



Diocese of Westminster

St John's Catholic Primary School
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DFE Number: 919 3398
URN Number: 117475

Headteacher: Mrs P. Smith
Chair of Governors: Mr M. Blayney

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of inspection: 3rd May 2012
Date of previous inspection: October 2006

Reporting Inspector: Mrs M. Betts

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 inspector spent one day in school, visited four lessons and one assembly, and carried out five 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, examination of school documents, and attendance at religious services where possible.

The Inspection of St John's Catholic Primary School, Rickmansworth was carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework and Schedule for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Archbishop of Westminster. The inspectors are appointed by 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.

Description of School

The school is a one form entry in the LA of Hertfordshire and the locality of Rickmansworth. The school serves the parishes of St John's, Mill End; Our Lady Help of Christians, Rickmansworth; St John Fisher, Chorleywood; St Bede's, Croxley Green. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 98%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 1.5% and from other Faiths 0.5%.

There are 210 pupils on roll, with 4 pupils with statements of Special Educational Need. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is below average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well below average. There is a well below average rate of families claiming free school meals.

Key for inspection grades.

Grade 1: Outstanding;*
Grade 1: Very Good;
Grade 2: Good;
Grade 3: Satisfactory;
Grade 4: Inadequate.

A. Curriculum 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?

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

Grade [1]

The school has recently reviewed their religious education curriculum against the key areas of the Curriculum Directory checking where and how these are being taught and that the balance between areas is in place. Their curriculum based on “The Way, The Truth and The Life” programme covers these aspects very well. A display of key Curriculum Directory areas in every classroom highlights for pupils the areas of learning within each lesson. For example during a Reception lesson the key religious education word was physically inserted into the “Revelation” area on the display. Very good planning adapted the Curriculum Directory objectives so that learning was relevant to the age and abilities of the pupils. Pupils learn about other faiths and this learning is enhanced by the links the school has made with the local Jewish community.

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

Grade [1]

All pupils are gaining an understanding of the life and teaching of the Catholic Church at a very good rate and display a growing depth of thought especially about their responsibilities as Catholics. This was evidenced during a year 5 lesson where pupils were asked to give a personal response of how they could bring Jesus to people in difficult social situations. They devised mature and optimistic ideas. Pupils are encouraged to apply learning to their daily lives. The standard gained in religious education is high and either in line with or above English in both key stages. Assessment of pupils is linked to the national Levels of Attainment. Work is being undertaken to ensure accuracy of judgements. The books are very well presented and evidence a full coverage of the curriculum with a very good range of written activities.

The quality of teaching

Grade [2]

Teaching is good overall and some outstanding aspects were observed. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, link teaching well with Scripture and plan thoroughly. Teaching uses visual presentation and open questioning effectively to engage the interest of the pupils. More able pupils are encouraged to develop as independent learners by being challenged to give individual responses. For example in a Year 3 lesson devising the final commentary for a film depicting the two disciples’ journey to Emmaus, pupils were challenged to describe how, knowing Jesus is alive and living in them, affects the choices they make for their actions. Marking of work is thorough giving appropriate praise with questions to extend the learning. Pupils are given opportunities to respond. Homework contributes very well to pupils’ learning.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade [1]

The leadership of religious education (RE) is very good and well supported by the school’s senior leadership. The religious education subject leader has a clear, enthusiastic vision for the subject and supports staff very well. Frequent monitoring by the leadership of work, planning and lessons

ensures standards are high. Evaluations are accurate and effective in identifying areas for development. For example regular scrutiny of books has led to an improved standard of presentation and analysis of assessment data has led to intervention support for one group of pupils. One teacher holds the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies (CCRS).

What has improved in curriculum religious education since the last inspection and what should the school do to further improve in curriculum religious education?

All improvement actions from the last inspection have been achieved. The RE governor monitors RE attainment and improvement actions and informs the governing body of her findings.

To further improve in curriculum religious education the school should:

Further develop religious education assessment to ensure judgements link more closely with national and diocesan requirements.

Ensure that pupils are aware of what they should do to achieve a higher assessment level.

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

Overall Grade: [1]

The school views itself as very good and the inspector concurs with this judgement. Pupils are gaining religious literacy at a very good rate. The standards achieved are high. Pupils are becoming more aware of how faith affects daily living. They enjoy their religious education lessons especially when given practical activities to express their ideas such as in drama, art, poetry and ICT (information and communication technology). Staff are committed to the high profile given to religious education and have high expectations of the standards they wish pupils to achieve.

