



# Archdiocese of Birmingham

## INSPECTION REPORT

### ST GERARD'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL BIRMINGHAM

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Inspection dates 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> March 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	4-11 years
Number on roll	226
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors (Acting)	Miss Margaret Dunsford
School address	Yatesbury Avenue Castle Vale Birmingham B35 6LB
Telephone number	0121 464 2613
E-mail address	enquiry@stgerard.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	June 2008
DFE School number	330/3367
Unique Reference Number	103458

**Headteacher** Mr David Hird

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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 RE lessons, one 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 and staff. She attended Mass observed an assembly led by Key Stage 1 pupils 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 RAISEonline, the development plan, teachers' planning, and learning journals. Alongside the validation of school self-evaluation, the inspector gathered evidence about good lessons, evidence which will be shared with other diocesan schools.

## Information about the school

St Gerard's is a one form entry Catholic primary school with a full time nursery unit. There are currently 226 children on roll, of which 26 have a full time nursery place. At present 58% of the children are baptised Catholic. The school is located in the heart of Castle Vale on the outskirts of Birmingham city centre. The school serves the needs of the Castle Vale/Tyburn Ward area with the majority of children coming from the locality. The large majority of pupils come from rented accommodation in an area where higher education qualifications are well below the national average. The school serves the community and parish of St Gerard. The school is situated on the same site as the parish church. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is currently 45%, well above the national average. Approximately 16% of children are on the special needs list. 31% of pupils come from minority ethnic groups. Percentage of pupils having a first language other than English is 12%.

## Main Finding

The school rightly judges the overall effectiveness of its Catholic life and RE to be outstanding. Systematic, thorough, clearly focussed and regular monitoring and evaluation enable the school to assess exactly where it is and what it needs to do in order to develop and improve. Monitoring and evaluation is deeply embedded in the culture and everyday life of the school. Governors, senior leadership and all staff place the development of the school's Catholic life as their highest priority and have systems in place to ensure that they provide the best possible outcomes for pupils and their families. RE is led very effectively and rigorous monitoring, evaluation and planning for improvement ensure that provision and learning are excellent.

## School self-evaluation

School self-evaluation judges that the pupil attainment is good but that progress is outstanding. Baseline indicates that children enter the school with little or no knowledge of the Faith but effective assessment and monitoring systems show that pupils make outstanding progress leading to good attainment. Monitoring systems show that children with special needs make good progress but this group of pupils, even though they are being assessed against RE not literacy skills, sometimes experience difficulty expressing their thoughts about more complex concepts in RE. The school gathers and assesses a great deal of evidence as to how well pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school and rightly judges it to be outstanding. The school's mission to strive for perfection with Christ at its side and guided by St Gerard is evident through the children's attitudes, actions and relationships which are exemplary. Children treat others with

kindness and compassion and they understand that their actions have consequences. Great attention is given to appraising pupil behaviour and reviewing pupil response and contribution to Catholic life. It places great importance on reconciliation and forgiveness and pupil awareness of the requirement to respect and care for others. Careful reflection and observation by governors, senior leaders and all staff have led to the accurate judgement that pupil response to collective worship is outstanding.

The way in which the headteacher, senior leaders and the governors monitor and evaluate the Catholic life of the school is outstanding and leads to effective change and strengthening of practice. All acts of worship are reviewed and discussed in detail and strengths and weaknesses identified, leading rightly to the judgement that the provision for collective worship is outstanding. The same approach is taken regarding practices that consolidate the pupils' spiritual, moral and vocational development. A rigorous, reflective approach to monitoring by senior leadership is fully supported by a united and committed staff. The quality of self-evaluation, the analytical skills of the headteacher and senior leadership, the clearly focussed plans for development demonstrate an outstanding capacity to improve. Governors are fully involved in the Catholic life of the school and contribute much to monitoring and evaluation. The RE link governor has a background rooted in Catholic education and is confident and knowledgeable in articulating his vision for the school and challenges in order to secure further improvement. Governors fulfil their responsibilities by challenging as critical friends, observing practice in the school (link governor), guiding on religious matters and receiving and interacting with reports.

