any groups who are underachieving.
- Pupils enter the school with little or no knowledge or understanding of RE. There is rapid progress by the end of Reception class. Overall pupils make very good progress in RE and reach expected standards of attainment in Year 6. However, progress and attainment in lower Key Stage 2 has not been as high as other phases.
- Teaching in RE is rarely less than good and can be outstanding. Most teachers plan lessons that are interesting and varied. As a result, pupils are engaged and eager to learn in RE. Where teaching has been less than good, senior leaders have put appropriate measures in place to improve teaching and learning.
- Teachers' subject knowledge in RE is generally good. However, the school has accurately identified that some staff who are new to teaching in a Catholic school require further training.
- The school has accurately identified the need for a greater depth of response from pupils when learning from RE. The school is encouraging pupils to explain how their learning in RE impacts on their own lives. This emphasis needs to continue as a focus for all teaching.
- Some staff, but especially those who are taking part in the *Journey of Faith* programme, are generous in sharing their own experiences of spiritual development with pupils. This not only engages pupils in discussion but helps pupils to ask searching questions about their own faith.
- The school has a strong focus on developing religious vocabulary across the school. This focus is particularly well established in Nursery which prepares pupils well for Reception class.
- The introduction of Godly Play in Key Stage 1 has been extremely successful. It not only improves pupils engagement with RE but also stimulates pupils' questioning and discussion. Practitioners in Year 2 have made excellent use of this resource, especially to help less able pupils. The introduction of Godly Play to Key Stage 2 in September this year has been well received by pupils. This resource now needs to be embedded in this phase.
- Additional adults are used effectively to support all pupils' learning. Teaching assistants' use of post-it notes, for example to record responses during Godly Play, provide an excellent assessment of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils have a good awareness of other faiths and religions. This awareness is enhanced through pupils' participation in a Cultural Diversity Week and collaboration with St Gregory's Catholic Academy.

- Relationship and Sex Education is taught well in accordance with the teachings of the Church. It has been carefully tailored to meet the needs of pupils.

Recommendations

In order to improve the school should:

- Embed the opportunities for pupil spiritual leaders to plan and lead collective worship and the Catholic life of the school.
- Develop the skills of teachers and leaders to accurately assess pupil attainment in RE and to analyse assessment data to inform improvement planning.
- Increase the frequency and rigour of the formal monitoring and evaluation of Catholic life, RE and collective worship.