



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the
Archbishop of Southwark and Inspection of
Denominational Education under Section 48
of the Education Act 2005

URN 100168

Our Lady of Grace Catholic Primary School
16 Highcombe
Charlton
London SE7 7HR

Inspection
date:

23rd May 2017

Chair of Governors:
Headteacher:
Inspectors:

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SECTION 48

Introduction

Description of the school

Our Lady of Grace is a voluntary aided Catholic Primary School. It is situated in the Greenwich Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark and is maintained by Greenwich Local Authority. The principal parish which the school serves is Our Lady of Grace, Charlton. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 96%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10%.

The school takes pupils from 4 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 250; the school is in the process of increasing to two forms of entry and has two classes in Foundation Stage. Our Lady of Grace moved into a new school building in January 2017. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is below age related expectation with an increasing number joining with skills below those typical for their age. The proportion of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) is 16% and 21% of pupils receive Pupil Premium (PP) funding. The school's deprivation index is higher than the national average. Around 6% of the pupils receive extra support in class. The level of English as an Additional Language is 35%, twice as high as the national average.

The school has an ethnically diverse population, 75% of pupils are from minority ethnic groups which include African, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Eastern European.

Date of previous inspection:

23rd May 2012

Overall Grade:

1

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1 Outstanding
Grade 2 Good

Grade 3 Requires improvement
Grade 4 Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school in providing Catholic Education

GRADE
1

Our Lady of Grace is an outstanding school which is committed to high academic achievement and all-round development of its pupils. The pupils' experience and understanding of the Catholic way of life, and their appreciation and understanding of social, moral and ethical issues is exceptional. Everyone in the community has a heightened awareness of how effective working for the 'common good' can lead to harmony, respect and fulfilment. Strongly shared values underpin the work of the school as it successfully prepares pupils for life.

The passionate, inspirational and well-regarded Headteacher, Senior Leadership Team, staff and governors all work together to create a caring, highly successful school. They are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have very effective strategic plans for its continued development.

The pupils' behaviour was exemplary. They are very considerate and kind to one another with strong relationships built on faith and trust. Heightened empathy for others was exhibited when a pupil stated that we believe God created us as a family, so she couldn't understand why we treated refugees so badly.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive and appreciative. As one parent stated "There is a sense of community and caring. The school is inclusive, welcoming pupils of different ethnic backgrounds, faiths and disabilities." Diversity within the school is seen as a blessing. The 'International Evening' held by the Parents, Teachers and Friends Association (PTFA) brings together the communities of the school and the local area to celebrate with song, dance and food. A governor said, "This school works because everyone in the community 'buys into' the Catholic ethos", a view echoed by many.

There are strong links with the parish and the Parish Priest is present in the school. Pupils share in the life of the Church through participation in Masses and Liturgies.

Our Lady of Grace is special in many ways. A beautiful, spacious new school building has just been completed. It is a 'London Gold Club' member for exceptional practice and outstanding achievements for disadvantaged children, and is amongst the highest achieving schools in the country attaining a Bronze award for 'Healthy Schools and Travel.'

All issues from the previous inspection have been addressed.

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

Governors, Headteacher and staff should:

- develop more opportunities for the greater participation of pupils in the preparation and leading of liturgies
- continue to develop pupils' self and peer assessment.

Publication date 18th July 2017

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school

Our Lady of Grace's Mission Statement is at the heart of school life. Its shortened and well-used form, "Do your best, let God do the rest" is a significant driving force in the considerable success of this school.

The Mission Statement was reflected in the excellent relationships and the high level of care and love for one another that was demonstrated by the whole school community. It is reviewed annually by staff, governors and pupils and Years 5 and 6 wrote their own child friendly version which is posted on the website. A pupils' quote from the website states "Our Lady of Grace is a community based on Gospel values. Our school isn't just an educational school, we are a family that never gives up."

Pupils appreciate the Catholic life of the school and participate with enthusiasm and pride in its liturgies and celebrations. The Parish Priest was very proud that Bishop Pat was full of praise for the spirituality and prayerfulness of the pupils at last week's Mass to celebrate the opening of their new school building.

The many opportunities that they are given to take on responsibilities are relished by the pupils, including being Zone and Playground Monitors where they help younger children have break-times that are fun and harmonious. Working for the common good continues with the work of the School Council whose ideas contributed to the installation of play equipment and a soft surface in the playground. School Council members have also signed one of the steel supports for the new building and discussed its positioning with the architect, they reported back to classes on their engagement with the new build.

