



# Archdiocese of Birmingham

## INSPECTION REPORT

### ST MARIA GORETTI CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL STOKE-ON-TRENT

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Inspection dates 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> November 2012  
Reporting Inspector Mr Joseph Skivington

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3-11 years
Number on roll	229
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mr Ray Chadwick
School address	Aylesbury Road Bucknall Stoke on Trent ST2 0LY
Telephone number	01782 234737
E-mail address	stmariag@sgfl.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	February 2011
DFE School number	861/3416
Unique Reference Number	124325

**Executive Headteacher** Mrs Margaret Yates

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DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



## Evidence

The inspection was carried out by 1 Diocesan Inspector. The focus of the inspection was on the effectiveness and use of the school's self evaluation of religious education (RE) and Catholic life. To validate the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation of teaching and learning, the inspector observed 8 RE lessons. In addition the inspector completed a work scrutiny and held a discussion with pupils to evaluate the impact of teaching on their learning over time. He held meetings with the chair of governors, staff, and parish priest. He observed a whole school assembly, the presentation of the Catholic life of the school, and pupils' behaviour. He looked at a range of evidence related to the school's self evaluation such as RAISEonline, the development plan and teachers' planning. Alongside the validation of school self evaluation, the inspector gathered evidence about assessment for learning, evidence which will be shared with other diocesan schools.

## Information about the school

St Maria Goretti is an average size Catholic primary school situated at the heart of a large council estate alongside the parish church. There are 229 pupils on roll, of whom 42% are Catholic. Pupils come from challenging socio economic backgrounds. There is a growing number of children with English as an additional language (EAL), with 50% Polish origin in the Foundation stage. The school works closely with St Gregory's Catholic primary under an executive headteacher over both schools. The role of RE co-ordinator is shared between a senior leader and another member of staff. Pupils' prior religious knowledge and experiences on entry are limited.

## Main Finding

In its self evaluation, St Maria Goretti judges itself to be a good school and, given the evidence from the inspection, this is certainly the case. All pupils benefit from and contribute with commitment and involvement in every area of school life, and consequently to its vibrant Catholic ethos. Their response to the good provision for collective worship is good. The provision and outcomes from the religious education programme, both teaching and learning, are good. The support from the governors is increasingly effective. The leadership is inspiring and has proven its effectiveness and ability, in a very short time, to move the school on its journey towards excellence. Indispensable to this rapid improvement has been the dedicated leadership of the RE co-ordinators, with their clear, measurable objectives and attention to detail, which are providing teachers with challenging but supportive guidance. The governors and senior leadership team know the school well and have clear, measurable goals and objectives, which have their origin in very effective procedures for monitoring provision and outcomes. It is a fully inclusive school and takes in and perseveres with the needy, the vulnerable, and the troubled, with real care and love. It has benefited enormously from the close collaboration with its partner school St Gregory's.

## School self evaluation

The school uses effective self evaluation procedures through frequent reviews and reflection on its current practice, which are assessed in detail, and lead to achievable aims and measurable objectives which are incorporated into the school development plan. It can demonstrate examples of its effectiveness, for instance, the impact of assessment for learning, or the impact of leadership and management on school improvement, with greater attention to detail and emphasis on accountability. The governors and senior leadership recognise the vital importance of encouraging frequent feedback and reflection on the school's mission, a revision of which is part of its development plan and will involve all the pupils as well as staff and parents. The governors have undergone the relevant diocesan

training, and all statutory requirements are fully met. They are knowledgeable about the day to day life of the school, in particular through the now more frequent reports on RE from the link governor.

The improved good teaching and learning of RE is monitored regularly through subject review, lesson observations, and book trawls. These are programmed and carried out, with already discernible impact on improved performance and outcomes throughout the school, for example in the better presentation and quality of written work. There is a good balance between the content of RE and the pupils' grasp of what it means in their daily lives, evident in their good behaviour and attitudes towards others.

