

Westminster Diocese Inspection Report

St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School

Treadgold Street, London, W11 4BJ

Date of inspection: 29 January 2016



A. Classroom Religious Education

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

Overall Grade 3

The revised curriculum, in place since September 2015, provides staff and pupils with a solid framework on which to build the school's work of developing the religious literacy of the pupils. It is grounded in the requirements of the Curriculum Directory and supported well by materials from recent training. There is built-in clear progression across the year groups with the potential to support good achievement in religious education. Pupils' achievement in religious education is less favourable than in the other core subjects currently. Resources are now readily available so that staff have good opportunities to enhance their teaching and develop pupils' learning rapidly. Teaching is typically satisfactory with some good elements. Recently, checks on pupils' learning and moderation of their work have been built into the cycle of the school year. Marking and the assessment of the pupils' work is generally regular but not yet fully diagnostic in helping pupils to move to the next steps in their learning. Pupils respond well to teachers' oral feedback but less effectively to written comments. Pupils' attainment is now carefully moderated with other local schools and the diocese, as well as internally. Senior leaders work very effectively in conjunction with the subject leader to ensure that religious education makes a central contribution to the Catholic life of the school. The link governors for religious education, including the parish priest, are actively involved in supporting classroom religious education. In discussion, current governors showed a thorough understanding of the next steps for the school. Classroom religious education at this stage of the school's journey is satisfactory rather than good because necessary changes to the school's provision in religious education have not yet had a full impact on how well pupils achieve.

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 3

The overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of this school is sound. St Francis of Assisi is an inclusive Catholic community where pupils' welfare is given high priority. As a result, pupils' personal development, demonstrated in their positive attitudes to school, to others less fortunate than themselves, and to those from different faith traditions, is good. The pupils show a growing understanding of the theology underpinning their pursuit of the Common Good through charity appeals and simple service to others. In this, the staff team and pupils are well supported by the local parish priest and by governors. The school's Catholic ethos is increasingly well demonstrated through the environment with its religious artefacts, displays of its charitable undertaking, and the regular visits to the parish church to celebrate Mass. Gradually, children are gaining in confidence in organising worship. Existing staff and those new to the school are now playing a more effective part than previously in the development of Catholic life. Current governors, including the parish priest, are actively involved in evaluating and developing Catholic life at St Francis. The school has an honest and accurate evaluation of how well it fulfils its mission as a Catholic school and recognises it has a way to go in encouraging pupils' active involvement in the prayer life of the school.

Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, executive headteacher, associate headteacher and staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent one day in school, visited 6 parts of lessons, undertook a learning walk, two collective worship sessions, carried out five interviews with school staff, pupils and governors. Other evidence was gathered from discussion with the parish priest, contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of pupils' work in lessons and in their books, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The inspection of St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School, Notting Hill, 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 Sheila Nolan	Lead Inspector
Mrs Claire O'Neill	Associate Inspector

Description of School

St Francis of Assisi is a one-and-a-half-form-entry Catholic primary school in the local authority of Kensington and Chelsea and the locality of North Kensington. The school serves families from the local parish of St Francis of Assisi but pupils also come from the neighbouring boroughs. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 91.5%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 7.5%. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 52.6%. One member of staff has a Catholic qualification.

There are 295 pupils on roll, with 5 pupils with statements of special educational need or 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 also well above average. There is an above average rate of families claiming free school meals. There are 104 pupils in receipt of the Pupil Premium.

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DFE Number:	207/3437
URN Number:	100494

Headteacher:	Mrs Kathleen Williams (Executive Headteacher) Mrs Dee Carey (Associate Headteacher)
Chair of Governors:	Mr John Asgian

Date of previous inspection:	July 2010
Previous Inspection grades:	Outstanding

Key for inspection grades:	<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?

Since the last inspection, the school has experienced much turbulence in its senior leadership. There have been similar significant changes in the make-up of the staff. As a result, not all the issues from the last inspection have been addressed fully. However, new leadership structures are now fully in place with notable support from another local successful Catholic school. Much work is underway to embed helpful systems and procedures so that the school and its pupils can flourish in developing religious literacy. The curriculum is developing well following purposeful training for staff. Systems to track and monitor pupils' progress are in the early stages of development but a start has been made in developing base-line assessments. The quality of teaching is also improving as a result of well-considered training, based on secure monitoring and evaluation. There is a determined drive by leaders to improve and staff are buying into the work as best they can.

