



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Monitoring Visit

ST PETER'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Lichfield Road, Bloxwich, Walsall, WS3 3LY

Inspection dates	16 th - 17 th November 2015
Reporting Inspector	Mr Joseph Skivington

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3-11 years
Number on roll	221
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governing body	Mrs Sheila Smith
Telephone number	01922 710872
E-mail address	postbox@st-peters.walsall.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	March 2012
DFE School Number	335/3306
Unique Reference Number	104234

Headteacher	Mrs Debbie Beirne
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Previous inspection:	3
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This inspection:	2
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DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



Information about this inspection

- 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 5 part RE lessons jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- 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 staff and with the parish priest and the chair of governors. He observed collective worship in the Reception class and a whole school assembly, whole school celebration of Mass, the Rosary group, 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, the development plan, teachers' planning, and learning journals.

Information about the school

- St Peters is a single form entry primary school in Walsall, with 221 on roll, including the Nursery class. Those who are Catholic make up 64%, and the rest are from a variety of faith backgrounds.
- A lower than average proportion of pupils are from a range of different ethnic and cultural background.
- A new RE subject leader took up post in May 2015. The school has experienced significant staffing problems over the last twelve months, which have now largely been resolved. Almost all staff are Catholic
- Attainment on entry indicated by RE baseline assessment is low.

Main Findings

- The quality of self evaluation of Catholic life and collective worship is good.
- The quality of self evaluation of RE is good.
- The quality of improvement planning is good.

School Self Evaluation

Catholic Life

- Since the last inspection the school has introduced more robust and reliable systems for monitoring and evaluating Catholic life, as well as the quality of religious education. These takes the form of frequent reviews and feedback from staff, pupils, governors and parents, leading to concrete action through the school's short and long term development plan. This is an impressive working document displayed in the staff room and annotated weekly with teachers' post-it notes, to provide an ongoing picture of progress which is measurable, and allows objectives to be reshaped as soon as the targets are reached
- Since 2012, when staff knowledge of assessment and planning was poor, the school has put in place a much more effective assessment and tracking system

which provides a clearer picture of pupil progress. The new headteacher brought in lesson observations, regular book trawls (involving governors and parents), Inset on assessment and marking. In particular whole school moderation in RE focussed on criteria such as learning *from* religion as well as *about* religion, with considerable success, as seen in the reflective and relevant extended writing of the older pupils.

- Due to recent staffing problems which were out of the school's control there have been some inconsistencies and a negative impact on progress, but the leadership has worked tirelessly to make sure that any serious lack of achievement has been obviated through focussed catch up where necessary. In this they have been very successful.
- Staff have received specific training, including diocesan input, to be better able to model, encourage and promote informal prayer opportunities for the pupils. This is a staff that prays daily together and provides excellent role models for the children. As a result they in turn are taking more ownership of their prayer life, with the older pupil helping the younger with their class assemblies. There is further Inset booked for January to work on a spiritual audit of all subjects.
- The school is developing fruitful processes whereby pupils contribute well to evaluation through surveys, questionnaires, school council, and the prayer leaders. They are involved currently in planning an area for quiet prayer in the school grounds. The mission statement was reviewed in 2013 by stakeholders and now the pupils will have the opportunity to discuss and interpret what the mission means to them in their daily lives. In conversation, pupils are enthusiastic about the opportunities to contribute more to the spiritual and prayer life of the school and to take more ownership of it.
- Pupils are involved in the reviews and evaluations of their liturgies and assemblies, and this encourages them to be reflective but also more confident in actively participating and contributing. This was evident in an assembly during inspection where Year 3 pupils dramatised the story of Jesus meeting Zacchaeus and how it changed his life.
- Staff are an integral part of the review process, particularly the link governor for RE, who plays an effective part in the ongoing evaluation of Catholic ethos and provision for spiritual development. Every staff member has a specific RE performance management target, which this term is better outcomes for pupils. As a result, teaching and assessment are having more impact in improving the quality of knowledge and understanding seen in pupils' work.
- Teachers are likewise held responsible for the quality and impact of class collective worship. They take care to plan meaningful class liturgies tailored to their pupils' age and spiritual development. They are helped in this by the prayer leaders who monitor the impact of the prayer areas in the classrooms. Opportunities to involve them further should be constantly identified and seized.
- A very fruitful whole staff/governors retreat day was held in June 2015 with a resultant deepening of understanding what makes a school specifically Catholic.
- The school includes questions about Catholic life and RE in its surveys of parent view. The majority of parents said they are kept well informed about how their children are progressing in RE, and appreciate the strong pastoral care in the school, as well as the outstanding behaviour of the pupils and their care for one another.
- A good example of useful parent feedback was the opportunity to comment and suggest improvements to the Easter celebrations – which the school has taken on board for next year.