The curriculum is balanced and accessible to all pupils. It effectively provides pupils with a growing insight into the life and message of Jesus as well as the central beliefs that Catholics hold, and the link between belief and action. The well planned and presented liturgical life of the school is enriching as the Church's calendar unfolds and is celebrated. Evaluation is being made an integral aspect of reviewing the quality of collective worship, another sign of the impact of clear leadership and management. The relationships education programme is likewise well planned, as is the sacramental preparation programme in tandem with the parish. Pupils' knowledge of other major religions is sound. Pupils are given many opportunities to exercise their generosity and they do organise much charity work in the local community and beyond.

There is a growing climate of self evaluation and review which touches every area of Catholic life and RE, and it is this attention to detail and a restlessness to improve even further which has resulted in a remarkable change in such a short time. Every area identified at the last inspection has been comprehensively tackled and being transformed into strengths. There is a real sense that leadership is on a mission to make this school the best possible, and the school is correct in judging its capacity to improve and sustain this high quality of education as good. The school sees the training of middle leaders as vital to sustaining these standards for the future

### **Overall effectiveness of the school<sup>1</sup>**

Outcomes for pupils in RE are good, closely linked to the good quality of the teaching they receive, and the fresh, enthusiastic, challenging approach of the RE co-ordinating team. Pupils' base assessment scores in RE indicate prior knowledge and religious experience to be low. Pupils make rapid progress in the Foundation classes so that by the end of Key Stage 1 they are broadly meeting expected attainment levels. This solid progress continues in Key Stage 2 so that by the end of Year 6 they are in line with expectations and some have exceeded expectation. It is too early to suggest better than good progress over time, but all the new initiatives and planning are making a real impact and point to a fast moving and improved trajectory towards excellence in the near future'

Pupils are able to speak with confidence about their learning in RE and have a good grasp of the main tenets of the Faith and the significance and efficacy of prayer. Pupils with particular learning needs are well catered for and make the same good progress as the others. The teaching is making good headway in encouraging independent, peer and group learning so that the pupils are becoming more enthusiastic and motivated learners. They are unanimous in saying they enjoy RE lessons and appreciate that they have the opportunity to feedback to their teachers on how best they learn in lessons. Their positive behaviour in lessons and around the school contributes much to their learning. Achievement and progress are both good,

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<sup>1</sup> As the quality of the school self evaluation has been affirmed, the judgements in this section of the report conform to those of the school.

The pupils through their time at St Maria's absorb and internalise the attitudes and values inspired by the message of Jesus. They well understand the connection between these and how they should act towards others and behave in their own lives. They are quick to praise, to thank and to forgive. Every pupil regardless of faith, or none, feels a valued member of the school community, and participates reverently in prayer and liturgy. All pupils know the child friendly mission statement and can explain their role in it with pride and enthusiasm. They contribute well to the Catholic life of the school through pupil voice and voting pads, and have discussed liturgies, but would like further opportunity to meet to discuss their ideas and role in collective worship and plan for specific events, for instance, the Year of Faith. The school council is proactive and invited into the school's decision-making process, for example, recruitment.

Pupils' response to prayer invitations and the rich provision is good, with an enthusiastic participation in liturgies and assemblies and opportunities for prayer. They are beginning to take the lead in planning and presenting their own class assemblies, as well as being willing servers, readers and singers at Mass in the parish church. There is room to develop further their skills of planning and presenting their own liturgies and becoming animators in the school as they get older. Prayer is undoubtedly an important part of their daily lives. They pray well, even the youngest, and their own compositions reflect their growing maturity and understanding. They sing with enthusiasm and feeling, as witnessed in the assembly during the inspection. This response sits well with the school's own self evaluation and demonstrates their growing ownership of Catholic life and the school's vibrant life of prayer and worship.

Provision for RE is good, with now much improved good teaching observed and some outstanding features noted. A supportive induction programme for pupils who have little prior knowledge allows them to become more quickly acquainted with key ideas about the Catholic Faith and at the same time provides a base line assessment from which progress can be tracked. The best teaching involved the pupils fully in their own learning and encouraged independent and peer work. They do the work while the teacher skilfully steers and shapes their learning. The school is alert to the fact that teachers' subject knowledge needs to be deepened in order to allow pupils, especially the more able, to achieve their full potential. Teaching assistants working with individual pupils provide feedback at the end of the lesson to indicate how their charges have made progress or what still needs to be gone over again.

