

# Westminster Diocese Inspection Report

## St. John Evangelist Catholic Primary School

Duncan Street, Islington N1 8BL

Date of inspection: 20 April 2016



### A. Classroom Religious Education

**What is the overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing pupils' religious literacy?**

**Overall Grade 2**

The overall effectiveness of the school is good. The school has revised its curriculum in recent years to provide a creative and varied approach to covering the key areas set out in the Curriculum Directory across the phases. This is delivered through a variety of approaches and in some cases through excellent learning opportunities. Pupils are highly engaged in their learning which is promoted through well planned and probing questioning, deepening their levels of knowledge and understanding. Most pupils make good progress across the phases, evident through the moderated levels of learning, which are matched to the levels of attainment in religious education. The school participates in the local deanery and diocesan moderation networks. The evidence base shows typicality of teaching is good overall. This is through a variety of effective strategies, including opportunities for pupils to engage in the learning process, and pupils know their next steps in learning and progress. The governing body generously support the excellent range of resources and accommodation. The governors, in particular the link governor and priest, are regularly and actively engaged in keeping abreast of progress of the school's initiatives, such as the new curriculum and its opportunities for further development.

### B. The Catholic life of the school

**What is the overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing?**

**Overall Grade 2**

The overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school is good. The school fully meets the 10% requirement of the Bishops' Conference. This is overseen by the governing body and the school leadership, who are fully committed to effective review and development of the new school curriculum. There is an ongoing contribution to the Catholic life of the school and the governing body is actively engaged in monitoring the progress of the school through identified priorities. Their strategic overview challenges and supports key identified areas. The significant staff movement in recent years has provided opportunities for staff promotion and succession planning. The newly appointed leader of religious education has begun to introduce some strategies and initiatives, in particular for new and inexperienced colleagues, to benefit from mentoring, coaching and modelling from more experienced colleagues and leaders. The school self-evaluation has identified the areas for ongoing development and improvement, which were borne out in the inspection. Respect and value for each other is evident in the exemplary relationships between staff and pupils. The pupils have an understanding of the purpose and value of their commitment to the Common Good and social justice.

## Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent one day in school, visited eleven lessons, an assembly, and six acts of collective worship. They carried out seven interviews with school staff, pupils and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, discussion with local clergy, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of St John Evangelist, Islington was carried out under the requirements of the Canon 806 and Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Archbishop of Westminster. The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation.

## Inspection Team

Mrs Tina Cleugh  
Ms Robina Maher  
Mrs Amanda Crowley  
Mrs Ann Staunton

Lead Inspector  
Associate Inspector  
Associate Inspector  
Shadow Lead

## Description of School

This Voluntary Aided school is a one and a half form entry in the LA of Islington and the locality of Islington. The school serves the parish of St John the Evangelist, Islington. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 99%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 1% and from other Faiths 0%. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 71%.

There are 304 pupils on roll, with 8 pupils with statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health & Care Plans (EHCP). The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average. There is a well above average rate of families claiming free school meals. 109 pupils receive the Pupil Premium.

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DFE Number: 2063456  
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Headteacher: Mrs Tina Oliva  
Chair of Governors: Mrs Patricia Meerestadt

Date of previous inspection: April 2010  
Previous Inspection grades: 1

<b>Key for inspection grades:</b>	<i>Grade 1</i>	<i>Outstanding</i>
	<i>Grade 2</i>	<i>Good</i>
	<i>Grade 3</i>	<i>Requires improvement</i>
	<i>Grade 4</i>	<i>Causing Concern</i>

## **A. Classroom Religious Education**

*How religiously literate are pupils in the teachings and traditions of the Catholic faith and how well do they know, understand and appreciate the importance of religious faith and practice in everyday life?*

### **What has improved in classroom religious education since the last inspection?**

The school has fully met all requirements from the previous inspection. Portfolios of moderated and assessed work in religious education are now in place and updated regularly. The school shares its moderation with other schools in the deanery and within the diocese. Teachers are becoming more confident in matching the moderated samples and planning for further improved levels of attainment in religious education. The school has generously committed funding to support the accreditation of the CCRS for seven members of staff. The school has benefited from a range of in-service training related to the assessment of religious education against the Agreed Understandings. The very recently introduced system of 'Lesson Studies' in religious education is empowering new and inexperienced staff to plan and deliver a systematic approach to topics. The school has identified its intention to increase the breadth of coverage of other world faiths being studied this term, at age appropriate levels.

