



St. Joseph's Harrow

Dobbin Close, Belmont, Harrow, Middlesex HA3 7LP

Date of inspection: 9th May 2014

A. Classroom Religious Education

What is the overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing pupils' religious literacy?

Overall Grade 2

The overall effectiveness of Religious Education is Good. The Curriculum Directory is fully met and forms the basis of the content planned and delivered. There is evidence that religious education is given its due status by all staff. The leader of religious education has developed very good structures to ensure planning and monitoring are regularly implemented in line with other core subjects. This is also evident in the Performance Management and Leadership programmes, scrutinised during the inspection. Overall the typicality of teaching is effective, with evidence of pupils being engaged in their learning. Pupils with special education needs and those entitled to Pupil Premium make good progress. Most pupils make good progress and the attainment levels are tracked as for other core subjects. The achievement of the pupils is good and is measured against the school's internal moderation and that shared through the deanery and the diocese. The leader of religious education is fully involved with Diocesan and Deanery moderation and partnerships. She has also ensured that relevant continuing professional development is supporting the identified priorities within their religious education action and whole school improvement plan.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What is the overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing?

Overall Grade 1*

The overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of this school is outstanding. Worship and prayer are central to the school, which provides pupils and staff with a wide variety of experience of Catholic faith and tradition. Pupils take an active role both in preparing liturgies, and working for the Common Good. They are committed to developing social justice. The pupils were articulate in their outline of how they are empowered to lead and support a range of fundraising events. They fully understand their role in being "called to serve" which includes the way the school develops their qualities of leadership and responsibility. The school works in close partnership with parents, parish and the Diocese. The school is fully aware of its ecclesial responsibility in particular its growing partnership with the feeder Catholic secondary schools to support transition and continuity. The Headteacher is ably supported by his senior leadership team and the governing body. They have a shared vision, which permeates the entire school ethos and its contribution to the mission of the Church.

Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent one day in school, visited seven lessons and an assembly, and carried out seven interviews with school staff, pupils and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, discussion with local clergy, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of St. Joseph's. Harrow was carried out under the requirements of the Canon 806 and Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Archbishop of Westminster. The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation.

Inspection Team

Mrs. Tina Cleugh

Mrs. Catherine Mc Mahon

Lead Inspector

Associate Inspector

Description of School

The school is a two form entry in the LA of Harrow and the locality of Belmont, Harrow. The school serves the parish of St. Joseph, in Wealdstone, in Harrow. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 98.8%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 1.2% and from other Faiths 0%. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 89%.

There are 430 pupils on roll, with 12 pupils with statements of Special Educational Need. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is average. There is a well below average rate of families claiming free school meals. Forty pupils receive the Pupil Premium.

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DFE Number:

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Headteacher:

Mr. Phil Sutton

Chair of Governors:

Mr. B Byrne

Date of previous inspection:

29 April 2008

Key for inspection grades:

*Grade 1**

Outstanding

Grade 1

Very Good

Grade 2

Good

Grade 3

Requires improvement

Grade 4

Causing Concern

A. Classroom Religious Education

How religiously literate are pupils in the teachings and traditions of the Catholic faith and how well do they know, understand and appreciate the importance of religious faith and practice in everyday life?

What has improved in classroom religious education since the last inspection?

The school has been addressing the area of assessment to inform planning. This has included the recent revisions of the agreed understanding, in the level of attainment in religious education. They have also been addressing the issue of improving and moderating levels of attainment to promote their target setting process in religious education. This is outlined in their SEF and school improvement plan, whereby the school recognises the importance of setting targets for improvement in religious education, as for other core subjects. The progress since the last inspection includes how the school is sharing the religious education targets with pupils and parents, as they do for other core subjects.

How well does the content of classroom religious education meet the requirements of the Curriculum Directory?

Grade 1

The school fully meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory, as laid down by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. The scrutiny of the timetables confirms the full 10% coverage across the school. The key areas are referenced in the medium term planning. The overview match to the areas in the Religious Education Curriculum Directory, (RECD), including the coverage from their scheme, The Way the Truth and the Life, is colour coded to indicate annual and cross-phase coverage. The school has developed year group overview records of this coverage, to include opportunities for celebration of the liturgical cycle and special key feast days and events in the Church calendar. The school has also just introduced the topic units from Dr. Margaret Carswell, since the beginning of this Spring Term 2014, as a trial in some year groups, to supplement the content in the Way the Truth and the Life scheme of work.

Pupil achievement (as well as attainment and progress) in religious education

Grade 2

Achievement in religious education is good overall. Attainment is measured against the diocesan agreed understandings of levels of attainment. The levels of attainment in religious education are recorded and tracked throughout the phases in the school, using the SIMS system, as for other core areas. Pupils are encouraged to engage with assessing their work against the targets, which are recorded in their religious education books. Moderation of progress, within year groups and across the phases, is carried out on a cyclical basis across the academic year. The samples are shared with the local deanery group and within diocesan moderation sessions. During the inspection the moderated samples were scrutinised. This highlighted an ongoing priority for the school to ensure that those samples assessed towards the higher levels, (towards Level 5 by the end of Key stage Two), reflect attainment sustained over time. The data presented to the inspectors and recorded in the SEF, indicates the need for the school to be more secure in the moderation of higher levels of learning. The 40 pupils entitled to Pupil Premium are tracked as a distinct cohort and the tracking presented to the inspectors reflected good progress overall.