The empathy the pupils show to others is evident in their support of charitable causes. For example, they supply food to the local Food Bank. Further afield, they have a particularly close relationship with St Anne's in Uganda; they have helped Father Joseph there to build his new school and exchange communication with him and his children about its progress. They understand that there are children less fortunate than themselves and have a heightened awareness of social justice. A year 5 child commented on the plight of Syrian children saying, "Children's rights are so important, they must be free from abuse and any kinds of things that physically hurt them".

Their interest in topical and local issues is evident in the letters they wrote to Sadiq Khan when he became the Mayor of London. They asked him to make transport greener, to keep local pharmacies open and make people fitter by having more outside gyms. The children also discussed last year's Referendum.

Priests from the parish are regular and invaluable visitors to the school. They support and advise the school on liturgies, lead Masses and prepare the pupils for Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. Parishioners and locals are invited

to school events. Pupils are altar servers and readers at Mass and the school choir visits the Church. Class Masses are regularly held there and many parishioners regularly attend.

Ecumenical links are developing with the nearby United Reform Church and Christmas and Easter celebrations are shared with local Church of England schools and the Christian Cluster Group. The school benefits from a sport partnership with St. Paul's Academy and also welcomes work experience pupils from secondary schools.

Parents are welcomed into the school and enthusiastically attend many liturgies and celebrations. The Parents, Friends and Teachers Association robustly fundraises, socialises and links the home with the school. Parents are kept well-informed with texts, noticeboards, newsletters and the web-site. The school has an extensive programme of support to help its parents – subject workshops, a drop-in advice service, bilingual support, counselling and positive parenting courses – which undoubtedly helps them to integrate into school life. One parent said, "The school is a wonderfully warm and open community where all are welcomed, cared for and supported which comes from its strong Catholic ethos".

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

The standards pupils achieve in Religious Education are very high. They are in line with results in English and Maths and above local and national attainments. The pupils enter school with attainment below age related expectation and with lower than expected communication and language skills. The excellent progress pupils, some of whom live in challenging circumstances, make across the school is a testament to the care and support they are given by the school.

Pupils who have additional needs have excellent support and make good progress in line with peers.

In class, pupils made it clear that they enjoyed their Religious Education, many of them liked being able to express their opinions in their lessons. One pupil said, "I like RE and learning about values, so I can be a better person and change the world". They approached tasks with enthusiasm, listened attentively and made good use of religious vocabulary. They talked to each other and readily shared their ideas and their faith. This was reinforced by a parent who said, "My daughter is happy she gets to talk to her friends about her love for God. It brings her great joy. Her favourite part of the day is singing to the Lord".

Pupils' Religious Education books showed the range and depth of quality activities undertaken. The books were well presented and showed that they take pride in their learning.

The behaviour strategies of the school, the high expectations of how everyone in the community will behave with respect and dignity and will share the

responsibility of caring for each other, all underpinned by the teachings of Jesus Christ, result in the behaviour of pupils at Our Lady of Grace being exemplary.

How well pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship

Collective Worship is central to the life of the school. The pupils were confident in prayerful situations and view communal and personal prayer as an integral aspect of their time in school. They were happy and at ease to pray in a variety of ways. They can write prayers for their own intentions and for class liturgies; in Early Years, the pupils made up their own spontaneous prayers to ask for help. Pupils can also meditate and reflect on scripture.

In a whole school assembly, the pupils gathered respectfully and listened attentively. They prayed for the victims and families of a national tragedy that unfolded that day, realising that as a community they share with the suffering of others. They sang a moving song with feeling and were also beautifully supported by the school choir. They were then asked to think of the ingredients that make Our Lady of Grace children so special and distinctive and they immediately identified that it was the values that they hold so dear, like "perseverance", year 3 and Early Years, "patience". They reverently brought up significant offerings, for example, the rosary that the whole school made in honour of Our Lady. They readily and joyfully joined in the school prayer which includes the line 'help our school to be a family'.

Classes have books with beautifully illustrated and heart-felt individual prayers, pupils have also written prayer books with Lenten promises and intentions for the plight of refugees.