The RE leader, an outstanding practitioner, is thorough, meticulous and effective in her monitoring, evaluating and leading her subject. Children's achievement in RE, teaching and curriculum are monitored and evaluated in order to plan future improvements. This is done through assessment, scrutiny of books, joint lesson observations and learning walks, the regular scrutinising of the quality of displays and prayer focuses in classrooms and around the school, discussions with children and pupil questionnaires. Outcomes are shared with staff individually and collectively, contributing to the evaluation of performance in all aspects of RE and informing future planning so that the school can continually improve provision through the priorities identified in the development plan. The RE leader has a robust action plan, which is linked to the school development plan and used as part of the rigorous performance management schedule to ensure it is all completed to a high standard. Weekly management release time enables the leader to identify areas that need to be addressed for the next academic year along with overseeing quality of assessment, analysis of pupil outcomes and the quality of teaching and learning in RE. The school rightly judges all provision to be outstanding

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

Baseline data indicates that most children enter St Gerard's with little or no prior knowledge of the Catholic faith. Children are re-assessed in the summer term; these assessments demonstrate that the end of Foundation Stage attainment is good. End of Key Stage 2 assessment data shows that pupil attainment is good. The curriculum strategy assessment focuses show that by the end of the key stage, the large majority of children are working at least within the expected diocesan attainment bands. Lesson observations and learning walks show that the children are interested, engaged and motivated in their lessons, so they enjoy learning. Pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary and they engage well on tasks and activities. The RE curriculum allows a lot of opportunity for the children to talk and discuss issues that will help them identify what is right and wrong and to ask the question 'why?' There is a strategic focus in RE lessons

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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.

on how the teachings of Jesus Christ are applicable in the children's lives today. Teaching is never less than good, with much being outstanding, which promotes purposeful learning, enjoyment, progress and attainment of pupils. Teachers have good subject knowledge and expertly build on the children's prior knowledge in order to enhance all pupils' understanding. They link learning to real life experiences and are skilled in challenging children through the use of effective questioning and clear explanations. Support staff is highly effective in supporting learning.

At St Gerard's, the Mission Statement 'With Christ at our side and St. Gerard as our guide we strive for perfection' is evident through the children's attitudes, actions and relationships which are exemplary. Children treat others with kindness and compassion and they understand that their actions have consequences. Pupils know they are valued for whom they are and that they are unique and special. Children have a strong sense of their own worth and are nurtured so they can have high aspirations and use their own gifts and talents for the service of others. In May a whole school vocations week is held. Each class focuses on the story of the call of the disciples and study a famous person who has devoted their life to their beliefs and values. Collective worship is central to the life of St Gerard's; it is inclusive of all children and staff and is valued by the school community. It is carefully planned, so that it is interesting, inspirational, reverent and reflective. As a result of this, children are keen to participate in and show reverence in all acts of worship. Children are given the opportunity to lead in whole school and class worship and enjoy this opportunity. Whole school Masses, led by the children, are carried out on a regular basis. All children, regardless of their faith, value being chosen and take their contribution and participation seriously. The school is committed to the spiritual formation and development of the pupils' growing relationship with God. This is achieved through the celebration and reception of the Sacraments, with the Eucharist being central to the life of the school.

St Gerard's is outstanding in its Catholic life and RE. It is a school that both children and their parents are justifiably proud. St Gerard's is a safe happy effective school where all pupils and their families benefit and thrive.

### **Recommendations**

Provide more opportunities for children to prepare and organise collective worship activities through revisiting the themes of the mission statement in class and assemblies.



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April 2013

Dear Parents and Carers

### **Section 48 (Diocesan) Inspection of St Gerard's Catholic Primary School, March 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 outstanding in its Catholic life and RE. The inspection found that this judgement is fully justified because:

- Your children flourish and benefit greatly from the school's vibrant Catholic life.
- Children make outstanding progress in RE because teaching is always at least good and often outstanding. The curriculum is rich and well planned
- Pupils' behaviour and care for each other are outstanding and truly reflects Christian values and teaching.
- Children respond exceptionally well to the outstanding collective worship they help skilfully to provide.
- Catholic life is very effectively led by the headteacher, senior leadership and governors.
- RE is exceptionally well led by the subject leader
- The school benefits from an exceptionally hardworking, capable, committed and united staff.

We suggest that the excellent worship life and outstanding pupil response would improve even more by giving the pupils greater opportunity to be involved in the planning and preparation of assemblies, class prayers, and Masses.

Your children's contribution to the excellent Catholic and prayer life of the school is outstanding. Throughout the inspection they were welcoming, courteous and informative. They are justifiably proud of their school. We thank you for the part you play in supporting your children on their journey of faith.

Yours sincerely

Brenda Beale  
Diocesan Inspector