The quality of teaching

Grade 2

The typicality of teaching from the lessons observed, the scrutiny of the work in the books, and on display in classrooms and public area, is Good overall. A total of seven lessons were observed across the phases. Through the scrutiny of the work in the books and from discussion with the leader of religious education the responses from the “next steps” in the marking, needs to be consistently applied and the peer assessment sheets monitored by the teacher to validate levels of progress consistently across all year groups, The school discussed with the inspectors that the next stage is to give priority to addressing the need for planned questioning within religious education lessons. This is to challenge the more able, whilst supporting the less able to achieve through scaffolded questioning for all groups; teasing out their levels of knowledge and understanding. The leader of religious education is also aware of the need to tie lessons closely to the levels of attainment and to deliver these accordingly; in particular to ensure that the subject knowledge being delivered is accurate. The school has also identified the need to monitor the moderation of the assessments for pupils achieving the higher levels of attainment.

The school provides a rich learning environment, which ensures the pupils have access to a variety of resources and artefacts to enhance their learning. There is evidence of high quality pupil centred displays, promoting the different liturgical celebrations and events over time. Homework is a key feature each term, acknowledged by both the parents and groups of pupils during the inspection. There is also evidence of ICT skills being developed throughout the topics delivered across the phases. The learning walk carried out, accompanied by the headteacher and leader of religious education, identified the range of strategies to deliver religious education which are planned and used across the phases.

Where teaching was very good, the pupils reflected on the importance of the events in Jesus’ life, as portrayed through scripture, role play and personal contemplation and reflection. All lessons observed provided opportunities for personal prayer and in some cases pupil spontaneous contributions. The provision for pupils with additional needs and in particular, in the case of a pupil with a high level significant need, the resource of their Sensory Room, and the role of the other adults in the learning process, is worthy of note.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 2

The leader of religious education provides a good structured programme of continuing professional development, monitoring and moderation across the phases. The school improvement plan reflects her commitment to develop the skills, knowledge and understanding of all staff. She attends all deanery and diocesan moderation and ongoing continuing professional development programmes. She provides the staff with support, encouragement and guidance. She is proactive in supporting and informing the senior leadership team. The school self evaluation document, (SEF) is fairly accurate, and from discussions during the inspection the leader of religious education will be reviewing the data presented. She presents the governing body with regular updates and works in partnership with the designated governor for religious education. This designated governor oversees the provision and makes regular informal visits, with a more formal annual day visit, to evaluate the quality of religious education across the school.

What should the school do to improve further in classroom religious education?

- School should continue to develop their understanding of the levels of attainment to support their moderation, particularly in the higher levels of learning
- Targeted questioning should be identified in the weekly planning and delivery of areas of learning, in order to accelerate the learning of all pupils, in particular the more able.

B. The Catholic life of the school

How well do pupils experience the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing through all areas of school life?

What has improved since the last inspection?

The school self-evaluation has identified how the school continues to develop its collective worship, including older pupils in the planning, preparation and delivery of class, key phase and whole school worship. This includes class “prayer partners” leading class worship weekly. The pupils are also producing a regular Newsletter for religious education and their Catholic life, which the parents were proud to receive. The pupils themselves, who represented a cross section of age groups, were confident and articulate to describe to the inspectors how much they are involved in the prayer and catholic life of their school. Thus, the school has addressed the areas identified in the previous inspection.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum – time, staffing, accommodation, resources, budget

Grade I*

The governing body has generously provided a rich range of resources, artefacts and in particular, developed the accommodation to a very high standard over recent years. The senior leadership team, led effectively by the headteacher, ensures timetables fully meet the requirements of the Bishops’ Conference for 10% dedicated time to the teaching and learning in religious education. Staff are encouraged to participate in the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies, (CCRS) and relevant deanery and diocesan training. The governing body is also committed to avail of the range of diocesan support, guidance and training. The meeting with the chair of governors, with the vice chair, who is also the designated governor to oversee The Catholic life of the school and religious education, confirmed the rigour and commitment of the governing body to the development and full provision for religious education.

The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community.

