



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

THE FABER CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL COTTON, STAFFORDSHIRE

Inspection dates 7th -8th December 2011
Reporting Inspector Brenda Beale

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Primary
Age range of pupils	4 – 11 years
Number on roll	66
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mr John Pennington
School address	Cotton Lane Cotton Staffordshire ST10 3DH
Telephone number	01538 702324
E-mail address	headteacher@faber.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	February 2007
DCSF School Number	8603300
Unique Reference Number	131984

Headteacher Mrs Alexandra Beardmore

DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one Diocesan Inspector. The inspector visited three full religious education lessons to observe teaching and learning, pupils' behaviour, and held meetings with governors, staff, and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, including assembly and looked at a range of evidence, including key documentation such as the school's development plan, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in RE, and pupils' work.

Information about the school

The Faber school is smaller than most. It has 68 pupils on roll, 41 being baptised Catholics (62%). The pupils are organised into three classes. The school is part of the Painsley Catholic Collegiate Federation which includes five other Catholic primary schools and the Catholic secondary school and shares one governing body. The social and economic backgrounds of the large majority of pupils fall within the typical range. A small number are from disadvantaged families. Some children come from isolated farming families. The school serves 2 parishes (Cotton and Alton) and a large geographical area. The majority of children need to travel to school by car or bus as they live outside of the immediate area. Currently, about 21% of pupils have special educational needs; this is above the national average. The school is housed in buildings that are more than 100 years old and is short of space. It has been extended and sensibly adapted and makes good use of available space. Even so, it lacks a hall and has to make do with accommodation rented elsewhere. External space is good.

Overall effectiveness of the school as a Catholic school

The Faber is a good Catholic School with an outstanding capacity to improve. The school has had significant changes in leadership within the last four years. The school was without a permanent head for eighteen months. The school had two acting heads before the present head was appointed in April 2009. The school staffing was restructured to ensure good teaching standards throughout. The structure now suits the needs of the school. The school has a strong family feel and it is a place where all children thrive and make good progress. Outcomes for pupils in regard for RE and the Catholic life of the school are good. Behaviour is excellent and the pupils say they always feel safe and are well cared for. In behaviour management the view of the child as a child of Christ is paramount and central to all actions. The school's capacity to improve is outstanding because both headteacher and the governing body have a clear vision and understanding of what comprises an outstanding Catholic school. The strong leadership team, the headteacher and her assistant head, are highly motivated, extremely competent and are able to inspire the whole school community to meet their ambitious vision for the school. Self evaluation that is in place is grounded in sound evidence and accurate analysis. Realistic but challenging plans are in place to fully develop the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. The Painsley Federation of which The Faber School is a member comprises good and outstanding schools. The federation provides great support and examples of outstanding practice which are contributing greatly to the development of all aspects of the school. The school has the fullest approval and support of the parents.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop confidence and theological understanding of all areas of the RE curriculum in order to support non-Catholic staff and extend pupils' knowledge.
- Develop monitoring activities so that the school has an accurate understanding of RE provision

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils

Progress is good overall but some pupils make outstanding progress. Baseline assessment indicates that most pupils enter with little or no knowledge of the faith. Good teaching, excellent

pupil behaviour, their enjoyment of RE lessons, which are interesting and motivating all contribute to good progress. The children are keen to do their best and approach their learning in RE with enthusiasm. The quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs/disabilities and their progress in RE are good. These pupils are well cared for and supported by staff and other pupils. There are several children with emotional and behaviour needs. They feel safe and have good self esteem. They thrive very well in this small friendly caring school. At the end of the final key stage no pupils are below average. Many pupils are above average in both their knowledge and understanding of religion but also in their ability to reflect on meaning. Year 6 pupils can talk with enthusiasm and a sound knowledge about the Bible, its structure and content. They have an appropriate knowledge of bible stories and their meaning, the Sacraments, signs and symbols, the Church's liturgical cycle, and what it means to live a Christian life. Year 2 pupils are able to talk about the Bible and its structure and they know some stories from both Testaments and are able to relate them to their own lives. They speak confidently about Baptism and they have an appropriate knowledge of the liturgical year and associated colours and are able to talk about prayer and recite several formal prayers they use frequently in their daily lives. They can explain the Advent wreath and why we have candles, crucifixes and statues.