### **How well does the content of classroom religious education meet the requirements of the Curriculum Directory?**

#### **Grade 1**

The school fully meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory and the 10% coverage of religious education. This is being developed creatively to include significant coverage of the liturgical cycle and the Encyclical from Pope Francis, 'Laudato Si'. The scheme being followed is effectively matched to the Religious Education Curriculum Directory, (RECD). The excellent planning system also includes the opportunities for links to the levels of attainment in religious education. This was evident during the inspection, such as the teaching on the celebration of Pentecost and the work of the Holy Spirit influencing the lives of the saints and indeed those people through history, who inspire their lives today. The key stage 'triad' grouping of the year groups supports the staff to plan and re-visit topics. This is ensuring continuity and progression is being built into the planning, mentoring and coaching for new and inexperienced teachers. Supplementary materials have supported the school's determination to tailor the tasks to enable pupils to reach the higher levels of attainment across the phases. The school has ensured that the lessons also include relevant and appropriate links to current issues in the Church, such as 'faith in action', the Year of Mercy and the art project which links the six elements of Catholic social teaching. The governing body has very generously allocated funding to meet the needs of the scheme and to ensure that relevant and updated resources are available to support the delivery of religious education. They continually monitor the progress of agreed actions.

### **Pupil achievement (as well as attainment and progress) in religious education**

#### **Grade 2**

The achievement, progress and attainment of pupils in religious education across the phases is good overall. There is evidence of better progress in some cases within the year groups and across the phases. The moderation of levels is not yet fully secure and the progress rates are variable. Tracking is in place through 'Target Tracker,' as for other core subjects. Whilst some outstanding examples of marking using the pink/green system of response from pupils was evident, it was variable in some

year groups. The work in the books in religious education is well presented, with good volume and coverage across the year and liturgical cycle. The phases across the school are over-reliant on worksheets in tasks set, which is denying further opportunities for pupils to expand their ideas, especially in upper Key Stage 2. Whilst there is evidence of differentiation in the planning of the tasks being set, not all of the 'other adults' in the learning process are focussed on supporting the pupils with additional and in some cases significant additional needs. At times the work is being 'done by' the adult and thus denying learning opportunities within their different levels of need. The school is fully committed to developing its skills in moderation and matching levels of attainment, as identified in their current action plan and their self-evaluation document. The recent partnership through their deanery, for many staff to access the CCRS training and accreditation, is at an early stage. The members of the newly established senior leadership team are working well together to implement their formative and summative assessment systems. They are tracking and using this information to inform further learning opportunities, towards empowering pupils to reach to the higher levels of attainment in religious education across the phases, within their potential and various stages of attainment.

## **The quality of teaching**

### **Grade 2**

The quality of teaching and its impact on learning is good overall. The evidence base collected during the inspection showed teaching and its impact on learning overall is not yet outstanding, as it is variable within the year groups and across the phases. There were some excellent examples of creative approaches and planned effective probing and searching questioning. These strategies, where they were applied, empowered pupils to deepen their levels of knowledge and understanding in religious education and its relationship to their everyday lives. An example of this was in the nursery, where the children were actively engaged in purposeful and engaging activities, through a range of well-planned indoor and outdoor tasks and activities. Other examples were in the scrutiny of the work in the books and discussion with pupils, where their 'next steps' in extending their learning was followed through. The structure of the planning ensures that succinct links to the RECD, are matched through the topics being covered. There were many examples of excellent support from other adults in the learning, especially for those pupils with additional and in some cases very significant additional needs. However, these excellent practices can be shared and modelled for less experienced non-teaching staff as support and guidance. The school uses the 'pink/green' pen system in religious education, as for other core subjects. Where this was most effective, the pupils were encouraged to respond to the 'pink to think' extension of their learning; however, this is not consistently applied across all classes nor across the phases. The recent introduction of the 'Talk, Time' discussion forum is having an effective impact on the pupils' ability to ask and respond to the 'Big Questions.' These AT 2, 'Learning from Religion', opportunities are enabling pupils to listen to one another, whilst developing their philosophical outlook on the meaning, purpose and challenge to our lives as Christians and in our modern world today. There are examples of outstanding teaching, which provide excellent capacity for effective role modelling in the future, especially from the newly established senior leadership team.

