



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST NICHOLAS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

BOLDMERE

(Part of the John Paul II Multi-Academy, Sutton Coldfield)

Inspection dates 20th - 21st March 2014
Reporting Inspector Teresa Quick

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Academy
Age range of pupils	4-11 years
Number on roll	212
Appropriate authority	The Academy Board of Directors
Chair of Academy Committee	Mrs Patricia Platt
School address	Jockey Road Boldmere Sutton Coldfield Birmingham B73 5US
Telephone number	0121 3552649
E-mail address	enquiry@st-nicholas.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	March 2009
DFE School number	330/3403
Unique Reference Number	140529

Headteacher Mr Matthew Emery



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 3 full RE lessons with the headteacher. 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. She held meetings with the chair of the school's academy committee (who is also vice-chair of the academy's Board of Directors), the link academy representative for RE and the chair of the school's academy curriculum committee, staff, and parish priest. She observed a prayer service, an assembly and attended Mass and the Stations of the Cross. She also 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. She looked at a range of evidence related to the school's self evaluation such as RAISEonline, the development plan, teachers' planning, and learning journals.

Information about the school

St Nicholas is an average size Catholic primary school serving the parish of St Nicholas, Boldmere in Sutton Coldfield. It is part of the John Paul II Multi-Academy with 3 other primary schools and the local high school. The number of Catholic pupils is currently 99%. This is an oversubscribed Catholic school with many parish Catholic children unable to gain admission to the school. Boldmere is a predominantly middle class area with good housing and high employment. The pupils are predominantly of white heritage. This is above the national average and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The numbers supported at school action plus or having a statement of special needs is well below average. Attainment on entry is broadly in line with the national average overall.

Main Finding

In its self evaluation the school rightly considers itself to be an outstanding Catholic school with outstanding teaching, learning and attainment in religious education. The Catholicity of the school is outstanding and the school's judgement is fully justified in that respect. The curriculum for religious education is well delivered with a strong commitment by all staff. The ethos and pupils' spiritual, moral and vocational development are outstanding. Behaviour is exemplary. The leadership of the subject is outstanding. Self evaluation is rooted in intimate knowledge and awareness of the school and analysis of performance in RE and detailed formal observation of the many and various aspects of the Catholic life of the school.

School self evaluation

The headteacher and the senior leaders have a thorough and intimate knowledge of the school. This comes from the subject leader's long, outstanding and dedicated service within the school and the exemplary leadership of this Catholic school by the headteacher as well as an effective and knowledgeable academy committee. Judgements that they make about the Catholic life of the school, the quality of collective worship, liturgy, spiritual and moral development of the pupils, and the extent to which pupils benefit from the Catholic ethos are accurate. They are supported by the views of parents and pupils. The first section of the school improvement plan is RE and the Catholic life of the school. The priorities are a correct assessment of need.

Judgements made about the Catholic life of the school are securely evidenced as a result of careful regular formal monitoring, observing and recording of assemblies, class prayer services and the many and various liturgies held by the school. Questionnaires, which include questions on the Catholic life of the school and the religious education, are completed annually by parents and also further questionnaires are given to parents in relation to their child's sacramental preparation and other aspects of the Catholic life of the school. The analysis and actions the school will take are fed back to parents. These then feature in the future planning as there is a clear picture of perceived need. Future planning to provide the best possible Catholic life is a priority within the school.

Academy committee representatives are well informed about the Catholic life and religious education by both the headteacher in his reporting to academy committee representatives and with their meetings with the subject leader. They are actively involved in school and attend the many liturgies. Reports on the RE visits are written for the academy committee by the link academy committee representative for RE. With the subject leader on the committee the academy curriculum committee monitor the s48 self evaluation document as their first item each half term.

The school's judgement of learning in RE is accurate. It is based on excellent processes that are in place for the monitoring and evaluation of the subject. The performance in RE is linked to similar performance in English across the school. Analysis of the attainment of pupils is carefully recorded. Baseline assessments show a decline in the awareness of the faith on entry to the school. Rapid improvement takes place consistently in pupils' knowledge and understanding. This is as a result of teaching being of a consistently very high quality throughout the school and assessment for learning is firmly established. Pupils enjoy their RE lessons. The school's knowledge of the pupils' response to RE and the Catholic life is accurate being based as a result of regular pupil interviews which are carefully documented.

The staff are given explicit times when they are to assess the pupils. The records of these assessments are given to the subject leader who together with the teachers monitors the progression and analyses the outcomes. Action is taken on the outcomes of the monitoring. The few pupils needing more support are identified and action taken. Pupils are identified for differing support and individual targets given in particular at the end of written work. There is continuous review. The headteacher and subject leader have gained a clear knowledge of the class groups. Systems are being developed further to take into account the findings and enhance the knowledge to support children's learning further.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

Outcomes from religious education by Year 6 are very good and generally above with some pupils well above diocesan expectations. Pupils are encouraged to become individual independent thinkers. Progress is outstanding. There is consistent development year on year. All pupils including those with SEND achieve well. Pupils in Year 2 have a very high knowledge and understanding of RE for their age. They speak meaningfully about the faith. Many of the pupils come from families where the faith is strong which is supporting the teaching within the school.

