

# Westminster Diocese Inspection Report

## St Augustine's Catholic Primary School

Riversmead, Hoddesdon EN11 8DP



Date of inspection: 26<sup>th</sup> November 2015

### A. Classroom Religious Education

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

**Overall Grade I**

The overall effectiveness of St Augustine's Catholic Primary School in developing its pupils' religious literacy is outstanding. What it teaches in religious education (RE) is fully in conformity with the Religious Education Curriculum Directory approved by the Bishops' Conference. The pupils make very good progress and achieve outstandingly well in their religious education. They are notably articulate in their ability to talk about the different aspects of their faith. The quality of teaching is excellent and the school makes very good provision for giving its teachers in-service training and support. The leadership and management of religious education are very effective and a higher level of provision has been achieved. Governors have taken a very active interest in this development and, by their support and critical challenge, have helped the school on its journey of improvement.

### 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 I**

St Augustine's Catholic Primary School has been outstandingly effective in developing its pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing. The evidence for this is the articulate and confident manner in which the pupils can talk about the issues of faith. The pupils speak with ease about how they live gospel values in their own lives. This is achieved by the substantive place the school gives to religious education at the core of the curriculum, supporting it with appropriate staffing, in-service training, accommodation and resources. The experience of prayer and the encouragement to find their own words mean the pupils are at ease in sharing their prayer out loud with each other. The encouragement of the weekly visit of the parish priest to the school means the pupils are at home with the liturgy in the parish. The senior leadership team, the governors and the teachers are generous in their involvement and partnership with parents, the parish and the diocese. The Catholic life of the school benefits from this same commitment and leadership by the governors and leadership team.

## 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 1 day in school, visited 8 lessons and 1 assembly, and carried out 7 interviews with school staff, parish priest, pupils and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of St Augustine's, Hoddesdon 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

Deacon Anthony Clark  
Mr Stephen Horsman  
Mrs Elizabeth Nye

Lead Inspector  
Shadow Lead inspector  
Associate Inspector

## Description of School

This voluntary aided school is a one form entry in the LA of Hertfordshire and the locality of Hoddesdon. The school serves the parish of St Augustine's, Hoddesdon. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 89%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 8% and from no faith background 3%. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 46%.

There are 258 pupils on roll, with no pupils with statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health & Care Plans ( EHC). The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is above average. There is a below average rate of families claiming free school meals. Eighteen pupils receive the Pupil Premium.

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DFE Number: 9193345  
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Acting Interim Headteacher: Mr Peter Coldwell  
Headteacher (on maternity leave) Mrs Hayley Francis  
Chair of Governors: Mr Phil Bibby

Date of previous inspection: 5<sup>th</sup> July 2010  
Previous Inspection grades: 2

<b>Key for inspection grades:</b>	<i>Grade 1</i>	<i>Outstanding</i>
	<i>Grade 2</i>	<i>Good</i>
	<i>Grade 3</i>	<i>Requires improvement</i>
	<i>Grade 4</i>	<i>Causing Concern</i>

## **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?**

In respect of classroom religious education, the last inspection recommended that the planned programme of assessment and monitoring be continued to ensure that tracking and differentiation enabled pupils to reach their full potential. The school has fully realised this programme and both tracking and differentiation have enabled pupils to achieve their potential in religious literacy. The school has built an ethos of open discussion and sharing which enables pupils to be challenged to reach deeper age-appropriate insights in the religious truths and attitudes that they are studying.

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

**Grade I**

The content of classroom religious education fully and manifestly meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD). The school uses the RE scheme 'The Way, the Truth and the Life', in conjunction with the Diocesan Agreed Understandings. Not only does this scheme conform to the RECD but the school has constructed its own grid of its teaching topics to ensure that the RECD themes are effectively developed over the years. The twilight INSET training sessions ensure teachers understand the broad areas and themes for the coming term. Progress in religious literacy is supported by the scheme's curriculum map. For example there is mapping of the pupils' understanding and engagement with scripture. The teaching on other world faiths is fully in place, including visits to appropriate places of worship. Parents are kept informed on the coverage of classroom religious education by an RE newsletter introduced this year.