## **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education**

### **Grade 2**

The leadership and management of religious education are good overall. The recently appointed leader of religious education is introducing some effective strategies to ensure that moderation and levelling is accurately assessed. She has devised an action plan which has been presented to the governing body. She has supplemented the religious education scheme to incorporate relevant and appropriate aspects of the liturgical life of the Church. The headteacher is actively guiding and

mentoring the newly appointed leader and other less experienced teachers. The newly introduced 'Lesson Studies' project is being well received, as part of a coherent continuing professional development programme, through its series of support and guidance. The school continues its active networking within the deanery and wider diocesan partnerships. The school has established a regular cycle of updates from the training received by the leader, which is disseminated to all staff. These sessions have included opportunities for embedding the AT 2, 'Learning from Religion', including the effective use of CAFOD, for a more creative approach to the delivery of religious education. The governing body, through the link governor for religious education, are kept informed of these initiatives through a combination of learning walks, led by the leader of religious education, the senior leadership team termly reports to the governing body curriculum and resources committee. The school recognises its current situation, identified in its action plan and self-evaluation document, and is addressing the areas identified to take the school further forward.

### **What should the school do to develop further in classroom religious education?**

- Embed the recently introduced strategy to ensure more accurate levelling of attainment in religious education
- Ensure that the responses through the 'Pink to think' process should move pupils to a deeper and extended levels of learning

## **B. The Catholic life of the school**

*How well do pupils experience the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing through all areas of school life?*

### **What has improved since the last inspection?**

The generous funding allocation for all aspects of religious education and the Catholic life of the school is evident across the phases. The school has appointed a new leader for religious education and the Catholic life of the school since the beginning of this academic year, as the school has recently experienced a significant high rate of staff movement including the leader for religious education and other senior leaders, moving on for promotion. The class worship programmes are being developed with weekly planned acts of worship, which are now beginning to include pupils to lead the worship. This is also an ongoing priority for the school, as identified in their action plan for religious education. The school has developed a sharper focus on the Common Good and Catholic Social Teaching themes. The newly appointed 'Faith in Action Ambassadors' have begun their roles of responsibility and are linking their activities to 'Laudato Si' and other opportunities for fund raising for a variety of causes.

### **The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum – time, staffing, accommodation, resources, budget**

#### **Grade I**

The school fully meets the 10% requirement of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. The governing body shares the school's vision to meeting all aspects of the effective delivery of religious education and the Catholic life of the school and support this with generous funding. This is reflected in how religious education is at the heart of the school and is reflected in the high status applied to all aspects of its delivery. They are actively monitoring the effectiveness of their spending commitment. The newly appointed leader for religious education and the Catholic life of the school is effectively supported by the senior leadership team ensuring whole school initiatives in religious education and the Catholic life are undertaken with enthusiasm and enacted in all key stages. The staff turnover provided opportunities for other leaders to be appointed across both the senior and middle leadership distributed model. The headteacher has worked tirelessly to ensure sustainability and cohesiveness in the staffing structure. The very significant staff movement in very recent years has had an impact on the opportunities for promotion from within and the external appointment of an experienced leader for religious education and the Catholic life. A mentoring system and the recently introduced 'lesson studies' strategy, and the mentoring process for new and less experienced staff, is beginning to impact on improved provision. The mission statement of 'to love, to learn with God in our hearts' is woven through every aspect of the daily life of the school. It is well known and easily referred to by pupils, who are able to link its relevance within their daily lives. The governing body work in close partnership with the headteacher and her team on a daily and more formal basis.

## **The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community.**

### **Grade 2**

Prayer and worship are central to the daily life of the school community including staff and pupils alike. Weekly opportunities for staff prayer include opportunities for staff to participate in readings, reflections and where appropriate spontaneous prayer. Weekly class worship has been introduced and during the inspection, examples of this were observed across the phases. This has identified the need for the school to develop more ownership for pupils to plan, prepare and lead the class worship across the phases, at age appropriate levels. The school has the luxury of proximity to the Church of St John the Evangelist. This is used well by the school, including weekly opportunities for classes to attend the parish Mass and for those older pupils to receive Holy Communion. They also have the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Advent and Lent. The priest who met with the inspectors spoke eloquently of the way the pupils are familiar with their traditional Catholic prayers and traditions and how many of them are altar servers. He also described the pleasure the parishioners receive in listening to their hymns and readings during Mass. He has recently joined the parish and is developing the partnership with the school. He is highly impressed by the wealth of knowledge the pupils demonstrate of their faith, in their responses to him during Mass and his class visits. The school is also planning attendance at the Diocesan 'Year of Mercy' Mass, in June. The school has identified in its action plan the intention to empower more pupil involvement and active participation in preparing and leading liturgies as the way forward towards excellence in the provision for the prayer and collective worship across the phases. They also plan to develop a 'prayer garden' through their partnership with the PTA, promoting a range of fundraising ideas.

