



# **St Mary's Catholic Primary School and Nursery**

Durants Road, Ponders End, EN3 7DE

Date of inspection: 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2014

## **A. Classroom Religious Education**

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

**Overall Grade I**

The overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing pupils' religious literacy is very good. The curriculum is based on the delivery of the Curriculum Directory supported by the 'Resource Framework for Religious Education in Catholic Schools.' Pupils are gaining religious literacy at a very good rate through the high expectations and careful planning of their teachers. They have very positive attitudes to religious education lessons and enjoy the wide range of activities used by staff to consolidate learning. Attainment is very good and in line with diocesan expectations. Self-evaluation is up to date, accurate, well evidenced and illustrates a very good awareness of development areas for religious education. Very good leadership of religious education supports the setting of challenging targets for pupils and provides very good support for new staff in planning and delivery of the curriculum. There are very good systems in place for monitoring all aspects of teaching and learning as well as regular participation in diocesan moderation.

## **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 I\***

This is an outstanding Catholic school in its effectiveness in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing. The vision of the headteacher, senior leadership team and governors, supported by local clergy is instrumental in ensuring that worship, prayer and sacramental celebration are central to the life of the school. The celebration of the Eucharist and Reconciliation are offered at key times of the year with pupils' participation in the preparation. Religious education is valued and recognised as the core of the curriculum and is given a very good range of resources which are under constant review. Pupils have a good understanding of the social teaching of the Church and are given many opportunities to develop personal responsibility and engage in action to support those in need locally and in the wider world. Governors play a major role in the life of the school in self evaluation and the Catholic Life of the school. There is a strong appreciation of being part of the local deanery and diocese of Westminster.

## 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 fourteen lessons, attended one Mass, eleven acts of worship and carried out seven interviews with school staff, pupils and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, discussion with the parish priest, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School and Nursery, Ponders End 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 Pamela Brannigan	Lead Inspector
Mrs Lisa Barton	Associate Inspector
Mrs Catherine McMahon	Associate Inspector

## Description of School

The school is two form entry in the LA of Enfield and the locality of Ponders End. The school serves the parish of Mary, Mother of God, Ponders End with a few pupils coming from adjoining parishes. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 98%. The proportion of pupils from other Christian denominations is 2% with no pupils from other faiths. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 89%.

There are 461 pupils on roll. There is one pupil with a statement of Special Educational Need. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is, at 83%, well above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is also well above average. There is an average rate of families claiming free school meals. One hundred pupils receive the Pupil Premium.

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DFE Number:	308 3500
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Headteacher:	Ms M Creed
Chair of Governors:	Mr K Andrews

Date of previous inspection:	25 <sup>th</sup> March 2009
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<b>Key for inspection grades:</b>	<i>Grade 1*</i>	<i>Outstanding</i>
	<i>Grade 1</i>	<i>Very Good</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?**

There were two areas for development identified in the last inspection. The first was to introduce more creativity into the teaching of religious education particularly by the greater use of ICT and new technologies. This has been very well addressed through a major investment in interactive whiteboards and a new information centre for pupils' use. The second was to review and develop further the teaching about other faiths to increase pupil knowledge and understanding of the wider world. The review has led to increased coverage of two world faiths and includes visitors to describe and explain their faith and practice. Both areas have been fully and successfully reviewed. There has also been a review of assessment in the light of the agreed understanding of levels of attainment and the new Curriculum Directory. A programme of internal and diocesan moderation has been put in place to support staff as they plan and assess pupils' work. New resources have been purchased to support teaching and learning including those for other faiths.

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

**Grade 1**

The content of curriculum religious education meets all the requirements of the Curriculum Directory. Teachers plan their topics highlighting the areas of the Curriculum Directory to be covered and each area is linked with year groups including the Early Years. Religious education across the school is creative, engaging and meets learning needs for all groups. The programmes of study provide a systematic study of the life and teachings of Jesus and the relationship between life and faith. Resources are used creatively to ensure the provision of an interesting and challenging curriculum. There is much evidence to show progression and depth of provision.