Grade I*

During the inspection, there was an opportunity to attend a collective worship dedicated to celebrating Our Blessed Lady, and her role in the Church. This was extremely well attended by parents, carers and grandparents. The parents, who met with the inspectors, were glowing in their praise of the “richness of the faith and prayer life” and of the range of opportunities for the development and spiritual growth of their children. Pupils were proud to outline how they actively plan, lead and deliver a range of class and whole school worship. This includes the weekly year five Bible Club, supporting year one pupils in their understanding of biblical texts, such as “The Lost Sheep”. These sessions are often linked to the weekly Wednesday Word, and have homework activities as relevant. The leader of religious education discussed and showed the inspectors the range of year group worship, celebration, both with photographic and display evidence available across the liturgical cycle. Parents informed the inspectors of the growing links with the parish, how the first holy communicants are supported through their programmes within the Eucharist and Reconciliation topics and sacramental celebrations in school. One of the lessons observed included the reflection in the “Peace Garden” which is also widely used across the school.

The “prayer books” visible on the desks of the older pupils, were provided as part of the ‘Year of Faith’ celebrations by the “Friends Association.” The Parish Priest is a regular and proactive visitor to the school, as evident in the rich range of photographic displays in the school and in the religious education folders for each year group. His involvement includes his regular ‘Latin’ classes, which the older pupils explained to the inspectors, is so popular that it is offered on a three weekly cycle.

The commitment and contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice.

Grade I*

The stimulating and colourful entrance to the school immediately draws the visitor to the wide range of acclamations, awards and national and local accreditations earned by the school community. There is also evidence of how the pupils have followed the very recent canonisations of St. John XXIII and St. John Paul II. They have also explored the celebrations for His Eminence, Cardinal Vincent Nichols and were able to explain his role in our church and our diocese.

The pupils spoke glowingly about their role in supporting Fair Trade. They were able to describe and articulate the reasons why we need to be aware of the plight of workers in the third world, how we “all belong to this one world.” They fully understood and gave precise examples of how the cost of produce here affects the low paid living conditions of those growing and exporting these goods, “that we enjoy every day”. The “Common Good” board display through the “rays” of committed action for the high range of needs, which the school support, is an excellent example of their ongoing generosity and determination to support others in their commitment to human flourishing. The pupils acknowledged this through their duty being “called to serve” as one pupil described “in the footsteps of Jesus.”

CAFOD’s work forms a large part of the school’s celebration of our global family. Their “One World Week” is another example of developing the pupils’ respect for different faith, beliefs and cultural backgrounds. The school has a planned programme of introducing the pupils to the lives, beliefs and celebrations of other faiths. This includes the annual visit of the Rabbi, with evidence in the work in their books of the different levels of learning about the Jewish faith and way of life today. Pupils are empowered to “lead” various aspects of the day to day life of the school. There are designated “leaders of learning” who outlined their commitment and roles of responsibility with pride, to the inspectors. They act as “buddies” to younger pupils, through their “leadership of learning” roles; they can take ownership on some decisions, including through the “suggestion box.” The behaviour, of the pupils during the inspection was exemplary. They are courteous, mannerly and confident, with many smiles and greetings, with a genuineness and warmth. They are fully aware of how to keep safe, including e-safety, and explained that, where they have a concern the “teachers will always listen to us.” This is a great testimony to the excellent relationships developed in the school.

Enabling the authentic partnership between parents, school and parish as an integral part of the Diocese, particularly through its relationship with the Diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf;

Grade I*

The school has developed a range of excellent relationships between the parents and the parish. They work in harmony through a range of collaborative activities, including supporting the parish sacramental programme. The parents who met with the inspectors proudly outlined the “long connection” with the school as parents of pupils now also in secondary school, and as adults. They discussed how “the catholicity has never been stronger.” They spoke of the work of the attached priest from the parish and how he is also supported in his work in the school by the pastoral assistant, including the way they both also attend the wide range of assemblies and prayer services. The parents appreciate the RE newsletters sent regularly, outlining the topics being covered in the

past, present and for future events. They recognise how “their children are valued” and that “their opinions are always acted upon”. They believe their children are safe in school, and that the headteacher ensures any issues are “swiftly and efficiently dealt with.” The response to the survey was overwhelmingly “Agree/Strongly Agree” at 95+%. The growing partnership with feeder Catholic secondary schools is supporting the transition and continuity for the pupils. The attached priest from St Joseph parish shows empathy with the pupils and makes a valuable contribution to the school.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school.

Grade I*

The headteacher is fully committed and dedicated to sustaining the centrality of the Catholic faith and Church’s mission in education. He and his senior leadership team actively provide an education which is linked intrinsically to the vision of discipleship for life.

The governing body is extremely well organised and actively supports the diocesan programmes. This includes ongoing training and guidance through local, ecclesial and statutory duties. The “Distinctive Nature” committee, keep abreast of all school related issues and priorities. The governors oversee the Catholic life and religious education of the school. Their role as “critical friend” is “robust and rigorous”, as described by one of the governors, who met the inspectors. They ensure they are represented across a variety of school based events, celebrations and activities. This includes supporting ongoing training, diocesan briefings and updates on national and local diocesan initiatives. The clerk to the governing body sets up annual monitoring and review programmes for identifying key areas for focus, including religious education and the Catholic life of the school.

What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?

- The members of the school community should continue their excellent practice, in particular the way they are committed to living out their faith and mission in the Church, which permeates all aspects of their Catholic life.