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

**Grade I**

Pupil achievement is outstanding. Pupils achieve in line with or better than levels for example in writing, the national levels of attainment are used and pupils are assessed regularly to ensure progression. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and display a high level of eloquence in their responses in all key stages. Pupils are confident in their use of religious vocabulary in religious education and across other curriculum areas, occasionally beyond their years. Teaching assistants are used effectively to support different groups of pupils to ensure stretch and challenge in most lessons. For example in one lesson on the Gospel of Luke and the Nicene Creed pupils were able to explain the links between the two. In a Reception class, children were able to clearly explain about how their talents were God-given and why God gave these talents. Parents were particularly complimentary about their children's religious education which was always engaging, and providing stretch and challenge.

### **The quality of teaching**

**Grade I**

The quality of teaching is outstanding and never less than good. Teaching is creative, using a variety of pedagogies in order to engage the children in their learning. For example, in one lesson the

teacher used video material of Pope Francis to illustrate what the Church should be doing in the refugee crisis; in another, active discussion on how one can use one's gifts to help others; in another, role play was used to communicate what Mary may have felt like at the Annunciation. Marking and constructive feedback is frequent and pupils follow up on teacher comments. Teachers impart religious knowledge creatively to engage children actively in their learning. Children are assessed regularly to review their progress and are shown how to improve their work and move to the next level. Through clear, directed and encouraging questioning teachers were able to check pupils' understanding throughout lessons. To ensure all children were given the opportunity to respond lollypop sticks or random selection of photographs of the pupils were used. Teachers use a wide variety of resources in their teaching including the parish priest who visits the school weekly to support their teaching. These visits are always very well prepared, with a focus and serve to enhance the learning in the classroom. The pupils and parents very much appreciate his input.

## **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education**

### **Grade 1**

The current acting subject leader, who is also acting deputy headteacher, has been in post since September. Since then she has built on the very good practice of her predecessor. She has a clear and dynamic vision for religious education, and works well with all her colleagues to strive for excellence. Planning is both individual and collaborative ensuring teachers know what will be the expected progress of pupils across each year group and key stage. Highly effective systems are in place to monitor and track pupils in their religious literacy. The subject leader is relentlessly focussed on improving teaching and learning, especially among the higher achievers and in this the teaching assistants are deployed to good effect. There is a professional development programme which ensures the ongoing development of the subject knowledge of the teachers and all are supported in this. The subject leader knows the strengths and challenges for religious education going forward and has highlighted these in the school's self-evaluation document.

## **What should the school do to develop further in classroom religious education?**

- Continue monitoring development of classroom religious education, in particular the maintenance of the pace and challenge in lessons.
- Give on-going support to the step change achieved in situating religious education at the heart of the curriculum, especially encouraging the creativity shown in lesson planning.
- Maintain the emphasis on articulate literacy of the pupils on RE matters, encouraging debate and challenge.

## **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 last inspection recommended that the school take greater account of parents' view in respect of the religious education and Catholic life of the school. It also recommended the school to establish greater links with the local community and schools in different settings. Through newsletters, website content and open parent meetings, the school has established much improved liaison and partnership with the parents. Through its involvement in local and civic initiatives (visiting the elderly at Christmas, local cancer charities) the greater links have been created.

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

#### **Grade I**

Over the last two years, the school has transformed the place of religious education in the life of school. Through generous allocation of staff training time, along with the contribution of the diocesan adviser, the school has achieved a new pattern for the place of RE. The developing of lesson plans by the teachers has been redesigned so that higher quality classroom teaching along with more opportunities for cross curriculum themes has led to this outstanding development. The school devotes the full 10% curriculum time required by the Bishops of England and Wales. Pupils benefit from the substantial resources and budget share that has been devoted to the transformation of the place of religious education in the school. The pupils demonstrate very good links and vision across all subjects as a result of this. The school fully utilises and benefits from the weekly visit of the parish priest, who prepares material himself to fit into and take forward the pupils' progress in the particular class he visits that week. The investment in using the Wednesday Word ensures good integration for the pupils and parents in respect of both classroom learning and the Sunday liturgy.