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

Grade 3

From the beginning of this academic year, the religious education curriculum has changed to reflect the diocesan attainment targets, to build in a cycle of progression, and to ensure that there are explicit links to the Religious Education Curriculum Directory. Additionally, lesson planning explicitly draws attention to the sources of revelation so that teachers are gaining in confidence in using the framework materials. Planning for the 'Big Questions' in AT2 'Learning from Religion' is also integrated into the new scheme of work. Although the Curriculum Directory forms the basis for the content of religious education and planning, the subject knowledge base of staff and their understanding of the sources of revelation continues to need much support. Resources are generally good, building up to match the new curriculum. Staff have had access to focussed training to support their efforts in encouraging their pupils to respond at a deeper level than previously to the work in class and to promote religious literacy. Scriptural sources are regular elements in daily work in lessons. Pupils do have opportunities to learn about other religions, mainly Judaism and Islam. However, pupils report that they would welcome further opportunities to learn more and in greater depth about these and other major religions. They would also like to visit other churches and places of worship.

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

Grade 3

Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive and support them in engaging well with the new curriculum. They are learning how to question and challenge their ideas as well as developing their skills in their use of religious language. Although most groups of children make satisfactory progress, able children have too few opportunities to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills at, and beyond, Level 4. Current attainment in religious education is lower than that in English and mathematics. Recently, the school has established a reliable base line assessment against which to judge the future progress of the pupils. Their work has been moderated carefully in conjunction with two other local schools as well as through diocesan procedures. This has contributed very positively to helping teachers to improve the accuracy and consistency of their judgements. Internal and external moderation of the pupils' work is part of the annual

cycle of the school's work. The school is growing in confidence in the accurate assessment of diocesan attainment targets.

The quality of teaching

Grade 3

Although teaching in religious education is typically satisfactory, there is considerable variation in teachers' knowledge base, confidence in interpreting the new framework and in their understanding of theological concepts. The more confident the staff, the more the classroom methodology used is able to encompass the many and considerable learning needs of the pupils. In a successful Year 3/4 lesson, for example, the teacher's confidence in relating key religious language to everyday experiences supported the pupils well in making progress in their understanding of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Throughout the school, positive working relationships between staff and pupils encourage pupils to work hard and follow teachers' requests. Pupils enjoy the regular access to scriptural sources, now part of most lessons, and older pupils are pleased in the encouragement to extend their work. However, pupils rightly identified that a greater range of activities and work at different levels would help them to make faster progress.

The monitoring cycle for religious education, now in line with that of other key areas, is robust. Evaluations of teaching and learning are accurate and carried out regularly by the senior team on an on-going cycle. Staff needs are carefully aligned with training to allow all staff the greatest possible opportunities to develop positively. Marking is generally regular but not yet developed fully to show regular diagnostic assessment and response from pupils. Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding is still a high priority for the school.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 3

The subject leader has recently taken up the coordination of religious education. In this she is very well supported by senior leaders and by the lead teacher for religious education across the three schools. The executive headteacher has a very clear vision for the direction of religious education in the school. The school is in the process of reviewing its current lengthy mission statement so that its refreshed vision of itself as a thriving Catholic school is readily accessible to all pupils, staff and parents. Senior leaders, the subject leader and governors, understand very well that religious education is at the heart of the school's work as part of the Church's mission. The drive to improve teaching, pupils' achievement in religious literacy, and the understanding and knowledge of many inexperienced and new staff, is relentlessly determined. Although much has been accomplished in a short time, the impact of these efforts is evident in clear systems and procedures but not yet fully demonstrated in classroom practice nor pupils' outcomes. The subject leader is aware of the strengths and areas for improvement among the staff, including subject knowledge relating to the new units of work. Work is moderated internally, with other primary schools, and with the diocese. However, there is much ground to make up following the legacy of sustained turbulence in the school. In particular, target setting for pupils in religious education, improved outcomes for pupils, teachers' sometimes limited subject knowledge and understanding of the new scheme of work, all require improvement. Senior and middle leaders show a whole-hearted commitment to establishing and sustaining excellent religious education.

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

- Develop teaching and learning further by
 - building teachers' knowledge and understanding of the new curriculum units
 - encouraging staff to gain a Catholic qualification
 - embedding the regular and accurate, short- and long-term assessment of the pupils' progress
 - furthering teachers' skill in building on previous learning and planning activities to match pupils' needs, including those of able pupils
 - supporting teachers further in the moderation of pupils' work across the attainment

targets.

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 instability of recent years has been detrimental to the school's attempts to develop its Catholic life. With the appointment of a permanent executive headteacher, an associate headteacher and religious education coordinator robust efforts are increasingly effective in developing the Catholic life of the school. Areas for improvement raised at the previous Section 48 inspection are beginning to be addressed with the appointment of a link governor for religious education and strongly developing links with the local parish. The Catholic life of the school is beginning to return to the heart of the school community. There is, for example, a new Mass timetable, more opportunities for prayer, including pupil-led worship, and an emphasis on encouraging a Catholic environment. However, some of this work is at the early stages of development and needs more time to become fully embedded within the school.