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

**Grade 1**

Pupil achievement, attainment and progress in religious education are very good. All groups make good progress including those in receipt of Pupil Premium. Pupils are knowledgeable and articulate in discussing their learning in religious education and its relevance to their everyday lives. They are familiar with the levels of attainment and confident in assessing their work against them. All classes use the 'bags of knowledge' to categorise their learning and in one class a pupil asked specifically what was needed to achieve the higher level. Pupils can talk about their targets and how to improve their work. They are positive about their learning and engaged in their lessons. Behaviour for learning is extremely good and no time is wasted during lessons. One child commented, 'the more you learn the better you become.' Pupils are beginning to use success criteria to develop their independent learning skills to make even more progress, which will further improve current good standards.

## **The quality of teaching**

**Grade I**

The quality of teaching is very good. During the inspection some outstanding lessons were observed with high levels of expectation. Different levels of support are used to ensure all pupils can access the learning, from carefully differentiated work to discrete support from teaching assistants. Teachers have good subject knowledge which they make accessible to pupils. Religious literacy is developed from Foundation Stage with pupils in Year 1 able to use the correct vocabulary to describe parts of the sacrament of baptism. Planning is clear and annotated for each class; workbooks show good coverage of the curriculum and presentation is of a high standard. Marking is consistent, up to date and provides pupils with challenges and dialogue. Where learning was most productive in lessons observed, the pace was good and teachers moved pupils forward in their understanding of the sacraments of initiation. Learning behaviour is very good and helped by a consistent approach across all areas of pedagogy, including good use of modelling. Assessment is accurate and provides opportunities for pupils working at all levels.

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

**Grade I\***

The leadership and management of religious education are outstanding. The headteacher who is also the subject leader leads a religious education team and has shared her vision for excellence with all staff. She is well supported by the whole school community including the well-informed governing body. The good systems she has put in place to regularly monitor, track and ensure pupil progress have enabled leaders to support new staff and ensure high standards are maintained. She has accurately identified what needs to be done to move all teaching and achievement to 'Outstanding' and has put in place strategies to achieve this outcome. The diocesan adviser is leading a series of moderation sessions for staff to develop teachers' expertise in accurately assessing pupils' work. This is leading to confident teachers who have high expectations of their pupils. The headteacher has an excellent understanding of all the strengths and areas for development in religious education. Along with her team, she monitors teaching, workbooks, planning and pupil progress and ensures support is given when needed. The school improvement plan clearly identifies issues for action and evaluates current provision. The link governor for religious education who is also the local parish priest is active in the life of the school and familiar with current developments in religious education. This enables him to support the school effectively.

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

- Continue to strengthen and maintain staff confidence in planning and assessment to ensure all pupils reach their full potential in religious education.
- Continue to identify more opportunities for pupils to engage in independent 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?**

Since the last inspection the school has continued to evaluate provision and opportunities for prayer and worship in partnership with pupils and their families. All staff have been well supported as they implement the new Diocesan Framework and the requirements of the Curriculum Directory. Links with parents have been strengthened by sending home the 'Wednesday Word' which has enabled a greater understanding of the Catholic life of the school. Pupils have been involved reviewing the Mission Statement which has resulted in a new motto, 'Love, Listen and Learn.' The school has recently trialled the diocesan toolkit for acts of worship to support staff as they enable pupils plan, prepare and lead times of prayer and reflection.

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

Religious education receives at least 10% curriculum time and has a similar budget to other core subjects. Resources are very good and are constantly reviewed and replaced when necessary. A very high proportion of teachers are Catholics and eight have the CCRS or equivalent qualification. The learning environment is outstanding with attractive classroom displays and prayer tables which reflect the Church's year and are used as a focus during classroom liturgies. School leadership, including experienced governors, offers very good support in developing and reviewing the quality of religious education. All staff receive regular in-service support and training related to the Catholic life of the school. Governors play a major role in the life of the school and contribute to the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan. The local parish priest who is also the link governor for religious education liaises with the school for a planned programme of masses and liturgies. He sees all religious education planning and acts as an additional teaching resource on visits to classes.