B. The school as a Catholic Community

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

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum - time, resources, budget

Grade [1*]

Religious education is very important in the school evidenced by the subject receiving at least 10% of curriculum time and by the high budget given to it relative to other core subjects. Pupils are aware that it is central to school and say "RE is what our whole school is about". They appreciate the RE links to the creative curriculum. Governors and parents are very aware of the importance of religious education. The senior leaders are all practising Catholics and offer teachers outstanding support and active guidance. They organise regular training linked to RE and the Catholic life of the school. Sometimes this is provided by the parish priest.

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

Grade [1*]

Worship and prayer are integral parts of each school day. Pupils' liturgical formation is very well planned to ensure the widest possible experiences of the richness of the Catholic tradition of prayer and worship. During the inspection the May devotion to Mary was celebrated by the whole school community and parents. The procession of flowers and the pupils' high quality of singing powerfully enriched the experience. Pupils are very respectful during worship and participate with sincerity. Prayer and worship have a very strong impact on pupils' spiritual and moral development. Pupils enjoy the variety of worship experiences provided and writing their own prayers to use in worship. They also have opportunities to pray their own intentions. Pupils are actively involved in leading worship and are keen to plan and prepare their own class acts of worship. The well attended weekly prayer group is led by the pupils of the school's chaplaincy team. The whole school regularly attend Mass. The four local parish priests make a significant contribution to the sacramental life of the school. Pupils, staff and parents have the opportunity of reconciliation in school on three occasions each year.

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

Grade [1*]

Pupils are very aware of the importance of service and can articulate that through their Catholic faith Christ calls them to serve one another. Their concern for the welfare of others is demonstrated by the project each class devises twice a year to practically help other people; their fund-raising for local, national and international charities particularly for an orphan school in India; and by their visiting and supporting local residential homes. Pupils are proud of their school and enthusiastically undertake a variety of responsibilities for younger children. They appreciate their ideas and opinions being sought for example through the School Council. The pastoral care of pupils is very good. In these ways the school contributes extremely well to pupils' confidence, well-being and self-esteem. Relationships are very good. Pupils appreciate the friendliness of staff who listen to them and help with problems. They describe the school as "a family where everyone supports each other".

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 school has very good links with parents who appreciate the approachability of staff and the welcome they are given at the school. Parents are actively supportive of the school and attendance at services is high. The school has effective links with the parishes through the relationships with the parish priests. The school attendance each month at the parish Mass enriches the pupils' knowledge of their faith, traditions and practices. The school works in partnership with the diocese through accessing their training and their guidance when needed, and implementing diocesan policies. Pupils and staff attend diocesan and deanery events and services. The School has close links with other Catholic schools.

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

Grade [1*]

The school leaders are passionately committed to the Church's mission in education. They have a clear vision and inspire and engage all staff and pupils in implementing and developing the school's Catholic ethos. The mission statement underpins all school activities. The Catholic identity of the school is pivotal to school life and this is evidenced in the very high priority attached to Catholic worship and pupils' faith development. The leadership understands very well the school's strengths and development needs through their thorough and accurate self-evaluation. Governors fulfil very well their responsibilities and are pro-active. The school's capacity to continue to maintain and promote its Catholic identity is outstanding.

What has improved since the last inspection and what should the school do to further develop the Catholic life of the school ?

Since last inspection the school has provided more creative worship opportunities for pupils, staff and parents.

To further develop the school's Catholic life the school should:

Engage pupils more in preparing and presenting their own acts of class worship.

Implement the school's plan to devise creative ways to engage more fully with the distant parishes.

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: [1*]

The school views itself as outstanding and the inspector concurs with this judgement. The powerful leadership of the headteacher and senior staff with strong support from the governors is instrumental in very effectively maintaining and developing the Catholic identity. Prayer and worship have a very strong central role in school life. The pupils' spiritual and moral development is outstanding and firmly linked to their Catholic faith in action. This is reflected in pupils' very good behaviour and positive attitudes. Service to others is promoted through religious education teaching and scriptural study of Jesus' example and inspires pupils' growing awareness of their Catholic faith commitment. Pupils say "we are all trying to be like Jesus".