



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST JOHN'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL GREAT HAYWOOD

Inspection dates	28 th - 29 th November 2013
Reporting Inspector	Paul Nutt

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4-11 years
Number on roll	83
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Bernard Corben
School address	School Lane Great Haywood Staffordshire ST18 0SL
Telephone number	01889 808190
E-mail address	office@st-johns-greathaywood.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	November 2008
DFE School number	860 3460
Unique Reference Number	124353

Headteacher	Mrs Rose Brookes
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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 3 full RE lessons, 2 with the headteacher, 1 with the headteacher as RE subject leader. He also visited the Foundation Years class. 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 and RE link governor, the parish priest, and spoke informally with teachers during lesson feedback meetings. He observed a school assembly, a form assembly and a presentation assembly well attended by parents. He 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. He looked at a range of evidence related to the school's self evaluation such as RAISEonline, school and RE development plans, teachers' planning, and link adviser reports.

Information about the school

St John's is a small Catholic primary school of 83 pupils with mixed-age classes, situated in the parish of St John in Great Haywood, Staffordshire. It serves a community within a 10 mile radius, with very little social deprivation. The number of Catholic pupils is currently 63%. The proportion of ethnic minority pupils is well below average, as are the number of pupils eligible for free school meals and those with special needs and/or disabilities. Attainment on entry is higher than the national average overall.

Main Finding

In its self-evaluation St John's judges itself to be a very good school. The evidence gathered during the inspection broadly supports this evaluation, and gives indications that there is capacity towards a higher judgement, with prayer life and much of the teaching especially strong. The school has moved forward significantly from the situation reflected in its last section 48 Inspection. Most of the recommendations have been implemented, as evidenced in all teaching being good or better, with at least 50% outstanding. However, the entrance hall and other areas of the school, including the hall which is used for assemblies, do not proclaim clearly the Catholicity of the school. The RE curriculum is progressive and age/stage appropriate, with a measured balance between learning about and learning from religion. Further focused work on other faiths and vocations would enhance pupils' learning opportunities and understanding. Religious education and Catholic life are both well led by the headteacher, and the school's evaluation is well founded on much supporting evidence, though this was not always easily accessible. There is a high level of involvement and reverence shown by pupils in all forms of collective worship. The staff make good use of the opportunities for informal collaboration afforded in a small school. Pupil progress and attainment are good.

School self evaluation

The school's evaluation of its Catholic life and religious education is broadly accurate. It is overall a very good school. There are processes in place for monitoring and evaluating Religious education and Catholic life; of necessity, because the school is so small, and the headteacher has a regular teaching commitment, these take place less frequently than in larger schools. This does, however, afford opportunities for frequent, less formal collaboration and monitoring. For example, a short-term individual learning programme for RE was in place for a recently-arrived Class 2 pupil from a non-Catholic school, planned

jointly by his teacher and her Class 1 colleague. There were significant links between lessons observed and collective worship during the two days, consistent with weekend Mass, the liturgical year and the life of John the Baptist. Lesson observations, complemented by more regular learning walks, are conducted formally once a year by the head, who is also RE subject leader. The recorded results, which were available during the inspection and confirm that all teaching is consistently at least good, have been fed back to individual colleagues and used to inform performance management cycles and school improvement planning. Each teacher has an RE specific annual target. All are involved in a termly programme of work scrutiny and moderation, included in the school calendar. Staff meet as a group to discuss and agree levels for pupils' work in each class. They develop annotated exemplars for consistency and continuity; a centrally-held resource available to the inspector, which provided reliable comparisons with planning, tracking and assessment records. These meetings play a significant part in the cycle of monitoring and evaluation, and outcomes are recorded for presentation to governors and future developments.

Assessment procedures are consistent across the school and can be confirmed as good. There is a combination of highlighted diocesan records in pupils' books, self-assessment sheets completed by pupils, and teacher records as part of a review cycle. As explained by staff, these are used to monitor progress, identify issues and fine tune future planning. Many pupils were eager and able to talk about their learning and progress. Teachers, in all lessons observed, used a range of questioning to monitor learning and progress. Input from all stakeholders, including pupils, governors and parents, is sought on learning opportunities and outcomes through questionnaires, surveys, newsletters and minuted meetings. The results, again available during the inspection, are used to prepare termly CPD meetings for staff, opportunities for targeted professional development and discussion of outcomes to inform future planning for school improvement. The headteacher reports termly to governors, minutes of which, and occasional reports by the link governor for RE, were made available on request.