Parents are welcome to attend many acts of Collective Worship. One said, "I really like that I am able to attend some of the Masses and that my daughter is able to say her prayers without prompting" and another, "My daughter loves her school and subjects given, she enjoys singing in assembly".

The pupils write prayers and organise some liturgies, Masses and assemblies for their class but, as they are so confident and enthusiastic, they should now be given more ownership and opportunities to regularly prepare and lead collective worship and liturgy groups.

How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils

Leadership is outstanding and underpins the success of Our Lady of Grace; it ensures that the Catholic ethos is reflected in all aspects of school life. The effective Headteacher has created a hard-working and cohesive staff team, within which he is developing strong leadership capacity. He has is passionate about the mission of Catholic education and is committed to the success and well-being of the school community. He is a well-respected leader of education in the Diocese and the Borough being a Local Leader of Education (LLE) supporting local schools, a link Headteacher for mentoring newly appointed Heads in the Deanery, a teacher training partner and a Pupil Premium Reviewer.

The knowledgeable and effective Governing Body is a visible presence in the school. A Governor Week further concentrates their efforts to get to know the school. They have an excellent understanding, through wide ranging monitoring procedures, of its strengths and weaknesses and provide a good balance of challenge and support. They are, for example, researching out of school hours' provision and governors sit in on school assessment meetings. Religious Education is regularly discussed at governor meetings. Governor Reports are sent to parents and they post reports of their visits to school on the school's website to share their findings, which focus on the impact of teaching and learning. For example, commenting on how much the pupils appreciated the message of the Mass, enjoyed a Religious Education lesson and to say "What a good idea it was to invite Rabbi Rose to come and talk about Judaism. The parish priest is the Religious Education Governor.

Self-evaluation of spiritual and academic achievement of pupils in Religious Education by governors and leaders of the school is rigorous and systematic with realistic goals set to implement targeted improvement. School leaders provide encouragement and a range of opportunities for staff to enhance their understanding and commitment to the Church's mission including updates on Religious Education in staff meetings, dedicated INSET training and Deanery Masses.

Parents appreciate that the leaders of the school are very welcoming, and "That the door is always open." They told inspectors that they trust the leaders and governors to be firm yet loving and that their children, including those who have disabilities or emotional stress, have been well supported. Parents attend liturgies and curriculum workshops and are regularly informed their children's progress. Though leaders are unfailing in the practical and emotional support they give to parents; they might consider ways of giving them further advice which would help them to enrich and develop the liturgical life of their children, for example, on understanding parts of the Mass or the significance and beauty of the Rosary.

How well leaders, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement for improvement to outcomes for pupils

The Religious Education Leader is the Deputy Headteacher. She has excellent knowledge and a capacity for strong leadership, is passionate and has committed spiritual purpose. She and the Headteacher make effective strategic decisions about the school and together plan opportunities for Collective Worship and celebration. She has developed positive relationships with staff, who respect her advice and appreciate her support. She is pro-active in the induction of newly qualified teachers, students and non-Catholics staff.

Leaders of the school have observed lessons, looked at books and displays and given developmental feedback, they also listen to the views of pupils. The Religious Education Leader ensures assessment is consistent through moderation within school and with other local Catholic schools and uses a cluster portfolio to confirm pupils' levelled work. She and the Assistant Headteacher track, analyse and evaluate with rigour. All this ensures that monitoring at Our Lady of Grace is systematic and productive and maintains the very high standards it achieves.

The leaders of the school attach much importance to the spiritual, moral and social development of their pupils. This ensures that the community has agreed values and is harmonious, caring and supportive. For example, pupils discuss ethical issues, classes agree a set of rules at the beginning of the year, cultural diversity is celebrated in Culture Week and the outdoor environment supports good behaviour.

The RE leader is proving to be a driving force behind the school's success by developing links with other Catholic schools, delivering training to staff at Inset and staff meetings and attending Diocesan training.

