



# Archdiocese of Birmingham

## Section 48 Inspection

### **ST. GABRIEL'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Wilnecote Lane, Belgrave, Tamworth, Staffordshire, B77 2LF

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Inspection date 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> March 2017

Reporting Inspector Mr T J Hughes  
Assistant Inspector Mrs R Nash

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Type of School	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	4 – 11 years
Number on roll	404
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Lisa Smith
Telephone number	01827 475045
E-mail address	office@st-gabriels.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	March 2012
DFE School Number	860/3482
Unique Reference Number	124373

**Headteacher** Mr J Hayes

Previous inspection: 1

This inspection: 2

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DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



**Evidence**

- The inspection was carried out by 2 Diocesan Inspectors.
- The focus of the inspection was on the quality, leadership, and impact of the school's provision of Catholic life, collective worship, and religious education (RE).
- The inspectors observed teaching across 12 RE lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. All of these lessons observations were conducted jointly with the head teacher, deputy head teacher or the RE subject leader.
- The inspectors completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic life, worship, and the impact of teaching on their learning over time.
- Meetings were held with the chair of governors, the link governor for RE and other governors, the head and deputy head teachers, the subject leader, class teachers and the parish priest.
- The inspectors attended the celebration of Mass, classroom collective worship, hymn practice and 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.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documents including the school's self evaluation, data about pupils' attainment and progress, RAISEonline, the development plan, teachers' planning, and learning journals.

**Information about the school**

- The school is situated in the parish of St. John the Baptist with Sacred Heart and serves the community South East of Tamworth.
- The percentage of ethnic minority pupils is half the national average.
- The percentage of Catholic pupils is currently 79%.
- The number of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with special needs is in line with the national average.
- Attainment on entry is in line with national expectations.

**Main Findings**

- At St. Gabriel's Catholic Primary School Catholic life and collective worship are both outstanding and religious education is good.
- The welcoming mission of the school is evident everywhere in the school and in every member of the school family.
- The school community is proud of its faith life and engages in a deep and meaningful spiritual dialogue.
- The governors are central to the success of the Catholic life of school; they wholeheartedly embrace the mission and heritage of the school and strive to improve at every opportunity.
- The pupils' response to all aspects of faith is outstanding; they are thoughtful and inquisitive and demonstrate the maturity and confidence to lead the Catholic life of the school.
- The school provides a welcome for needy pupils, and ensures they are integrated and supported to assist their personal and academic development.
- Collective worship is outstanding and is brought alive by the provision of uplifting sacred music.

- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning in RE.
- The teaching of RE is good.
- The outstanding RE curriculum motivates the pupils, building incrementally on their knowledge, skills and spiritual perceptions.
- Good leadership of religious education has given rise to many improvements and supports the rich provision which staff deliver with increasing skill and insight.
- To improve further the school should increase the amount of outstanding teaching and ensure that more able pupils are sufficiently challenged in RE.

## THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

### **Catholic life, collective worship and spiritual, moral and vocational development: provision and outcomes**

- The Catholic life of the school is outstanding.
- The mission statement of the school -  
*'St. Gabriel's is a welcoming school where:  
We pray together, care for each other and learn together.  
We feel safe and respected, we try to do our best.  
Everyone is treated fairly, we have fun with our friends,  
With Jesus Christ at the heart of our loving Catholic community'*  
- provides a map, which everyone follows and is the central, guiding purpose in all aspects of their work together.
- It is clear that everyone is proud of their school and eager to live out this mission.
- The senior leaders, school staff and governors have worked diligently to establish and consolidate the Catholic ethos of the school. As a result, everyone understands and invests in the Catholic life in the school. Prayer is sincere, worship inclusive and uplifting, the curriculum thought provoking and spiritual, and the school environment bears witness to the living faith of each child and each adult.
- The depth of Catholic life in the school has come about through honest self-reflection, strategic planning and hard work.
- The pupils are central to the delivery and maintenance of the Catholic life of the school, they live out the key principles of their faith through their respectful behaviour; they are leaders of prayer and worship and make significant contributions to the direction of the school, for example they are instrumental in selecting and promoting appeals for the charities which the school supports and funds.
- One of the greatest strengths of the school, and as such the deepest element of the Catholic life, is the way in which the school embraces and supports families with needs.
- The governors and school leaders have strategically managed systems to integrate pupils who have challenges in life. Investment of time and money has gone in to employing additional pastoral staff and reaching out in the widest sense, to the local community and providing secure and forward thinking educational and spiritual experiences for all of the pupils.
- Collective worship is outstanding.
- The celebration of Mass, which occurs in the school hall, stands out for its reverence, sincerity and manifestation of a faithful community.