- Monitoring of collective worship has a clear impact on the quality of liturgies and assemblies because, through frequent reviews, there are now shared expectations of what constitutes good practice.
- Students of all faiths and none are willing and reverent participants in collective worship. The whole school Mass during the inspection was a joyful celebration where the children sang with great enthusiasm and meaning. Even the youngest were impeccably behaved and involved.
- Action to encourage the involvement of more students in the planning of the liturgies is ongoing. The evidence in the quality of the personal prayers composed by the children points to the development of a deepening relationship with God. The Rosary group meeting at lunchtime is a sign of commitment to developing closer links to Jesus and Mary.
- Some pupils are involved in the parish Sunday Mass, especially during the sacramental preparation course, but there is still scope to actively invite more of them to become more involved, more frequently. At present there are missed opportunities for school and parish to work together to maximise the children's entitlement to experience, and be involved in the wider mission of the Church beyond the school gates.
- Students are aware of the diversity of faiths and cultures in Britain, and can appreciate some of the similarities and differences between their traditions. The Jesuit Pupil profile is proving very useful in helping pupils to articulate their ideas and to make links between the school's values and their daily lives.
- Everyone, regardless of their faith background, is affirmed and respected, and readily welcomed to participate in every aspect, including the Mass, where all, regardless of background, readily volunteer to play a part. Every child's voice is heard, and noted, in an atmosphere of inclusivity.
- Provision for the spiritual, moral and vocational development of students has been audited across all areas of school life and the impact of this is constantly reviewed. There is appropriate provision for sex and relationship education through the *All that I Am* programme.

Governance

- Governors are committed to the school and its Catholicity because they are well informed, and are therefore in a strong position to recognise the quality of its ethos.
- The governors are a well qualified and experienced group of supportive and challenging critical friends of the school.
- Through robust and reliable processes governors hold senior leaders to account for sustaining and constantly improving the Catholic ethos of the school.
- Governors are frequent visitors to the school and know staff and pupils well. Their visits always have a specific aim and purpose, which is noted on a governor visit form and reported back to the full governing body. This enables them to come to reliable conclusions about progress and ethos as evident in the governors' minutes.
- Improvement planning is marked by clear priorities, success criteria, and review intervals. In-service provision and support material are provided for staff. The subject leader will feed back issues to the RE governor each term and the governing body are provided with an overview of progress against the school improvement targets.
- Targets are appropriate to the stage at which the school finds itself, because of the rigorous processes for evaluation which feed directly into the improvement plan.

- This is a school that knows itself well and what it needs to do to sustain its journey to achieving outstanding provision and practice.

Religious Education

- Self evaluation is rooted in close evaluation of performance in RE, which show that the processes for review are increasingly effective in correcting a recent history of mediocre achievement and provision.
- Learning walks and book trawls at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 are key to correcting any inconsistency in teaching or assessment. The marking of pupils' work is an effective means of showing pupils how to improve, but there is a need now to raise the bar further with appropriate challenge and even higher expectation. The pupils' response to teachers' formative advice and comment is, in some books, monosyllabic, and does not therefore have any impact on improvement over time. But there is also good practice where teachers set aside time for pupils to reflect on and respond at some length with real intellectual effort.
- The RE curriculum is broad, inclusive, balanced and occupies 10% of the timetable.
- There is effective support for newly appointed teachers and those who do not have a background in the Catholic Faith.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

