



# Archdiocese of Birmingham

## INSPECTION REPORT

### ST WULSTAN'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME

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Inspection dates	3 <sup>rd</sup> - 4 <sup>th</sup> December 2013
Reporting Inspector	Brenda Beale

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3-11 years
Number on roll	430
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of Governors	Mrs D Lowe
School address	Church Lane Wolstanton Newcastle ST5 0EF
Telephone number	01782 296140
E-mail address	headteacher@st-wulstans.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	October 2009
DFE School number	860/4366
Unique Reference Number	124359

<b>Headteacher (Acting)</b>	<b>Mrs V K Smith</b>
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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, and parish priest. She observed three phase liturgies 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. She looked at a range of evidence related to the school's self-evaluation such as RAISE online, the development plan, teachers' planning, and learning walks. 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 larger than average primary school serving the parishes of St Wulstan, Wolstanton and St John the Evangelist, Chesterton. A below average proportion, just over a tenth of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium. The percentage of children with special educational need and/or disabilities is lower than the national average. Until the beginning of this academic year the school was led by an executive headteacher. Currently the school is being led by an acting headteacher who was previously the deputy headteacher. The school runs both breakfast and after school clubs. 60% of the children are baptised Catholics.

## **Main Finding**

School self-evaluation judges that the overall effectiveness of its Catholic life and RE is good with some outstanding features. This judgement has been reached by the school because since the previous inspection there is clear evidence that the school has moved on in all areas, including its provision for RE and the Catholic life. It has developed and continues to develop processes to rigorously monitor and evaluate the impact that changes and improvements have on outcomes for pupils, parents and staff. In its self-evaluation St Wulstan's judges itself to be a good Catholic school in which the leadership of the Catholic life by the senior team, RE leader and governors is good. It also judges that the way pupils benefit and participate in the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. It believes that the provision of collective worship is good with pupils' response being very good and at times outstanding particularly when they lead and organise liturgy and worship. Self-evaluation ascertains that teaching is good and sometimes outstanding leading to good and at times high attainment in religious education. These judgements are accurate and wholly reliable.

## **School self-evaluation**

The way in which leaders monitor and evaluate Catholic life and plan for improvement is good. Audits, questionnaires, learning walks, staff meetings and reports to governors by the headteacher and RE subject leader feed into detailed plans with specific and measurable actions that have led to rapid developments and effective improvements. This is an ongoing process which is in itself developing into outstanding practice. The governors are fully informed about the Catholic life, through termly reports from the RE leader. The chair of governors is an experienced practitioner in Catholic education and a frequent visitor to the school providing good support and challenge. She 'walks the school' alongside the RE leader ensuring the spiritual environment provides the best opportunities for pupils, parents and staff. All staff, governors, parish priest and parents make a significant contribution to

the strong Catholic ethos. Although leaders are relatively new to the role, the school is well led and managed and the acting headteacher, RE leader and other school leaders have their own strong personal faith and they share their faith journey with other staff and children as they understand the difficulties of practising their faith in an increasingly secular world. With this awareness, leaders are committed to continuing to move the school forward, and judgments made in each of the areas are based on very recent monitoring and evidence.

The quality and quantity of the provision of collective worship is a high priority within the school. Careful planning and monitoring has led to extensive improvements which in turn has greatly improved pupil response and participation. Self-evaluation judges pupils' response to collective worship is good and at times better. It has carefully monitored the impact greatly improved provision has had on pupils, parents and staff. Audits, surveys and questionnaires have fed into development plans. For example senior leaders have acted on pupils' suggestions to develop an outdoor reflective/prayer area. The RE leader is wholly committed to and has the capacity to develop outstanding RE and Catholic life in the school. She has been described by an outstanding and experienced teacher in the school as 'an inspiration'.