- Pupils prepare and lead collective worship with quiet confidence. They ensure that the services run well and deliver prayer, scripture readings and sacred movement with heartfelt spirituality.
- During collective worship beautiful music, which can be gentle and reflective as well as lively and uplifting, is led by a talented music teacher and accompanied by enthusiastic pupil musicians. All pupils engage in the singing and movement, which enhances their prayer experiences.
- Collective worship from early years through to Year 6 pupils is sincere and personal, it helps pupils feel closer to God and to one another.
- From the last inspection the school has acted upon the recommendation and embedded the practice of the pupils preparing and leading collective worship. It is clear that pupils undertake this task with joy and skill.
- The prayer life of the school has been thoughtfully and conscientiously enhanced through the spiritual enthusiasm of the pupils and the strategic planning of the school staff.
- Pupils offer their own prayers in their written work, open prayer sessions and in class, Mass and the inspirational setting of the prayer garden.
- Prayer is planned and supported, helping the pupils develop skills in reciting traditional prayers, which are appropriate for their age group.
- Praying in other languages has also added another dimension to the profile of prayer.
- Pupils are eager to build their routes to God through engaging in a wide variety of prayer.
- The pupils across a range of ages participate in retreats both at Alton Castle and in other school settings. These retreats allow pupils to explore their beliefs in ways that are different to the activities they experience in class. For many children this has the positive affect of unlocking elements of their inner faith.
- The parish priest has a key role in supporting the collective worship and Catholic life of the school. He works closely with the senior leaders and RE co-ordinator to ensure that the liturgy is brought alive and relevant for pupils of all ages.
- The pupils, and in turn their families, are eager to support the pastoral role that the parish priest and his team have in the local community. For example, in welcoming the growing Polish community the school has embraced the running of a Saturday school for this community and many pupils will attend. The parish is also involved with alleviating homelessness and supporting those in social and economic need. Again, pupils understand the importance of showing compassion and assist the parish in whatever way they can.
- The dialogue throughout the school about the Catholic Schools' Pupil Profile and the related virtues is rich and meaningful. Pupils can recognise the virtues when discussing the actions of others. For example, when discussing fasting and giving during Lent, pupils spoke realistically of 'generosity'.
- As a result of thoughtful planning, the concept of 'vocation' is strong amongst the pupils. Pupils recognise that their behaviour reflects their faith and that God provides them with their personal qualities, which affect others; this they see as a vocation.

- Furthermore, the staff help the pupils link their confidence and growing skills across many subjects to their spiritual make up, which in turn supports their preparation for the wider world.
- The governors and staff are eager to share the mission of the school with parents. They also, through questionnaires, glean the views of parents about the faith life provided for their children and take note and act upon the parents' positive and developmental views.

### **Leadership of Catholic life and collective worship**

- The leadership of the Catholic life and collective worship is outstanding.
- The head teacher, senior leaders, staff and governors have created a school environment which lives out its mission through carefully structured planning and evaluation and with the sincere desire to place Jesus at the heart of everything.
- The head teacher is determined and compassionate and takes all necessary steps to communicate the ethos of the school and challenge all stakeholders to improve their delivery of Gospel values.
- For many of the governors the Catholic life at St. Gabriel's is personal. They have longstanding connections with the school through family and parish links. As a result, they are clear about their responsibility to ensure the Catholic ethos and vision of the school. They are regular visitors to the school and actively monitor the quality of the Catholic life and collective worship.
- The impact of the school development plan is notable. Through collaborative working, the governors and staff have brought about change and development. For example the school has been immersed in the Catholic Schools' Pupil Profile and the related virtues which have led to pupils having deeper discussions in their RE lessons about how they might make the virtues manifest in their lives. In early years, when school leaders audited the teaching and learning in RE, they recognised the need to expose the pupils to a greater variety of prayer and a wider range of gospel stories.
- In recent years the school has consolidated its relationship with a family of Catholic schools in Tamworth and Lichfield. Collaborative working has been a catalyst for development of Catholic life and collective worship in all of the schools and the free flow of ideas and approaches is seen as a positive element in the improvement of St. Gabriel's.
- Governors are eager to continue to update their skills and have undertaken training within the diocese, which has assisted them in monitoring the quality of Catholic life and collective worship.
- The trust between the governors and senior school staff is strong. Their partnership is productive with all parties open to scrutiny and development, giving rise to a mission, which is contemporary and flexible so that faith in the school is relevant to the pupils and their families.
- As a result of audits, the school has both developed its delivery of experiences and resources, which has enhanced the ethos and affirmed the special and reverent qualities of the faith life of the school.
- The governors are dedicated and active in their evaluation of the school's spirituality and promotion of Gospel values. They assess provision through learning walks, the scrutiny of pupils' work, attendance at assemblies and through the reports and discussions at meetings with the head teacher and senior teachers. They recognise the need to further embed the Catholic Schools' Pupil Profile and that the Catholic curriculum could be more explicitly included in planning for subjects other than RE.

