



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST WULSTAN'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

STOURPORT-ON-SEVERN

Inspection dates
Reporting Inspector

3rd – 4th February 2014
Brenda Beale

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4-11 years
Number on roll	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of Governors	Mr Patrick Kennedy (Acting Chair)
School address	Elmfield Walk Stourport-on-Severn Worcestershire DY13 8TX
Telephone number	01299 877808
E-mail address	secretary@wulsev.worcs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	November 2008
DFE School number	885/3380
Unique Reference Number	116915

Headteacher

Mrs B Boffey

DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



Evidence

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 3 full RE lessons with the headteacher. 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. She held meetings with the chair of governors, staff, the parish priest and deacon. She observed a prayer service in the Reception class and a Mass. She 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. She looked at a range of evidence related to the school's self evaluation such as RAISEonline, the development plan, teachers' planning and assessment. Alongside the validation of school self evaluation, the inspector gathered evidence about teaching and learning, evidence which will be shared with other diocesan schools.

Information about the school

St Wulstan's is a one form entry Catholic primary school serving the parish of St Wulstan, Stourport-on-Severn. St Wulstan's is in a mixed area of some council and predominantly private housing. The proportion of Catholic pupils is currently 80%. Only 3% of the children come from ethnic minority groups. 12% of pupils are on the special needs register, with 2 children having a statement. 10% of pupils receive free school meals whilst only 1% have English as a second language. The school is currently in negotiations to convert to a Multi Academy Company with four other Catholic primary schools and a Catholic secondary school.

Main Finding

In its self-evaluation St Wulstan's judges itself to be good in all aspects of its Catholic life and RE. These judgements are wholly reliable in so far as nothing is less than good but self-evaluation has been cautious, as in some areas there is evidence of outstanding practice, particularly in the way pupils respond to and participate in the school's worship and Catholic life. Self-evaluation has rightly acknowledged that in terms of overall effectiveness it is a good Catholic school with some outstanding features. RE is very well led and monitored by the RE subject leader and this has led to steadily improved practices and outcomes for pupils. The Catholic life is well led and, though there is not a wide range of written formal monitoring procedures in place, it is a high priority for senior leaders, the RE subject leader, staff and governors. It is under constant review and scrutiny. Since the last inspection a number of initiatives have been introduced which have led to the improvement and enrichment of the Catholic and worship life of the school.

School self-evaluation

One of the main strengths of the monitoring of the Catholic life and collective worship in the school arises out of the strength and experience of the senior leadership team and RE leader who are fully committed to its maintenance and development. The senior leadership and RE leader know what is required to ensure best practice in RE and Catholic life and there is a culture of openness, honesty and a willingness to accept changes that will lead to improvement. This is reflected in the development plan which documents improvements that have been achieved whilst identifying clear areas for development, comprising explicit responsibilities, times and costings. The governing body is fully informed and very knowledgeable about the Catholic life of the school and of the attainment and progress of

pupils in RE. Governors provide both support and challenge for the maintenance and improvement.

Pupil participation and response to Catholic life are judged by the school to be good but this is a cautious judgement as it is at times outstanding. Senior leadership is vigilant with regard to pupils' behaviour: they rely on a range of information gained through lesson observations, attention to behaviour at all times, and informal feedback from parents and visitors. Behaviour is exemplary. The first item at any staff meeting is child centred concerning group or individual behaviour or concerns. This is similar for most aspects of Catholic life. Senior leaders and staff know the children and their response to Catholic life very well. The way in which pupils participate and respond to collective worship is judged to be good but there is an acknowledgement by staff, parents and governors that it is substantially outstanding. Though there are few formal monitoring procedures in place great attention is paid to the way in which children behave and participate in Mass, assemblies, class prayers and meditations. A prayer audit has been carried out by the RE subject leader by which means a weakness in prayer was identified and measures to improve it were put in place. The school has a united staff and Catholic life and worship are often subjects for discussion and reflection.