Relationships throughout the school are excellent. There is an excellent Catholic ethos within the school supported by all members of the school community. Teachers, academy committee representatives, parents and pupils all play their part. Academy committee representatives totally support and are actively involved in promoting the school's ethos.

¹ 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.

They are well informed about the Catholic life and religious education. The ethos of the school, the Catholic life and the teaching and learning in RE supports the outstanding spiritual, moral and vocational development. This is a harmonious community where pupils work, play and pray happily together.

Pupils show respect for the other pupils and the adults with whom they come in contact. They understand the mission of the school. Behaviour is excellent both in lessons and around the school. Pupils are polite and welcoming and proud of their school. Prayer is an important part of the school's life and is said at four points in the day. The approaches to prayer life provided by the school are excellent. Pupils take an active part in the liturgies from a young age and, in Key Stage 2, are able to plan and organise the class prayer services and lead liturgies in church for the parish. The parish priest is well known to the pupils and contributes very well to the life of the school. Links between school and the parish are exemplary. Pupils show concern for those less fortunate than themselves. They are keen and generous in their support for local, national and global causes.

Provision is outstanding. The quality of teaching is outstanding and ensures that pupils make consistent progress as they journey through the school. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the RE curriculum. There is excellent support from the subject leader and very good co-operative peer support. Planning meets the needs of individual pupils. Very good support is provided by the teaching assistants to support the learning. There are opportunities for differing types of written work. Pupils' books are regularly monitored. Marking is positive and supports individual learning. There is very good planning for RE which is regularly monitored ensuring consistent progression. Systems of assessment and monitoring are excellent and are being developed to enhance knowledge to support children's learning further. The school's mission underpins all that the school does. The school uses the *Diocesan Strategy for Religious Education* as the basis for learning. The curriculum is enhanced well with visits and retreats. There are clear links between RE and the other subjects. Art, music and ICT are used well to support learning in the subject. The family life programme used is the diocesan *All that I am*. Pupils are taught a respect for other people's faiths and cultures. There is limited teaching about other religions or visits to places of worship of other faiths. The RE curriculum provides very well for pupils' spiritual, moral and vocational development.

St Nicholas' correctly judges itself to be an outstanding Catholic school which is led by a highly effective senior management team and governing body. This may be an outstanding Catholic school but driven by their desire to provide the best possible religious education and Catholic life for the pupils and the knowledge of where they can make learning even better, the school has the capacity for further sustained improvement.

Recommendations

In order to improve further the school should:-

- Further develop and adapt the curriculum for RE to ensure a greater awareness of other faiths and cultures.
- Develop links within the MAC to develop and share best practice across schools



March 2014

Diocesan Education Service,
Don Bosco House,
Coventry Road,
Coleshill,
B46 3EA

Dear Parents and Carers

**Section 48 (Diocesan) Inspection of St Nicholas Catholic Primary School,
March 20th-21st 2014**

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 is an outstanding Catholic school. There is an excellent Catholic ethos where every member of the school community is valued and respected. The school's mission underpins all that the school does. The Catholic life of the school is carefully monitored with the leadership seeking ways to make it even more meaningful for your children. Pupils take an active part in the Masses and liturgies whether for the whole school or in their classrooms. They are happy to plan, organise and lead liturgies for fellow pupils in school and lead liturgies for members of the parish congregation in Church. There are outstanding links between the school and the parish with both the school and the parish benefiting from the excellent leadership of the school and in RE in particular.

The children make excellent progress in religious education with many pupils reaching standards which are above what could be expected of them. The Catholic curriculum is excellent and taught so that pupils are interested and actively involved in their learning. Pupils are proud of their school. They feel safe and happy and know they are listened to and cared for. This is a harmonious community where pupils work, play and pray happily together. Teachers encourage the children to behave well in a mature way both in class and around the school. The pupils are confident, polite and welcoming. The teachers and the academy committee regularly review what is learned in religious education and the Catholic life of the school to ensure that your children receive the best possible religious education.

I have recommended that the school further develop and adapt the curriculum for RE to ensure a greater level of awareness of other faiths and cultures and develop links within the MAC to share best practice across the schools.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time in the school, being able to see the children at work, play and prayer. It has been a privilege and pleasure to inspect your school. The children, governors and staff made me feel most welcome. The children are a credit to the school, to their families and to those who care for them.

Yours sincerely

Teresa Quick
Diocesan Inspector