## **The commitment and contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice.**

### **Grade 2**

St. John Evangelist demonstrates a good commitment and contribution to the Common Good and social justice. The pupils appreciate their 'call to action.' The 'Faith in Action' ambassadors, who met with the inspectors, described how the faith in action initiative has enabled them to identify and plan fundraising activities and to promote issues related to Catholic social teaching. The pupils are supported to keep abreast of the messages from Pope Francis and his 'tweets' are often referred to by staff during assemblies. The annual schedule of support to local and national charities, include the harvest collection distributed to the homeless in Islington. Other local and national pledges include the 'Christmas Jumper' appeal, the 'Jeans for Genes, Macmillan Cancer Support and the 'run a mile' Sports Relief fundraising activities. These also include, singing Christmas Carols for the local needy during Advent, supporting the Lenten appeals for the Catholic Children's Society and CAFOD. Their international focus raises funds for the 'Missionaries of the Poor Supporters Association, (MOPSA), to help street children in Kenya, Calcutta and the Philippines, be fed and educated. The school has recognised its need now to extend this awareness to the wider school community which will support the pupils across the phases in developing the theological understanding which underpins their actions. Some of the pupils could articulate their understanding of solidarity within Catholic social teaching, where one child described that 'if one hurts, we all hurt, as we are all linked together.' However, it is evident from the discussions with pupils and staff during the inspection and identified in the school action plan, that more ownership by pupils will be developed to take the school forward, The Christ-centred relationships are clearly evident through the interactions

between staff, with pupils and pupils with each other. The behaviour and attitudes of the pupils are exemplary. They are proud of their school and have excellent capacity to be leaders, to develop the many aspects of the range of initiatives to support enhancement of the common good and social justice, both in their school, locally and nationally. In this way, it will impact on the understanding of the pupils and support their human flourishing. The active PTA events include opportunities for family celebrations with the pupils across the age range. Parents are most generous in their fundraising and commitment to supporting those less well off than themselves. They recognise and appreciate the opportunities for their children to be 'active in their faith.'

## **Enabling the authentic partnership between parents, school and parish as an integral part of the Diocese, particularly through its relationship with the Diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf;**

### **Grade 1**

The partnership between home, school and parish is outstanding. The close proximity to the church facilitates regular visits and opportunities to worship and defines the children's understanding of the school as part of the parish. The church and the expertise of the clergy are well utilised and significantly enhance the children's experiences as they continue on their faith journey. The parental questionnaires were overwhelmingly positive and this was affirmed by the parents who met with the inspectors. The school fully engages with the Islington deanery forums at various levels as well as joint in-service days on religious education and the Catholic life of the school. The pupils benefit from the 'Big Sing' annual event at St. Joan of Arc Islington, to meet and celebrate with pupils from other deanery schools. A number of staff are working with other colleagues in the deanery, to complete their CCRS accreditation and qualifications, as well as attending liturgical events at deanery levels. The school also engages at diocesan level, attending events such as the Good Shepherd Mass and the Year of Mercy Pilgrimage. The middle leaders also benefit from links through the deanery, such as the Inclusion Leaders' forum and opportunities for the leaders to religious education and the deputy and headteachers, to meet on a planned regular basis for networking, sharing and disseminating good practice. The CCRS programme is a continued hallmark of the way the school has striven to open its networking links and opportunities. The governing body is fully aware of its ecclesial mission in the Church. They actively participate in a range of school events and celebrations and keep abreast of development and priorities through the regular reports from the headteacher and members of the leadership team. The governors who met the inspectors are experienced and outlined how they are fully aware of their responsibility in challenging the leadership and ensuring the school meets all of its statutory and diocesan duties.

## **The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school.**

### **Grade 2**

The overall effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school is good. The senior leadership team is fully committed to ongoing improvement and development, particularly in supporting and empowering the newly formed leadership colleagues. They are most ably led and directed by the headteacher, who has a clear vision and determination for excellence. She has guided and supported the recent and significant changes in staffing and appointed key post-holders, who are growing in their partnership and collaboration to address the key areas for continued improvement and development. The active prayer life and commitment to guiding and teaching pupils to embrace their independence and leadership skills in leading worship and liturgical events, has been acknowledged through discussion during the inspection. This is also identified through their evaluation of the action plan and self-evaluation process. The governing body are kept



fully aware of all aspects of the school improvement agenda and are regular visitors to the school. They participate in learning walks, meet staff and pupils and attend relevant celebrations and events. They are fully committed to ensuring that the school continues to reflect and identify key areas for ongoing improvement and development. They also ensure that the pupils gain an understanding and insight into the theology which underpins their efforts to continue to, 'build up the Kingdom of God in peace, love and justice.'

### **What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?**

- Extend the Faith in Action Ambassador role to ensure that their understanding of theology underpins their actions
- Pupils to be empowered to plan, prepare and lead worship including opportunities for spontaneous and reflective prayer