The way in which the RE leader monitors and evaluates her subject is extremely good. Pupils' attainment and progress in RE is very well monitored. The RE leader has carefully analysed the results of the assessments and has set out to raise achievement in the area of learning from religion and with success. Through CDP staff have had the opportunity to experience and provide different ways in which to encourage this strand of the *National Levels of Attainment* in RE. Attainment across the school has been raised through good assessment procedures, book trawls, learning walks and lesson observation. The findings from these have fed into the RE section of the school development plan and then through INSET and the support of the RE leader have been implemented by staff. Planning is carefully monitored to ensure coverage and progression. Teaching is monitored through lesson observations and book scrutinies. Feedback in lesson observation forms is encouraging but also presents challenge and sets targets for improvement. The school has reviewed its marking policy in order to help pupils understand the next steps they need to take to improve. A robust system of assessment, tracking and monitoring of pupil progress and attainment are in place, though at present it does not look sufficiently closely at the progress and attainment of different groups

### **Overall effectiveness of the school<sup>1</sup>**

Attainment is above average and at times better. Very good progress is made between entry to the school and the end of Key Stage 1 leading to almost all pupils achieving at or above expected levels. Pupil surveys indicate that pupils enjoy RE lessons. Pupils present their work well and Y6 books are particularly pleasing in the quality of both presentation and content. Assessment and surveys show that all groups of children do well and enjoy the range of activities they are offered in RE.

Through reflection and review very good opportunities are offered to the pupils to benefit and contribute to the Catholic life of the school and their response is judged by senior leaders and staff to be outstanding. This judgement is verified through pupil and parent surveys, evidence and records of pupil led fundraising. Monitoring of behaviour by all the staff, school leadership and governors indicate that pupils are courteous, polite, caring, respectful of all persons and fully understand the importance of forgiveness given and received. A strong understanding of vocation has emerged from pupil and parent

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

questionnaires. Feedback from work of a seminarian in the school shows that pupils know that vocation is being the best that God wants us to be and that we are called to use our gifts and talents to serve God.

The way pupils respond and participate in collective worship is high priority and key concern for the RE leader, senior leadership and governors and is regularly reviewed and evaluated at staff meetings and the Mission and Ethos Committee. Responses to pupil questionnaires show that pupils enjoy liturgies and worship in school, many children commenting in particular on the effective use of visual resources and drama. Pupils expressed clearly that they are more engaged when they or children from other classes lead the liturgies. School liturgies and worship are vibrant and they regularly include visual resources for focus, discussion and reflection. Pupils are taught the value of prayer and reflection as part of the school day. They learn about different types of prayer and take responsibility for leading prayer and liturgies.

Teaching is good and at times outstanding. A strong focus since the last inspection on CPD on learning and teaching across the curriculum means that basic features that make good and outstanding teaching are also present in RE lessons. For example, learning objectives are clear and shared with the pupils; success criteria are made clear; assessment for learning is used throughout lessons; teacher questioning is used well to promote and develop children's learning. Lessons are well planned, well structured, and well-paced. Teachers plan a range of activities and teaching strategies

In order to engage all pupils and cater for the needs of different learning styles, pupils have opportunities to work independently, in groups or in pairs, with teachers intervening where appropriate to move learning on. Where additional adults are deployed in class, they are well used to support differentiated learning. ICT supports and promotes learning well. Good use of interactive whiteboards mean that children have access to a range of visual stimuli, prompts and online resources to support learning. The ICT suite is also used for RE lessons as appropriate. A Year 6 pupil wrote, 'RE is fun but interesting at the same time.' In the recent survey 97% of pupils said teachers expect them to work hard in RE lessons

The use of assessment to support learning is good. Teachers give effective verbal feedback during lessons so that children are clear about their next steps in learning and teachers are able to modify lessons to address misconceptions and to extend learning as necessary. Since the last inspection a 'feedback for learning' policy has been developed and implemented, which means that in addition to verbal feedback, written feedback focuses on not just praising effort and attainment, but encourages a dialogue between teacher and pupil, so that next steps are clearly identified and children move on in their learning. Often this is in the form of questions in order to encourage children to think about their learning and to respond to teacher comments made. This process is yet to be embedded across the school. All teachers use the RE level descriptors to assess work. Samples of work and evidence is collected by the RE leader in a portfolio to use in moderation.