Baseline records indicate that most pupils enter the school with very weak knowledge and understanding in RE. Close collaboration between class teachers and support staff can be seen in medium- and short-term planning and evaluation, and confirmed in conversation with individual staff during the inspection and lessons observed. As a result attainment data indicates that outcomes in RE are closer to other core subjects by the end of Key Stage 1, and are broadly comparable with literacy by Year 6. The school's judgement of the quality of learning and progress in RE as good is accurate, as indicated particularly in discussions with children, who speak positively of their lessons and teachers and evince a good range of understanding. This judgement was shown to apply to all groups within the school, though their ability to relate learning to their own lives is less strong.

Many pupils contribute significantly to the Catholic life of the school and benefit accordingly, as they themselves confirmed. The school motto is at the centre of much of its daily life and the high quality of behaviour, almost total absence of inappropriate behaviour and interpersonal relationships at all levels witnessed during the visit. These contribute to all forms of collective worship, which is adjudged outstanding by the school. This is an overestimation at present, though it is certainly good. Pupils are involved in preparation and often take a lead in delivery. In the three forms of worship observed, there was coherence: the school prayer, prayer appropriate to the season, time for reflection, links to the life and mission of John the Baptist, Advent and preparation for Christmas. Each gathering had additional elements, but pupils behaved with reverence yet participated with enthusiasm, consistent with the school's self evaluation. There were a significant number of parents present for the celebration assembly; they attested to the quality of collective worship. Regular monitoring is largely informal, conducted by the head and governors, who include other staff in discussions of the school's programme of assemblies and Masses. The parish

priest judged it to be good in Masses and sacramental preparation. Pupils spoke of their enjoyment and its value in understanding aspects of faith and scripture. This is an area of school life to which the recently-arrived parish priest could make a most valuable contribution. Whilst planning and preparation are in place by discussion, collective worship forms part of the termly headteacher's report to governors, the occasion for formal evaluation and improvement identification. The school's evaluation of prayer life as outstanding was confirmed as reliable during the visit.

Leadership and management in the school are very good, consistent with its own evaluation, notably in RE and the place of faith in other curriculum areas. The headteacher has a clear vision of the nature of Catholic education, the importance of raising standards and the promotion of individual faith development for pupils and staff. She incorporates this into her planning for assemblies and performance management processes. Her strong and committed leadership is evident at all levels within the school; however, in spite of the inclusive and collaborative ethos, which is confirmed by staff, the governors will need to address the current absence of any other postholder for RE as she is retiring next summer. There are regular informal discussions and evaluations of Catholic life by the headteacher and her staff. Indeed, staff are encouraged to alert the head and colleagues to any ideas or developments. A recent whole-school amendment to assessment was made in this way, using evidence of successful trialling in one class. Termly scheduled meetings for all staff are a key forum for this, as shown by agendas. Evidence is considered of pupil involvement in activities, feedback from parental and pupil questionnaires and surveys, and the school council: reports of this process are included in the termly reports to governors by the headteacher. Individual governors visit the school, and some have been involved in learning walks and observations. They monitor and evaluate the work of the school; receive reports to committees; oversee the production of documentation.

Teaching is secure and well planned. The lessons seen revealed broad agreement with internal evaluations and records of internal observations over time. There were some examples of outstanding teaching. The head has a clear understanding of current practice in school. Assessments in RE are structured, books marked regularly, and effective use is made of this information for planning. There are self-assessment sheets in exercise books, which are used regularly and consistently to enhance learning and progress. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge, and use a wide range of strategies, including IT, music, prayer and scripture, to secure engagement and good progress. All children benefit significantly from the breadth and appropriateness of the school's curriculum, as well as the many opportunities to develop a maturing understanding of their faith. This judgement was borne out during the inspection, notably in conversations with children, staff and governors. RE and Catholic life are audited annually; the outcomes of this process are presented to governors and inform the improvement plan for the following year.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

Outcomes and provision for all pupils are good. Baseline evidence indicates that most children enter the school working with low levels of understanding of the Catholic Faith. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils' attainment is close to diocesan expectations for RE; by the end of Key Stage 2, 60% of pupils work within or above national levels of attainment and broadly in line with other core areas of learning. Learning and progress are good. Lessons are well planned and incorporate a range of high quality resources that interest and engage the pupils. These include music, drama and IT. Differentiation is included in all planning across 3 broad bands within the class. All classrooms are well resourced and have very

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.

good displays, which are relevant and colourful, with celebrations of pupils' work and prayer corners.