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

The provision for prayer and worship is outstanding and at the heart of the life of the school. Prayer and worship are central to daily life through class prayer times, liturgies and assemblies. Pupils are encouraged to write their own prayers and books are compiled for use on specific occasions. In addition, pupils are given frequent opportunities for spiritual development through meditation and reflection. Pupils are often engaged in the planning and preparation of worship particularly for the year group Masses in the parish church. Parents and families are invited to masses and other liturgies and value these opportunities to share the faith life of the school. Pupils also visit the church to develop their knowledge of Catholic traditions and practice. The sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation are celebrated in school during Lent and Advent as well as Stations of the Cross and a Palm Sunday procession.

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

### **Grade I**

The commitment and contribution to the Common Good are very good. The school is a most welcoming community which promotes respect for all faiths, beliefs and backgrounds. The gifts and uniqueness of each individual are recognised and celebrated through assemblies and newsletters. The school achieved the Inclusion Quality Mark in 2013. There is an excellent range of extra-curricular activities to support the interests and gifts of pupils as well as a breakfast club to help parents. Pupils are given many and varied opportunities to develop as members of the school community and mentioned a recent 'Friendship Day' organised by the School Council. One pupil said, 'It's good to be in this wonderful school and join in all it has to offer'. Pupils are encouraged to share their gifts with others in acts of service to the school through well established systems, including the School Council, playground friends and Year 6 buddies. A wide range of charities include UNICEF, support for a homeless centre, the Catholic Children's Society and Cafod. The school is also involved with the local community through participation in Mission services, dance festivals and sporting events. Conversations with pupils indicate that they are beginning to understand the theology underpinning their support for people in need. Older pupils also are beginning to grasp some of the moral issues in society. The school is attempting to ensure that pupils understand the call to justice and a sense of service are essential parts of their Catholic identity.

## **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 I\***

Partnership between parents, school and parish is very effective and seen by governors and leadership as an essential part of the being a diocesan school. Links are very good with frequent participation in church events and the use of school premises by the parish. Class Masses and visits to Mary, Mother of God parish church help pupils and parents to see the Church as a vital part of school life as does the involvement of the parish priest who is link governor for religious education. The school works closely with parents and families and keeps them well informed through newsletters, questionnaires, curriculum meetings and consultations. The school welcomes parental participation as classroom volunteers and actively seeks to communicate a shared understanding of the mission of the school. There is a high level of attendance at assemblies and liturgies. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the provision offered by the school. Many thoughtful and appreciative comments were made on the diocesan questionnaires including, 'St Mary's does a wonderful job in supporting children's Catholic faith in partnership with families.' Links with the diocese are very good. Senior leaders and governors attend diocesan conferences, in-service and courses offered by Westminster Education Service. The diocesan adviser has led sessions linked to assessment and moderation for all staff. The headteacher has participated in meetings to share expertise with other local Catholic schools.

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

### **Grade I\***

Leadership is outstanding. All leaders are fully committed to the Church's mission in education. They demonstrate this by providing a curriculum with spiritual and moral education at its heart. Catholic life is central to the work of the school and leaders ensure that all aspects reflect the richness of a Christian way of life. The headteacher ensures that all staff have the skills and opportunities to contribute to the Catholic life of the school and there are excellent systems in place to induct and support new teachers. Pupils are given every opportunity to know the life and teachings of Jesus and

the traditions of the Catholic Church as well as an understanding of their own uniqueness as children of God. Governors make a highly significant contribution to the work and Catholic dimension of the school. They have a high level of expertise and fully understand their role as governors of a diocesan Catholic school.

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

- Continue to develop pupils' understanding of Catholic Social Teaching and the theology underpinning their engagement in acts of service.
- Enable pupils to investigate the ethics of the market place through the Fair Trade movement with a view to attaining Fair Trade status for the school.