RE is very thoroughly monitored and impact carefully evaluated by the subject leader. The school rightly judges that attainment and progress are good and at times outstanding. The RE leader bases her judgements on a range of thorough monitoring processes: assessments, book trawls, lesson observations, learning walks, pupil discussions and marking. Teaching and curriculum are also carefully monitored. Support is provided for new or inexperienced teachers and the subject leader works closely with RE leaders from other Worcestershire Catholic schools.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

Attainment in RE is above average with some that is high. Careful tracking of vulnerable groups across the school ensures that teachers are well informed about pupils' progress in RE, and they have appropriate expectations of their progress. Children make good progress by the end of Key Stage 1 and, by the end of Year 6, the quality of their learning is good and sometimes outstanding. Care is taken to differentiate work for pupils of all abilities. All pupils are encouraged to develop as independent learners through questioning, discussion, and talking partners. Teachers plan lessons which enable the children to enjoy RE. Through monitoring the RE leader ensures that activities are sufficiently challenging for all pupils, and that their attainment and progress is in line with that made in literacy.

Pupils respond very well to the range of opportunities which the school provides for them in relation to the Catholic life. Their excellent behaviour promotes good and better learning and contributes greatly to the Catholic life of the school. They take on responsibilities within the school and parish e.g. house captains, school councillors, altar servers, play leaders, reading buddies, serving afternoon tea to sick and elderly parishioners. Children are encouraged to reflect upon their own personal calling to serve God and their own personal vocation. The quality of worship at St Wulstan's reflects the spirituality of all the pupils and their active participation in Masses both at school and in church provides strong evidence of their spiritual growth. Collective worship and prayer are an integral part of school life. Children are encouraged to learn formal prayers but also to write their own prayers and to take part in open prayer times. Good use is made of the school prayer book of which each child has a copy. Pupils make good use of the school chapel in which the Sacrament is reserved. The children enjoy Mass and the new parish priest is very popular because as

¹ As the quality of the school self-evaluation has been affirmed, the judgements in this section of the report conform largely to those of the school.

one child explained 'his sermons are really good fun but have a special meaning. I love listening to him.'

The leadership of Catholic life, in which the RE leader also has a strong input, is good. Staff and governors share a clear vision based on strongly held beliefs and values. The school's mission statement reflects the clear direction of the school's work and ethos. This has been recently reviewed and amended with all stakeholders, including parents and the governing body, contributing to the agreed statement. The spiritual development of the staff is important to governors and senior leaders and has been supported through dedicating teacher in-service days to a staff retreats and opportunities are given for staff to celebrate Mass together in the school chapel. The Catholicity of the school is of prime importance to the governing body and senior leaders who take a keen interest in any political agendas which might change the nature and purpose of the school. The governing body is fully committed to upholding the Catholic ethos of the school, and in fulfilling its role as critical friend through providing support and challenge for the school as it seeks to implement its mission statement. They are committed to appointing Catholic teachers wherever possible and a significant proportion of teachers employed at the school hold the CCRS qualification.

The provision of RE is very good and it is well led and monitored by the subject leader. A high proportion of teaching and learning is good and sometimes outstanding. Different teaching and learning styles are catered for with a variety of planned activities and resources. Staff skilfully use a range of questioning techniques to further develop pupils' learning. Differentiation in planning is used to cater for pupils of all abilities. Effective use of resources, including ICT and teaching assistants, ensures that children are well supported in their learning. More experienced members of staff support and mentor those with less experience to drive up standards. Spiritual, moral and vocational development is only indirectly monitored through lesson observations but great attention is paid to pupils' behaviour towards each other and adults. Pupils' spiritual, moral and vocational development it is greatly enhanced by the care and guidance they receive from all staff who are passionate in giving them the best religious experience they can. Pupils learn to respect others, to value justice, understand the difference between right and wrong, and learn to forgive others and ask forgiveness. This underpins the school's behaviour management policy.

Assessment against national attainment level descriptors is ongoing and rigorous. Learning objectives and success criteria are shared with the pupils at the beginning of lessons and are renewed in the plenary to aid teachers' planning and assessment. This is then used to consolidate, revise and progress. Staff have high expectations which enable the pupils to think and work towards becoming independent learners. Support staff, when available, are effective in supporting learning; teaching assistants make important contributions to pupils' good progress in RE. Through marking and verbal feedback, staff ensure that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do next to improve their work. Marking and questioning are very effective in developing understanding and meaning. The pupils are fully involved their learning and respond enthusiastically to questioning and they are keen to pose questions and seek answers. In outstanding lessons 'teacher talk time' could be more accurately described as 'teacher/ pupil dialogue'. Assessment procedures, as recommended by the diocese, are embedded across the school. Moderation of work takes place during staff meetings.