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

Grade 3

Religious education receives the full weekly entitlement of 10 percent of curriculum time as directed by the Bishop's Conference. This academic year, religious education has been given a renewed focus as a core curriculum subject. All class teachers now plan and teach their own classes for religious education. Additionally, regular slots have been identified for assemblies, worship and liturgical celebrations. Throughout the school, religious education is given a high priority in displays and in the many religious artefacts throughout the building. St Francis and St Clare, for example, dominate the entrance hall and greet the visitor although some of these artefacts go unnoticed by staff in the humdrum of daily life. The budget is above that of other core subjects and reflects the school's commitment to improving classroom religious education and developing the staff to teach and assess effectively so that students can make meaningful progress. The mission statement, currently complex and lengthy, is about to be reviewed by the whole of the school community. Senior staff and governors ensure that other leaders are well supported in developing both the academic and spiritual life of the pupils and the staff.

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

Grade 3

Within each class there is a focal point for prayer that displays personal items as well as liturgical themes. Resources are developing well to support prayer in school and at home. Set prayers start each day, the lunch break and round-off the end of the day. All pupils also received a prayer card during the school's feast day. Staff attended training on child-led worship but this initiative is in the early stages of development. Pupils have regular opportunities to attend class Masses at the local parish church. Newsletters from the parish and the school strive to reinforce for families the Sunday Gospel message. Whole-school Eucharistic celebrations take place at least twice a term, reflecting key events in the liturgical year as well as the school's feast day. Previously, assemblies lacked theological input but now increasingly reflect the content of classroom religious education. Nevertheless, the school recognizes that assemblies sometimes lack a clear and accessible Catholic message for the pupils. To date, pupils have had limited exposure to creative

approaches to prayer and the liturgy. However, accurate self-evaluation is ensuring that in the coming months, pupils will have opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation, for example, participate in the Jubilee of Mercy and become an Apostle of Mercy, and use the new school prayer garden. Staff are scheduled for further training to develop Catholic worship and facilitate pupil-led worship and meaningful liturgies.

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

Grade 2

Like their patron saint, St Francis of Assisi, staff and pupils are very committed to contributing to the Common Good within the school, and both locally and internationally. Selected pupils are 'play leaders' and assist other pupils in the playground. Some Year 6 students have formed a group called HELP (Helping Every Loving Person) and have raised money via a music concert and a danceathon for Syrian refugees and a children's charity. The group's next project is helping to save a local library. Pupils understand increasingly well, at their own levels, the theological basis for such projects. One student commented that "we are not related by blood but God is our Father and we are therefore all brothers and sisters." The whole school has also supported the work of Mary's Meals, The Passage and the Catholic Children's Society. The school celebrates achievement and pupils' talents via the saints' house system, zone boards and the weekly newsletter. The students feel secure and happy in the school, are keen to please, are able to thrive in their personal development.

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 2

Partnerships with parents, the parish and the diocese have become central to the school through the work of the current leadership team. Although only a small number of parents replied to a recent questionnaire, the majority who did were extremely positive about children's experiences of the school. Recently the school has striven to work much more closely with parents and carers via a parent-teachers association, a weekly school newsletter, and a religious education newsletter. The school website is in the process of a remake to support communications also. The school is also setting up a parent council this year. The parish priest celebrates Mass with a class each week and is a school governor. He is keen to be involved in school life despite numerous other commitments and he has played a key role in supporting the school by informing the diocese of critical issues concerning governance. He welcomes any additional opportunities to support the development of the school community, particularly the critical area of the subject knowledge of the staff. The school is now very open to the support of the diocese and as a result good links have been established. Staff attend regular diocesan training and moderation opportunities and the school also welcomes members of the diocesan team to support the school. Close links with two other primary schools is rapidly improving the rate of progress in these aspects of Catholic life. There are now excellent opportunities for the sharing of good practice, moderation and support for the development of religious education and the Catholic life of the school

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

Grade 3

In this recovery phase after a sustained period of turbulence, leaders and managers are positive and realistic about the Catholic life of the school. This is in part because even during difficult times the school did not lose completely its Catholic identity. As a result, the school is in a strong position to develop further its existing practices of prayer and worship and the Common Good. The school is very aware of

the church's global mission and its responsibility to promote this mission among its community beginning with an in-depth review of its mission statement. The governing body has been energised in fulfilling its responsibilities to develop the Catholic ethos of the school. Governors have an accurate view of critical areas and understand that the expectation to monitor formally future development and ensure a rapid but sustainable rate of progress for St Francis.

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

- Embed formal systems for the monitoring and evaluation of the Catholic Life of the school to ensure that there is continuing improvement in all areas.
- Increase the opportunities for child-led worship.
- Review and revise the mission statement to make it readily accessible to the whole school community.