Pupils' contribution to the Catholic life of the school is good and they benefit well from it. Pupils take on responsibilities and participate constructively in the Catholic life of the school beyond lessons and activities. Many children volunteer to represent the school at Masses held throughout the area, for example the community Mass for St Wilfrid and the combined schools Mass. Most children are reflective and enquiring in their RE lessons and often continue this in their free time. They understand that religious belief and spiritual values are important for many people and show respect for other people's beliefs and values. They show interest in the religious life of others and care and show respect for religious objects in the school. Most of the children understand the importance of key celebrations throughout the liturgical year both in school and in the parish community. Children readily want to join in these celebrations and can explain why we celebrate them. They are able to express their own views and beliefs. They are considerate to others and caring to anyone in apparent need. They respond to the needs of people both within school and beyond. They often discuss a variety of issues and ask to fundraise for some causes, local, national and international. During the past twelve months the school has raised money for the Father Hudson's Society, and the Cauldwell charity amongst others. Children show an understanding of the need to forgive, be forgiven and have a good understanding of right and wrong. This is demonstrated by children being able to verbalise the school rules and saying why an action is right or wrong. Pupils show great consideration towards each other and adults.

Pupils respond to and participate in collective worship well. Pupils readily take part in the regular and routine prayer life of the school. Assemblies have opportunities for pupil participation and are carefully and thoughtfully planned. Most children willingly attend additional services both in school and the local parish, to celebrate key seasons and festivals. Pupils often volunteer to represent the school in their own time. Pupils act with reverence in all types of collective worship. Children are involved in the celebration of the Mass and they are beginning to help to prepare Mass. They are involved by reading, saying bidding prayers, singing and taking part in the offertory procession. They understand how important the Mass is and members of the school community say that behaviour is excellent during Mass. All children sing a variety of hymns and religious songs, both traditional and modern, joyfully. Pupils enjoy hymn practice and often ask for different hymns. Many children have joined the school choir which rehearses during lunchtime and enhances collective worship. Most children are able to reflect in silence, dependent on their age. They join in community prayers with confidence and are at ease when praying. They have a good and growing understanding of the religious seasons and feasts.

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the school

Leaders and managers both within the school and across the federation are passionate and deeply committed to the Church's mission in education. They provide clear and instructive guidance on

how the teachings of Christ are central to all practice within the Catholic school and throughout all areas of learning. Therefore all staff, pupils and parents have a high regard for the Catholic life of the school. Leaders know the school's major strengths and areas for development and are implementing plans that are aimed at improving spiritual and moral outcomes for pupils. They have led training on the importance of liturgy and how to lead this, and how to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum, assessment and monitoring. Senior leaders are beginning to monitor the progress of all pupils. During 2011 the mission statement was revised by all stakeholders. All members of staff now have a clear understanding of the nature of a Catholic school and its mission. Children are also beginning to understand this and the role that they play in the mission. Monitoring and evaluation of RE and planning for and implementing improvement to outcomes are satisfactory but rapidly improving. The headteacher and her small staff have had to focus heavily on raising standards in literacy and numeracy, but robust plans are now in place to improve outcomes for pupils in RE. Assessment procedures following diocesan guidelines are beginning to be used in school. These are analysed which enable clear targets to be set for the improvement plan and to identify any training needs. Summative assessment of three key strands of the religious curriculum is being undertaken and used to provide data for tracking pupil progress. From the beginning of the autumn term children are being levelled in these key strands. The marking policy is used to provide effective feedback for development and children are expected and given time to respond to comments in the RE work.

The effectiveness of the governing body in respect to the Catholic life and RE in the school is outstanding. The governing body has undergone instability and change over the last two years but is now a federated governing body which includes 6 primary schools and one outstanding high school. Governors make an exceptional contribution to the work and Catholic direction of the school. They have high levels of insight, are extremely well organised and thorough in their approach. The governing body is fully supporting the school and carrying out their statutory and canonical responsibilities to an outstanding degree. They continually review the effectiveness of their systems and act upon their findings. The governors including the school specific committee know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and what the school needs to do in order to improve. The governors are focused upon RE school improvement and pupil outcomes. The governors are involved in all areas of the school's religious life. Governors monitor RE standards and provide areas for improvement. They challenge and support. Governors are determined to provide a good Catholic education for all groups of children. The governors are a visible presence in school. Parents often informally chat to governors and parents' views are gathered through these informal methods as well as formal questionnaires, carried out at least twice a year. The chair of governors and two other governors meet with the headteacher at least once a term to discuss the improvement plan, self evaluation and how the school is improving. Each meeting is focused on challenging and improving the school to create an outstanding Catholic school.