The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education

Teaching is effective and purposeful. In lessons, pupils were reminded of their prior learning; this was linked to the present theme of how people could be helped. Topics were made relevant to them. A younger child said, "I believe the Holy Spirit can come to us and help us share our family". The older children watched a video clip of an Olympic relay race and understood that the Holy Spirit "helps us to carry the baton". In the same lesson, referring to the acts of public kindness shown in the light of the national, tragic loss of lives the previous night, they thoughtfully discussed the Aesop quote displayed in the hall, "no small kindness is ever wasted." Lessons were interesting with a range of styles and activities which helped pupils to develop. For Pentecost, they acted out the story as it was read aloud and they made spoon puppets for their theatre in Early Years; technology was used to great effect; pupils were encouraged to collaborate; pace was beautifully calm to lively as appropriate. In one class, the teacher guided the pupils to meditate reflectively on what it was like to be with Jesus by the seaside. Expectations were high. Teachers asked good questions but sometimes opportunities to probe pupil's answers were missed.

Learning was scaffolded with key words, some being produced with excited anticipation and wonder from a 'magic bag' for the school's youngest children; teachings assistants worked instinctively and patiently to help pupils to optimise their learning.

Marking in pupils' books is becoming more evaluative, with comments from teachers which will help the children to develop their religious thinking. The pupils are generally responding to these comments and beginning to assess the work of their peers, mostly looking to correct literacy mistakes. The school should now develop this to further enhance pupils' self-assessment at the end of each lesson as well as at the end of a topic; and also to assess, at key points, whether their peers have achieved the religious objective.

The pupils were encouraged and praised throughout for their diligence and spirituality. They really like their Religious Education lessons because "I can discuss my own opinions", a view shared by pupils throughout the school.

The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning

Pupils benefit from a well-planned curriculum that inspires them to think deeply about their faith and their relationships to others.

Pupils take advantage of the many enrichment activities offered by the school. Visitors, like Bishop Pat, Rabbi Rose and Imam Swaleh, and Faith Week deepen

the pupils' understanding of their own and the religions of others. Representatives of Cafod came to discuss the plight of the refugees. Special cultural events echo and celebrate the diversity of the community, such as visits by Brazilian and Afro-Caribbean musicians, the sharing of national foods, costumes and dancing and special assemblies for Chinese New Year.

Trips to the Woolwich Library, the Houses of Parliament, the residential holiday to Arethusa and their visit to a local non-Catholic church, increased their knowledge of the outside world and added to their enjoyment of school life.

The pupils benefit from a range of after-school clubs to cover sport, dancing, drama, the emphasis being on teamwork and effort.

The displays around the school were eye-catching and help the children to feel rewarded, safe and informed. Links are made to other curriculum areas so that the children understand that their spirituality can be expressed in many ways.

The school fulfils the requirement of the Bishop's Conference and allocates 10% of curriculum time to the teaching of Religious Education. The school follows 'The Way, the Truth and the Life' programme of study, supplemented by the SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects) Programme and resources and liturgies provided by staff.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

An act of Collective Worship, linked to the liturgical year, the sacraments, the Bible, moral issues, the Religious Education scheme or SEAL, takes place daily. It is either whole school, key stage or class based and is supported by dance, drama and singing and it makes a significant contribution to the pupils' spiritual and moral development.

Mass is celebrated at the beginning of term and on Feast Days. Class Masses take place weekly for Key Stage 2 in Our Lady of Grace Church and for Key Stage 1 in school.

Ash Wednesday, the Leavers' Mass and Stations of the Cross are amongst the many liturgies celebrated which strengthen the Catholic ethos of the school. Parents said how they were deeply moved by the recent Passion Play.

Twice a year each class prepares and leads assemblies to which parents are invited. The parents are welcomed to the school before the assembly to share refreshments, the PTFA are on hand to forge links and strengthen relationships. Assemblies and prayers to share different faiths, cultures and backgrounds take place throughout the year.

Pupils pray at the beginning and end of the day and lunchtimes; opportunities for formal, spontaneous and meditative prayer are provided and the pupils can voluntarily add their own prayer intentions to baskets. The school might consider

more opportunities for pupils to choose the time and place for their own personal worship; this might tie in with the school's plans to develop a prayer garden for the new building. Each classroom has a focal area which is relevant and attractive with displays of pupils' prayers and objects to illustrate the Religious Education topic. It too could be enhanced as a place for voluntary prayer or reflection. To highlight the importance of collective worship for all of the school community, staff pray at the beginning of each meeting.

The First Holy Communion Programme, led by Parish Catechists, is supported and extended in school with regular teaching sessions. The whole school celebrates with a special assembly dedicated to the First Communicants and attended by their families in the weeks following their First Communion.

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