Teaching is secure and well planned, with 100% regularly good or better over time. Assessments in RE, formal, formative and self-assessment, are very well structured, and effective use is made of this information for planning. Pupils are given frequent opportunities to work independently. Teachers and support staff demonstrate good subject knowledge, and teachers use a range of learning opportunities, questioning techniques and clear differentiation; books are marked regularly. As a result children participate enthusiastically in RE lessons, where relationships are positive, empathetic and consistently appropriate, as they are around the school more generally. The school prayer is regularly used in lessons and elsewhere; a range of age/stage prayer and reflection contributes significantly to pupils learning experiences in lessons, Catholic life and collective worship. Pupils speak confidently about the positive impact upon them: they enjoy school and feel safe and valued.

The Catholic life of the school is very strong, with a clear ethos and commitment evident on entry. The school motto is central to its life, with artefacts, statues, prayers and displays throughout. There are opportunities for all pupils in Key Stage 2 to take part in retreats to Harvington Hall and the local Benedictine convent, an invitation offered to staff as well. Pupils lead and contribute to regular fundraising and charity work, notably in regular support for a charity in Malawi, Children in Need, Macmillan and Harvest Bingo for older parishioners. Pupils' involvement in the life of the Church is good, and they contribute widely to the life of the school. The parish priest has supported sacramental preparation. There is considerable pupil involvement in the faith life and collective worship of the school, notably in preparing for and leading Masses, but also in the wider parish community Masses. They are always fully engaged and display reverence and enthusiasm.

The purposes and development of prayer are taught progressively year by year, as is evident from long-term planning, and prayer has a significant part in all aspects of daily life. The school prayer is widely used, and the older pupils spoke of their understanding of prayer for different purposes and their opportunities to write and use their own prayers, especially in lessons and form assemblies. There are rich prayer corners in most classrooms, with artefacts, pupils' work and resources linked to the liturgical year and the "Walk With Me" booklets. A collage of ceramic tiles for individual pupils and families, and a display by pupils in Years 5 and 6, using IT most effectively to explain the mission statement to younger pupils, are features in a main corridor.

Leadership and management are a current strength of the school, though the forthcoming change of headteacher will need to be addressed and managed promptly and effectively. There is a clear sense of purpose, vision and direction which is shared at all levels, including governors. There is close collaboration between the different levels, and everyone is encouraged to contribute to planning and implementing school improvement. Governors are regular visitors, and this contact helps to inform understanding and the monitoring and evaluation cycle. Communication is also good and includes families and the wider community through meetings, letters, newsletters, questionnaires, and a very informative and well-maintained website. There is a willingness to consider suggestions and new initiatives with the continual aim of improving in-school provision and outcomes.

Recommendations

- Establish a more regular, systematic and dated record of internal procedures and outcomes

- Enhance pupils' learning and understanding of vocations and other faiths
- Develop further areas of the school to proclaim its Catholicity
- In view of the known change of headteacher, and no succession plan in place, responsibility for Catholic life/collective worship and RE should be reviewed as soon as possible, with an action plan developed for smooth transfer and professional development to ensure that school improvement is not stalled.



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

3 December 2013

Dear Parents and Carers

Section 48 (Diocesan) Inspection of St John's Catholic Primary School, 28th-29th November 2013

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 developed and built upon the recommendations in its last Section 48 Inspection in 2008. It is a very good Catholic school with an outstanding prayer life and consistently strong teaching. The leadership of the headteacher is very positive, giving clear strategic guidance to all the staff. The school is well supported in this by its governors, who show a strong commitment to its continuing success.

The pupils speak with enthusiasm about the school and its Catholic life, enjoy their learning and feel safe and happy. When they first arrive at the school many children have limited religious knowledge but they make good progress and, by the time they leave, they have achieved good standards. They are developing a good knowledge of Christ's teaching and understand the basic tenets of our Catholic faith. Collective worship is good. Pupils know and can talk about a number of Bible stories, and have a good understanding of the importance of personal and traditional prayers.

I have recommended that, in order to continue to make good progress, the school should develop a more regular, systematic and dated record of internal procedures and outcomes; enhance pupils' understanding of vocations and other faiths; develop further areas of the school to proclaim its Catholicity.

It was a pleasure and a privilege to spend time in your school and see how well your children are doing. I was made really welcome by everyone, and was very impressed by the collaboration and mutual support, within the school and beyond, to ensure that all the children live happy and fulfilled lives.

Yours sincerely

Paul Nutt
Diocesan Inspector