The school reliably judges the RE curriculum to be very good. RE curriculum reflects the values and aims of the school as well as the relationships the children have with each other and their teachers. The diocesan scheme 'Learning and Growing as the Children of God' is followed from Reception Class to Year 6 ensuring progression between key stages and

year groups. It is continually developing and growing. The children are given many varied opportunities to enrich their learning and to respond to God's calling in their everyday lives. The curriculum is further enriched by the distribution of the 'Wednesday Word'. Pupils are confident to discuss their knowledge and understanding of the faith and their life within the parish. There is an effective programme for sacramental preparation which involves the school, home and parish. An understanding of other faiths is taught through a planned programme of work. Pupils have also visited other places of worship to further enhance their understanding of other faiths. Sex and relationship education is taught through the diocesan scheme, 'All that I Am.'

Collective worship and prayer are an integral part of school life. A regular programme of assemblies including class assemblies, Masses, hymn practices, penitential services and daily prayers take place in school and church. A gospel assembly each week allows the children to engage with the Sunday gospel. Masses to celebrate notable times in the Church and school calendar are held in school due to the distance involved in travelling to the parish church. School Masses are held in church on Sundays on a monthly basis when the children lead the singing. There are strong links with the music and RE departments of the Catholic secondary school with an annual celebration of faith and music, shared with the secondary school and its other Catholic feeder schools. Formal prayers are said each morning, at lunchtime and at the end of the day. Prayer tables are a focal point in each classroom. Pupils are given the opportunity to understand different devotions including the Rosary, Stations of the Cross and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

Self-evaluation reliably judges St Wulstan's to be a good Catholic school with many outstanding features. All staff are excellent role models and ensure the development of the Catholic ethos. The school has very close links with the parish enabling the pupils to become valued and active members of the parish community. The pupils' behaviour is outstanding and together with their enthusiasm for learning enables the pupils to achieve good standards.

Recommendations

- Further develop the programme of auditing and monitoring of Catholic life and collective worship and ensure that all members of the community, particularly pupils are involved in these processes.
- Further support pupils' understanding of vocation through a planned programme of visits and speakers.
- Ensure all staff understand what makes 'outstanding' teaching in RE and its impact on successful learning to move all lessons to outstanding



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February 2014

Dear Parents and Carers

**Section 48 (Diocesan) Inspection of St Wulstan's Catholic Primary School,
3rd – 4th February 2014**

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 judged itself to be good in its Catholic life and RE with many outstanding features. The inspection found that this overall judgement is reliable because your children flourish in this school where Catholic life and collective worship is outstanding. At the end of both key stages pupils' achievement is good and at times outstanding. Pupils make excellent progress and enjoy their RE lessons. The provision for their spiritual and moral development is exceptional. Teaching is consistently good and at times outstanding. Pupils' behaviour and care for everyone in the community is exemplary. Children respond exceptionally well to the collect worship which they help to provide. Catholic life is very effectively led by the governors, headteacher, senior leadership team, RE leader with the support of the parish priest. The subject leader is outstanding and fully committed to her role and to improving standards in RE. Children thrive well in this school because they feel safe and are happy, confident to face challenges and have a very good understanding of how loved and special they are in God's eyes.

To make this very good school even better we would like leaders to monitor more formally pupils' outstanding participation in and response to Catholic life and collective worship. This will enable the school to improve on its already excellent provision. We would like the school to further explore the promotion of vocation by inviting speakers from different walks of life who are seeking themselves to be the best that God wants them to be. Finally we would like the school to ensure all teaching of RE is outstanding.

Throughout the inspection your children were so very courteous, welcoming and extremely well behaved. They fully participate in the school's Catholic life and love to worship and pray together. They work very hard in their RE lessons. They are rightly very proud of their school. We thank you for the part you play, whatever your own faith may be, in supporting the Catholic life of the school and your child's spiritual growth.

Yours sincerely

Brenda Beale
Diocesan Inspector