Promotion of community cohesion is good. The school is making a strong contribution to its communities within the Catholic context of the school. An audit of community cohesion is in place and has identified the strong impact the school has on the local community. It has identified that the school needs to develop the way it serves and promote global communities. The school has effectively promoted a sense of belonging and a common identity and values among the pupils. There is general appreciation and valuing of diversity and an awareness of human rights. The Faber has a clear common identity and values based on gospel values. These are clearly identified and promoted among the pupils and the impact of the school's work is felt strongly by the local community. Feedback confirms this view. The pupils and parents engage well with the school ethos and community. Although pupils are predominately white British, the school is successful in enabling learners from all backgrounds to get on well with each other in lessons, on school projects, socially at playtimes and during visits with other schools. The pupils are acquiring the suitable skills for participating in society. The school has established links with other schools through friendship days, e-mail correspondence, sports and common activities and this is helping to develop learners' understanding of other communities. Pupils are actively involved in fundraising work for charities both within the UK and overseas. The children often choose these charities and research why they need aid.

The quality of the school's work in providing Catholic education

Teaching of RE is effective and some outstanding practice was observed during inspection. A lesson on the anointing of David involved a range of interesting activities. Pupils in a Year 4, 5 and 6 class worked collaboratively together and the members of each group fully contributed to the excellent outcomes by using their particular skills and abilities. The lesson was fun and engaging. It built on prior knowledge and ensured progress and learning were of the highest standard. Many of these qualities were seen in other lessons observed. Teachers plan and prepare well. The headteacher and her assistant have excellent subject knowledge which they share with younger and non-Catholic staff. Younger members of staff need to develop a deeper knowledge and understanding of the faith to enable them to grow in confidence. Teachers use a range of different techniques and questioning in their RE teaching. ICT and other resources are used imaginatively within lessons to develop children's spiritual understanding and promote questioning. Marking is specific to the task and is beginning to look at spiritual development to help move the children forward in religious understanding. Assessment in RE is good. Staff use assessment for learning strategies within their RE marking to provide detailed feedback. Teachers listen to, observe and question groups of pupils during lessons in order to reshape tasks and explanations to improve learning. The diocesan guidelines for levelling have been introduced during the autumn term and are now providing a more detailed picture of the standards in RE.

The time allocation for RE meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and the curriculum fulfils the *Curriculum Directory for Religious Education* and diocesan requirements. The scheme is tailored to meet the needs of individual pupils and the mixed age groups; activities are adapted to suit the needs of the children. The curriculum is currently being reviewed so it meets the pupils' needs, interests and aspirations better. The school has recently adopted a skills based creative curriculum which will ensure children's needs are better met. Long, medium and short term planning ensures full coverage of the RE programme. The *All that I am* programme is being introduced to cover family life and sex education. Children attend the diocesan retreat centre as part of their sacramental preparation, both for day and residential visits. The pupils and their families are further supported in this preparation by the excellent support of parishioners. The curriculum provides good opportunities for spiritual and moral development, especially the termly problem solving days focusing on spiritual development. Strong emphasis is placed with staff that the RE curriculum is a 'living' document that is not to be used as a mere knowledge base but extended to understanding how to 'live' as people of God. Current affairs and news are used within the curriculum to give religious teaching relevance within the modern world. All sessions start with a simple prayer to focus the minds of the children towards God.

The provision of collective worship is good. A very good whole school assembly was attended during inspection. The theme was Advent and the focus was the celebration of the feast of the Immaculate Conception. It was led by the headteacher. The content, presentation and use of good ICT resources were excellent. The liturgical calendar is used and liturgies, assemblies and Masses are planned around this. Special attention is given to the Rosary during the months of October and May. All children have been given rosary beads, which are used to help the children to pray the Rosary. The local parish priest attends school regularly and provides opportunities for children to attend confession. Each classroom has an attractive prayer focus and the displays relating to the Catholic life of the school are plentiful and of the highest quality. The children are familiar with a wide repertoire of hymns and range of prayers. Opportunity for prayer and worship is plentiful. To help with the lack of space a beautiful chapel has been created in an outside classroom. It is furnished with pews from the closed local church and provides space for collective worship or a quiet place for contemplation and prayer.