- The senior staff and governors monitor and maintain the school website, as they acknowledge what an important platform it provides to communicate the school's message and mission.
- The governors are sincere in their desire to uphold the mission of the school. They have a very real sense of the strong Catholic heritage of the school and the wealth of faith and care it can offer to many children and families, both now and in the future.
- The leadership of the school has worked in a systematic way to monitor provision and the judgements determined in the school's own self evaluation are consistent with the evidence found during this inspection.
- The pupils play an important role in leading the Catholic life of the school. They are sensitive to the emotional and spiritual needs of everyone in the school community. This empathy inspires the prayers that they share and influences their actions as members of the various councils that they are part of.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

### Leadership, outcomes from and provision for religious education

- The provision of religious education at St. Gabriel's is good.
- RE is very well led by the co-ordinator.
- As a result of excellent management, the passion of the lead teacher for RE and infectious communication, RE as a subject has moved forward immensely.
- Standards of achievement in RE are high. From low starting points all groups of pupils make good progress with over three quarters of pupils exceeding expectations in RE by the time they leave the school.
- Pupils make very quick gains in early years and at their midway point of their first year in school, the children can demonstrate a good grasp of prayer, knowledge and spirituality.
- In Key Stages 1 and 2 progress and outcomes are particularly good thanks to the attention teachers give to the needs of all groups of pupils. It is notable that the staff recognise that a significant proportion of pupils with special educational needs will often respond very well in RE and their progress is often faster than the gains they make in other subjects.
- As a result of strong teaching in Years 5 and 6, pupils in these classes make very good progress.
- These standards have been driven up by the concerted effort of the RE leader to improve provision through careful planning, modelling lessons, supporting newer members of staff and making assessment systems manageable and meaningful.
- Focus on the liturgy has been a key factor in improving the understanding, outcomes and empathy of the pupils when responding to tasks and questions about scripture and the life of Jesus.
- The teaching of RE is good with a proportion that is outstanding.
- The best teaching occurs when expectations are high and the consideration about what the pupils will actually learn is planned.
- Teachers use engaging approaches and have developed a culture of mature dialogue in the classroom, which motivates the pupils to think deeply and match what they experience in lessons about their faith to their own lives.



- A significant proportion of teaching is only good and some way from outstanding. Some teachers were not completely clear about the learning and did not model their expectations or promote high quality work in pupils' books.
- The RE leader has correctly identified the need for class teachers to differentiate work for a wider range of pupils with differing abilities and in a number of lessons the favourable impact of this was evident.
- The school's marking policy, which is adhered to by all staff, allows pupils and teachers to have a conversation about faith through the work undertaken. Often class teachers will extend a pupil's thinking or offer a further challenge so that deeper consideration is given to what faith means to children in their own lives.
- The school has worked hard to address the issue of multi-faith experiences in the curriculum. This has been achieved through some inspired work utilising the skills and knowledge of key members of staff and forging links with other schools in other parts of the Midlands.
- For example, the school has developed a partnership with Westminster School in Birmingham, a school with a diverse range of faiths represented. Shared work with Westminster School has provided opportunities to gain a greater understanding of other world faiths through the eyes of children.
- The RE curriculum is enriched by work about vocation. The pupils have an instinctive perception of 'choice' i.e. 'God gives us gifts and talents and we choose how to use them for the benefit of others'.
- Regular charity events for local and global causes, visits to places of worship and venues of social importance, like The Houses of Parliament, are all ingredients of the breadth of the Catholic curriculum.
- The governors fulfil their statutory and canonical responsibilities in regards to RE. They ensure that the requirements of the Bishops Conference are met in terms of curriculum time for RE and the priority that RE is given in the school. This is borne out by standards of achievement in RE which are in line with the good standards achieved in the core subjects of reading and writing.
- The teaching of relationships and sex education is in accordance with the recommended approach of the Catholic Church and is delivered sensitively to meet the needs and understanding of the pupils of all ages.
- As the pupil roll has increased over time, so the school site has grown. School leaders have taken the opportunity to include spiritual development in the physical elements of the building and grounds. This has led to an inspirational range of displays, artefacts, statues and prayer areas, which provide a reflection of the faith, values and mission of the school.

## Recommendations

### In order to improve the school should:

- Extend pupils' understanding and knowledge in RE by:
  - Improving the quality of teaching and learning so that a greater proportion is outstanding.
  - Ensuring more able pupils are challenged and can respond at greater depth both verbally and in their written work.