- Attainment and progress at both key stages are good. Pupils' baseline assessments indicate low prior knowledge but they make swift progress through Key Stage 1, and by the end of Key Stage 2 the majority meet diocesan expectations in terms of both attainment and achievement. The proportion making more than expected progress is growing and will accelerate with an increase in challenge especially for the more able. The pupils say they really enjoy RE and certainly behaviour across all years for learning is outstanding.
- Disadvantaged and SEN students' progress matches that of the others because of extra support in lessons and tasks which meet their learning needs and match their abilities. Proactive teaching assistants make a real impact on their learning.
- The majority of lessons and books show good learning, a tribute to the teaching, which is consistently good and sometimes outstanding in its impact over time.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge and engage the pupils in the lessons with interesting variety of activities including open discussion about the topics covered. These become increasingly mature and thoughtful as they move up the school, as every student's opinion is listened to with respect and interest.
- The area for further improvement lies in robust questioning which checks understanding rather than presuming it, but also challenges to elicit a measured reflective response, which is essential to stretch the more able, so that the teacher can judge more accurately the progress the pupil has made, both in learning *about* religion but also learning *from* it. Some historical marking has not been effective for this very reason, but the school is now tackling this with focus and determination.
- The school has ensured that the curriculum is structured around the Curriculum Directory for RE.

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.

- There are many opportunities for pupils to exercise concern and generosity towards others through helping each other, outreach to the local community and charities, as well as to support national and international charity work such as CAFOD.
- Students have many opportunities to develop their skills and talents through assemblies and liturgies, using art, drama, and music and the school has good photographic evidence. The colourful displays around the school reflect the liturgical year: they are both instructive and uplifting. The school led the May Procession as well as the cluster Advent celebrations.
- The sacramental programmes are run by the parish priest and led by the parish catechist.
- Priorities for improving outcomes in RE are appropriate and the resultant good and better progress is evident in pupils' work. The impact of every action is at the forefront of leadership thinking and planning.
- The governors are very well informed, are in a position to assess the quality of the RE outcomes, and know how to compare themselves to other diocesan schools. They fulfil their statutory and canonical responsibilities thoroughly.
- Senior leadership is inspiring and staff morale is high. This school is well on its journey now to becoming a school with high quality Catholic life and RE.

Recommendations

- Increase the percentage of pupils making more than expected progress, by the use of more challenging questioning both in lessons and in written feedback, particularly for the more able pupils.
- Take practical steps to encourage closer and more fruitful links and collaboration between the school and the parish community.



November 2015

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

Dear Parents and Carers

Section 48 (Diocesan) Inspection of St Peter's, Bloxwich, Walsall, November 16th – 17th 2015.

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 a very good, distinctive Catholic ethos which informs all that it does. The recently appointed leadership has made a real impact on developing its Catholicity. This is based solidly on clear vision and self evaluation, which will sustain and continue to improve even further the good quality education the school provides. Pupils speak very highly of the school and are using the opportunities to become involved and take ownership of their own education well. Their standards are at the diocesan expectations; progress and achievement are good. The pupils enjoy their work in RE immensely and are eager and valued members of the school community. Their response to the excellent provision for collective worship is good. Teaching and purposeful learning in RE is consistently good with some outstanding practice.

I have recommended that the school should challenge pupils even further, particularly the more able, through questioning closely and marking which has a real impact on better progress over time. Also that parish and school work together collaboratively so that the children feel welcome and able to play a valued part in the shared mission of the Church in the parish.

I met and talked with many of the pupils, whom I found were invariably welcoming and courteous, and I was very impressed by their outstanding behaviour as well as the valued contribution they make to the school community and their own education. They are a credit to the school and to their families and those who care for them.

It was a pleasure and privilege to inspect St Peter's and I wish it every success in sustaining its effectiveness.

Yours sincerely

Joseph Skivington
Diocesan Inspector