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

#### **Grade I**

Worship and prayer are central to the life of the school for pupils and staff providing engaging, innovative and creative experiences of the richness of the Catholic tradition; the celebration of the Eucharist and other sacramental celebrations are offered weekly at class Masses and at key times of the liturgical year, with pupils' active participation in the preparation, planning and delivery. The parish priest described the faith of the children as "very robust". As a result of the excellent opportunities pupils' have for quiet prayer, reflection, sharing and discussion, their spiritual development is assured. For example at the act of worship this morning the children were invited to "Come and join the circle" This was a delightful innovation, a visible sign in the joining of hands, resulting in a sense of belonging. The quality and preparation of the Act of Worship, coupled with the listening and engagement of the children, made this an outstanding celebration. The pupil Chaplaincy Team supports the school's commitment to the children to develop their own prayer life. As well as planning and preparing acts of worship they are also central to the organisation and running of the weekly Prayer and Reflection group that takes place every Monday at lunchtime to encourage all children to be actively involved in and celebrate their faith through prayer and worship.

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

### **Grade I**

Pupils flourish at St. Augustine's because the school provides the children with excellent opportunities for them to develop and celebrate their gifts and talents. The school's mission is: "We come to school to live and learn happily together, by loving ourselves and each other as Jesus teaches us to." This is lived by the pupils who demonstrate an excellent understanding of, and engagement with, the Common Good and its theological foundation. They are actively enabled to develop their individual gifts and talents and to involve themselves in service for those less well off than they. Excellent displays throughout the school give testament to this. The Church's call to action for justice and peace is fully appreciated and understood, and is appropriate for the pupils concerned. For example, in the hall there is a display of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching which celebrates each theme and act in support of the Common Good. Cross-curricular themes, often linked to CAFOD, Fairtrade and other similar organisations, encourage children to think ethically and to grow in understanding of the Church's mission for justice and peace. Pupils have first-hand experiences and accounts of local, national and international contexts. The school uses these exceptionally well to support the pupils' involvement with the Church's global mission.

## **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 been outstanding in establishing and serving authentic partnerships with its parents, parish and diocese. The weekly class mass in the parish church is the focus of its excellent relations with the parish and thus also with the parents. The school contributes to the parish newsletter and the parish priest is a familiar visitor in the school. Parents are given up to date information through the school newsletter on the website as well as the religious education newsletter each half term which outlines the topics their children will be covering. A home/school book encourages parental support and engages parents with its invitation to share prayer intentions. Parental workshops are offered so that parents have the chance to know and understand what the school is teaching. The school has pioneered the 'Reception Tie Ceremony' in which new pupils are presented with the school tie by older pupils who take on special roles of welcome and friendship. The school has good relationships with the diocesan education service, with the diocesan adviser visiting the school regularly. The school has recently hosted the moderation meeting of local Catholic schools developing the accuracy of their assessment levels. It has a good relationship with its nearby Catholic primary school (St Cross), collaborating on liturgies and moderating work together. The school takes full part in diocesan conferences and events. Recently Bishop Sherrington celebrated Mass in the school for its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

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

### **Grade I**

The leadership and management of the school in promoting the Catholic life of the school are outstandingly effective. The policies and style of the leadership of the school have created a sense of community which is an outstanding witness to its Christian beliefs and values. Whether through the clarity of its mission statement, its policies on behaviour and inclusion, or its efforts to live the Gospel values, the school exemplifies its Catholic life. The introduction of its carefully laid out set of 'Ten Commandments' and its listed Catholic Social Teaching principles means that the assemblies

and charities have a backdrop which gives them place and meaning. The Spirituality Week, Fair Trade Week and other such occasions help promote individual and collective relationships in faith. Even with the recent changes in the leadership team, the interim headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have maintained and developed the quality of leadership, building on the vision the headteacher established before she went on maternity leave, and taking the school forward in its catholicity. Governors have maintained a proactive, challenging and supportive role, encouraging staff and parents to improve the Catholic nature of education in St Augustine's.

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

- Continue in their efforts to help pupils see the integrity of their life and faith.
- Find out more about the school's history and display it, letting pupils, parents and visitors see who founded it, who the first headteacher was and what their special charism and vision for the school was.