Planning is effective when it takes account of prior learning particularly in the case of setting lesson objectives, which target the learning needs and abilities of individual pupils. On occasion more differentiated writing tasks would challenge the more able, and support the less able pupils, to really fulfil their potential. The written tasks themselves need to show more extended, reflective writing, an opportunity for the pupils to respond at length to what they are learning. The marking of written work is proving an effective tool to show pupils how they can improve and creates a formative dialogue between teacher and pupil. It is however inconsistent across the school. Also, the quality of pupils' written responses needs to be addressed for marking to achieve its full impact.

Assessment procedures are being successfully embedded and moving on to provide for the tracking of individual progress, with teachers becoming increasingly confident at assessment using the level indicators, benefitting enormously from the frequent joint assessment and moderation meetings with the partner school. This is leading to the sharper use of pupil data to inform lesson objectives and teaching strategies. Impact over time is yet to become fully evident.

The curriculum is balanced and accessible to all. The school follows the diocesan programme, *Learning and Growing as the People of God*. The new relationships programme is in line with Catholic guidelines. At the last inspection multi-faith knowledge and experiences were an area for development, addressed so successfully that they are now a strength, with a week devoted to other religions as well as visitors and visits to other places of worship. Pupils can speak with some understanding of similarities and differences between religions. There is a close link with Thailand. Pupils in Year 6, also in Year 5 and Year 3, are able to take fruitful advantage of opportunities for retreat. Parish and school work together to run the well planned sacramental preparation programmes.

Provision for collective worship is good, with close links to the adjacent church. The school is promoting ministry and the Year of Faith with a high profile. The well planned liturgies follow the Church's liturgical year, and are echoed by some excellent displays in classrooms and around the school, and traditional Catholic practices such as the Rosary in October and Stations of the Cross. Prayer groups and the use of prayer bags are successfully encouraged and space set aside for quiet reflection. ICT is used effectively both in lessons and assemblies to good effect.

### **Recommendations**

Provide training and support for teachers both in terms of securing and deepening their RE subject knowledge and of developing their assessment and moderating skills even further.

Involve all pupils in developing the skills of planning and presenting their own liturgies and assemblies.



November 2012

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Dear Parents and Carers

**Section 48 (Diocesan) Inspection of St Maria Goretti Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent**

I am writing this letter to share with you the findings of the diocesan inspection of your children's school. Diocesan inspection now explores in detail the school's own view of itself as expressed in its self-evaluation. For this reason, much of the report is more technical than used to be the case. You are still entitled to have a copy of the full report should you want one and it will be available on the school website or by request from the school office.

The school has a strong distinctive Catholic ethos, which informs all that it does. The present leadership is making an inspiring and significant impact on developing its Catholicity. This is based solidly on clear vision and self evaluation, which will sustain and continue to improve even further the high quality education it provides. Pupils speak very highly of the school and are using the opportunities to become involved and take ownership of their own education remarkably well. Their attainment meets expectations well; progress and achievement are now good. The pupils enjoy their work in RE and are eager and valued members of the school community. They respond well to the good provision for collective worship. The quality of teaching and purposeful learning in RE is good.

I have recommended that the school should enable staff to deepen and further secure their RE subject knowledge, and advance their assessment and moderating skills. Also that all pupils have the opportunity to plan and present their own liturgies and assemblies, building on the emerging good practice I observed.

I met and talked with many of the pupils, whom I found were invariably welcoming and courteous, and I was very impressed by the good contribution they make to the school community and their own education. They are a credit to the school and to their families and those who care for them.

It was a pleasure and privilege to inspect St Maria's and I wish it every success on its journey towards excellence.

Yours sincerely

Joseph Skivington  
Diocesan Inspector