The effectiveness of the curriculum in promoting pupils' learning and the way in which it promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and vocational development is good and at times outstanding. Long term planning, medium term and short term ensures coverage of the RE curriculum. The correct time allocation is given to RE on the school timetable. The school uses the Diocesan Curriculum Strategy for the teaching of RE, 'Growing and Learning as the People of God'. This is also reinforced through the Masses, assemblies and liturgies, which follow the liturgical year. Children learn about the teachings of Jesus from the readings, the seasons of the liturgical year and special days, such as saints' days are used to learn about the lives of the saints. The RE curriculum is flexible so that current developments in the Catholic Church locally, nationally and worldwide can be included. For example, with the inauguration of Pope Francis, opportunities were taken for children to

learn about traditions of the Catholic Church, its hierarchy and how a new pope is chosen. In the Year of Faith opportunities have been taken for children to think about how they can bear witness to their faith. Pupils' awareness and respect for other cultures and faiths is high and is celebrated at key points throughout the year in topic work. Family, sex and relationship education takes place in Year 6 and is taught within a context which is consistent with the teachings of the Church. The RE leader and other senior leaders liaise with the parish priest to ensure there is a comprehensive and thorough sacramental preparation programme. Recent parent questionnaires returned show that 100% parents agree that the school provides children with opportunities to develop spiritually.

The provision of collective worship is good and judged by the school to be developing rapidly. The RE leader formulates a plan each term which timetables liturgies and Mass each week and outlines themes/topics on which to base them. These are closely linked to the liturgical year and current topics. Collective worship at the beginning of each week is based on the readings from the Sunday Mass in order to develop children's understanding of what God's word means for us. Whereas previously whole school and key stage liturgies were led by senior leaders, currently all teachers have opportunities throughout the term to lead. This means that, supported by leaders, they are becoming more confident and developing skills needed for leading worship across the school. This also means that non-Catholic staff, supported by their Catholic colleagues, are developing their understanding of the Catholic faith for the benefit of the pupils. The RE leader liaises with the music leader to ensure that music enhances collective worship, choosing music and hymns linked to the seasons of the liturgical year and special days. Children learn a range of traditional and more modern hymns and songs.

St Wulstan's is a school that is highly valued by pupils, parents, staff and governors. The school has been through a time of rapid improvement and has the capacity to close the gap from good to outstanding in all areas of RE and its Catholic life. A parent wrote in a recent survey 'My daughter loves school and flourishes in the caring ethos. She enjoys talking to us about what she has learnt in RE'.

## **Recommendations**

- Improve written feedback for learning, creating a learning dialogue in pupils' books and allow more time in lessons for pupils to respond to feedback.
- Invite external agencies/organisations to broaden children's understanding of vocation in the wider community.
- Broaden the opportunities for parents to share in liturgical assemblies led by the children.



December 2013

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

Dear Parents and Carers

**Section 48 (Diocesan) Inspection of St Wulstan's Catholic Primary School,  
3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> December 2013**

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 with outstanding features in its Catholic life and RE. The inspection found that this judgement is fully justified.

- Your children flourish in this school where the RE and Catholic life has developed greatly since the last inspection.
- Children make good progress in RE because teaching overall is good and at times outstanding. Your children say they enjoy their RE lessons and are expected to work hard.
- The curriculum is very good and greatly enriched by the liturgical life of the school
- Pupils' behaviour and care for each other are outstanding
- The school provides excellent collective worship for all its pupils. And they respond well and participate fully.
- Children of all faiths or none feel included and gain knowledge, understanding and respect of the Catholic Faith.
- Catholic life is very effectively led currently by the acting headteacher, senior leadership team and the subject leader.
- The RE subject leader is highly skilled and dedicated to her management and development of RE.

To improve further I have recommended that the school should improve written feedback to pupils and allow more time for them to respond to the feedback given; invite external organisations more frequently to broaden children's understanding of vocation in the wider community; and broaden opportunities for you the parents and carers to share in liturgical assemblies led by staff and children.

Throughout the inspection, the children were welcoming, extremely well behaved and able to share their knowledge confidently. They enjoy RE and are proud of their school. We thank you for the part you play, whatever your own faith maybe, in supporting the Catholic life of the school and your child's spiritual growth.

Yours sincerely

Brenda Beale  
Diocesan Inspector